

Socialist Challenge

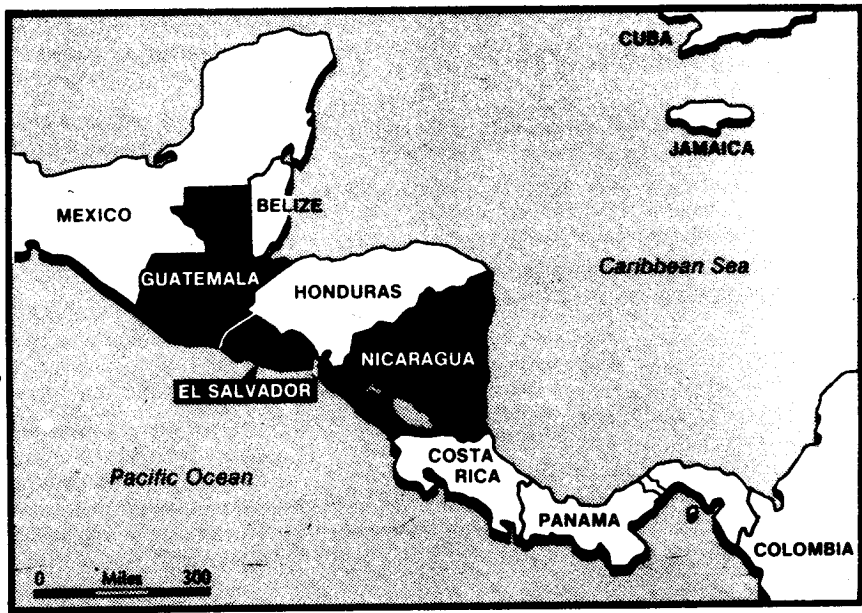
US HANDS OFF EL SALVADOR

*Demonstrate Sat 25 April,
assemble 12.30
Speakers Corner*

VICTORY TO THE FMLN



March for jobs, Liverpool to London, 1 May



WASHINGTON NEW VIET

El Salvador - workers against US imperialism



Revolutionary leaders address San Salvador rally

A revolutionary leadership

EL SALVADOR'S struggle against military dictatorship is spearheaded by four revolutionary organisations, each of which has its own armed wing.

The armed forces of the revolution jointly make up the *Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN)*. Martí was the founder of the Communist Party and led the 1932 insurrection.

The political co-ordination of these organisations, which has brought together the social democrats and progressive sections of the Christian Democracy, is the *Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR)*. The controlling interest in the FDR lies with the revolutionary organisations.

The three strongest revolutionary organisations, which have carried the main responsibility for the struggle, are the Revolutionary Peoples Bloc (BPR), the United Peoples Action Front (FAPU), and the Popular Leagues of the 28 January (LP-28).

Their armed wings are, respectively, the *Farabundo Martí Peoples Liberation Force (FPL)*, the *Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN)* and the *Peoples Revolutionary Army (ERP)*. The fourth, smaller revolutionary organisation is the *Central American Revolutionary Workers Party (PRTC)*.

In addition to these forces, the *Nationalist Democratic Union*, the legal expression of the Communist Party, is integrated into the *FLMN* and the *FDR*, after having previously supported the Duarte junta.

The revolutionary organisations tend to be split-offs from the Communist Party, and their most prestigious leader, Cayetano Carpio, was previously a central leader of the Communist Party.

The revolutionary character of the Salvadoran leadership is confirmed by the main points of the FDR's programme. These include the nationalisation of all basic means of production, the disbandment of the army and the creation of a people's army, expropriation of the big landed estates, and the democratic self-organisation of the masses.

ON July 19, 1979, the workers and peasants of Nicaragua led by the youthful fighters of the *Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN)* brought down the Somoza family dictatorship.

Washington backed Somoza, and the Pentagon provided the tyrant with what help it could, short of sending in the marines.

But the Nicaraguan people won, and the shock waves are being felt throughout Latin America — in El Salvador, Guatemala, and elsewhere.

In El Salvador there is now a civil war, with the masses of workers, students, and peasants lined up against the US-backed repressive regime and terrorist gangs.

Washington fears that its domination of El Salvador and other Central American countries could be ending; a domination that has lasted through nearly all of this century.

Intolerable

These years of US support to reactionary regimes have brought intolerable conditions for the masses of El Salvador, who do not have even the minimum necessities of food, clothing and housing. Hunger stalks El Salvador, which ranks as one of the Western hemisphere countries most severely affected by malnutrition.

At least 75 per cent of the

children under five show signs of malnutrition and related diseases before their first birthday.

Corporations

There are fewer than three doctors for every 10,000 inhabitants. Illiteracy runs to 40 per cent in the cities and 60 per cent in the countryside.

The average yearly income is 450 dollars, but even this miserly sum is misleading. While a small number live in luxury, the vast majority of the population is impoverished. About 2 per cent of the people control over 60 per cent of the cultivatable land.

Most industry is foreign owned. US corporations predominate, raking in huge profits from the sweat and blood of the Salvadoran workers.

Exxon, the International Basic coffee company, Westinghouse Electric, Alcoa, Texaco, US Steel and others are involved, as are the First National Bank and the Bank of America.

These US corporations have everything to gain by keeping their good friends in power. In October 1979 the military

Socialist Challenge

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If you would like to be put in touch with Socialist Challenge supporters in your area or would like more information fill in the form below

Name.....

Address.....

Age.....

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Send to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.



TON'S 'NAM

**'s and peasants
ism**

By Nancy Cole



regime of General Humberto Romero faced rapidly growing revolutionary opposition.

The US government, in an attempt to forestall the kind of sweeping changes which have occurred in Nicaragua, aided and supported the 'face-changing operation' that

replaced Romero with a group of military officers and members of the Christian Democratic Party led by Napoleon Duarte.

Washington

Now the reforms of this junta have been exposed, and it has been revealed to be no less brutal than its predecessor.

So Washington has stepped up its military aid, especially after the offensive launched by the revolutionary organisations on 11 January of this year.

Thousands of Salvadorans have been killed in 1980 and '81 — freedom fighters, unarmed peasants, and urban workers are being gunned down every day by the official armed forces and the right-wing paramilitary gangs of the ruling junta.

This is Washington's war; the slaughter could not go on without the military, economic and political support for the Salvadoran regime.



Young Sandinista fighter during uprising against Somoza dictatorship

Grave threats to the Nicaraguan revolution

THE United States is making a determined drive to throw back the victorious revolution in Nicaragua, to harass the New Jewel government in Grenada, and defeat the revolutionary struggle in El Salvador.

Key elements in the counter-revolutionary strategy now being adopted by the United States include:

- A total shut-off of aid to Nicaragua.

- The construction of a counter-revolutionary guerrilla force, consisting of former members of the Nicaraguan national guard.

- A mounting offensive against the revolution in Grenada, including the cutting off of aid aimed at constructing a major airport on the island.

- A huge build-up of military aid to the right-wing junta in El Salvador.

The new moves against Nicaragua are especially threatening. The US has cut off a total of \$24m in aid, including \$9.6m destined for the purchase of American wheat.

Shortages

As a result there is a grave danger of a bread shortage and hunger among the people of Nicaragua. The pretext for this move is that 'arms traffic may be continuing' to the rebels in El Salvador, and that 'other support very probably continues'.

There is no doubt that these economic moves against

Nicaragua are part of a strategy to bring down the Nicaraguan Sandinista government. Over the past few weeks, more and more information has been emerging about the counter-revolutionary preparations of supporters of the former dictator, Anastasio Somoza.

Attacks

They have constructed roving guerrilla squads based in Honduras, calling themselves the Nicaraguan Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARN). These squads have carried out a series of armed attacks over the border into Nicaragua.

In addition to the FARN forces in Honduras, a number of training camps have been constructed in Florida, obviously with CIA money and instructors.

The political force behind FARN is the Nicaraguan Democratic National Union, led by Fernando Chamorro. Chamorro was one of the 'democratic' leaders of the opposition to Somoza, joining the fight of the Sandinistas against the dictatorship in 1979.

After the Sandinista victory, he became a member of the Government of National

Reconstruction (GRNN), led by the FSLN.

Broke

But basing himself on that sector of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie which opposed Somoza, Chamorro broke with the increasingly left-wing direction of the Sandinista government and quit the GRNN.

The logic of his opposition to the Sandinistas is now becoming clear, as he links up with supporters of the Somoza regime against the revolution.

The workers and peasants of Nicaragua are preparing to defend their revolution, by the construction of people's militias. Bayardo Arce, head of the Political Commission of the National Directorate of the FSLN, said of the construction of the militias:

Defence

'Our professional army is small. Naturally, I'm not going to do the CIA's work for it by giving its exact size.

'One the other hand, our plan is not to have 50,000 people under arms. It is to have 100,000, and if necessary two million, the whole adult population of Nicaragua. That is our right, to defend ourselves when faced with aggression.'



Women militia fighters in Nicaragua

'The community needs to be defended against the police'

WINSTON CASTELLO, joint convenor of the Brixton Defence Committee, spoke to Socialist Challenge in a personal capacity about the need to defend those charged in the events.

SC: What is the role of the committee? Elsewhere defence committees have had two roles: defending individuals who have been arrested, but also the more general defence of the community. Is this the case here?

WC: Yes. The committee hopes to represent people in the courts. This extends to getting solicitors and barristers, and ensuring that supporters turn up when cases are being heard.

But as well it is still seen as necessary to defend the community from the police. The first decision made by the defence committee was to call a rally, which was later cancelled by a defence committee meeting.

WC: Most of the charges so far have been for threatening behaviour, burglary, and so on, but I've come across one serious charge where a mother said that her son had been charged with arson, which carries a very heavy sentence.

The background to the charge is quite interesting: this guy claimed that what happened was that he was driving down Brixton Hill and his car ran out of petrol, so he grabbed a can to go down to the petrol station.

The petrol pump attendant said he couldn't sell him any petrol in a can because of what was happening unless he had police permission. He was going back to his car when a police van drove up, so he asked for permission to fill the can up.

The police said, jump in and we'll take you to the petrol station. In fact they took him to the police station and charged him with arson. The police have admitted since that the petrol tank in his car was empty, so that case is developing.

Black, white and all ages have been charged so far, even some social workers. There was a National Front guy arrested and in court he said that he saw the police giving some black kids a hard time, he went over and got arrested for threatening behaviour.

SC: Is bail being given?

WC: Bail has been given in most cases, but sureties have sometimes been high — £1,000 for the arson charge, around £250 for burglary.

The defence committee is not sure how many are still inside. We have the names of 180, but the police have refused to give us the rest. Most people are out on bail, but there are still a few inside.

SC: What is the relationship between the defence committee and the defendants?

WC: It's not formal. Defendants are coming to the committee for support and the committee is working closely with the Brixton law centre: most people want to be represented by defence committee supported lawyers.

There'll be a full meeting on 22 April when the defence committee will be elected by the defendants, their parents and the local community. This is when the formal links will be established.

WC: At the meeting on Wednesday of last week a decision was taken to exclude whites. Does the defence committee see itself as black only?

WC: At the meeting you refer to, there were over 200 people there, and the vote to exclude whites was carried by only 22 to 17.

There is an element which wants to exclude whites, while others see the committee as defending the community of Brixton — black and white.

Quite a few of the defendants are white. The meeting on 22 April is open to everyone.

SC: What practical tasks do we need to take up?

WC: What needs to be done is to build support for any action taken by the local community.

If a demonstration or rally is called in the future, it is necessary for all the labour movement to build for it, to lobby local councillors and MPs in support of it.

What happened in Brixton concerns all working class people. It is not just Brixton which is affected.

The issue should be raised in trades councils, trade union branches, and Labour Parties. The action of the police and their continued presence must be condemned.

The defence committee has made a decision not to cooperate with the Scarman inquiry, but if we decide to call a community-labour movement inquiry we will want the support of everyone.

There is a need to hold a demonstration or rally in defence of Brixton. Of course, we need money to defend those charged; and financial support is needed for the day-to-day work of the defence committee.

Donations and messages of support can be sent to: Brixton Defence Cttee, c/o Brixton Community Law Centre, 506 Brixton Rd, London SW9.

BRIXTON

Drop the charges Police off the streets Boycott Scarman

What has happened in Brixton since the weekend of street battles between the community and the police? **JOAN TWELVES** and **GREG TUCKER**, Socialist Challenge supporters in Vauxhall Constituency Labour Party, spoke to Ted Knight, leader

'An army of occupation...'

'MY cabinet colleagues don't like you — they would not trust Lambeth council with any money. If I went back to them now and said I had conceded and given money to Lambeth they would have me certified.'

So said Michael Heseltine in response to a request for aid from Ted Knight, Labour leader of Lambeth council.

Having set up the Scarman inquiry, the Tories washed their hands of any responsibility for the social conditions in Brixton or

police activity there. Their only concern is how best to deploy the police to keep Brixton quiet.

As Ted Knight told Socialist Challenge: 'Since the events of the weekend, the police presence has been maintained at tremendous strength and one can describe it as an army of occupation.'

'They now have surveillance equipment being set up around the streets of Lambeth, which gives the impression of a concentration camp atmosphere.'

This has gone hand-in-

of Lambeth council; to Sue a single black parent living in Brixton, and to Winston Castello, joint convenor of the Brixton Defence Committee, about the events and their aftermath. They also give their own views on the situation

hand with a series of police raids, numerous arrests and the watching of hospital casualty departments in the area. An example of this police activity was shown on the council estates.

Stockwell Park Estate was twice invaded by 250 riot police who ordered people into their homes and arrested those who hesitated or didn't live on the estate.

A week after the riots you can still feel the tension on the streets. The slightest noise which a week ago

would have been ignored, leads to heads turning and a feeling of anticipation.

The only concession from the police is that they say they would restrict the use of sirens over the Easter weekend!

But for all this the community has not been cowed. Everyone is united in Brixton black and white, on the need to withdraw the police from the area. People on the streets on the weekend of 12-13 April gained a sense of power they won't give up.

'Enthusiasm

AT A meeting of Socialist Challenge supporters over the Easter weekend, TONI GORTON asked several people about the response of co-workers to the Brixton events.

Pam, who works in a small tools factory in Sheffield, said: 'Nobody seemed to be very surprised. They saw it as all being against the police.'

'People said things like "the police asked for it", and started telling stories about experiences they had had with the police fitting them up on false charges.'

John is in engineering in Manchester: 'The older white workers' response was that there was a need for new riot police — every other country had them.'

'There was discussion about whether Enoch Powell was right in his forecasts — but few seemed to agree with Powell's solutions.'

'The big thing that influenced people was that white youths had been seen fighting along with black.'

'A solitary black worker said "great!" Black and white workers had real fears about what happened and I found that giving a socialist explanation which linked up the role of the police and government to the social conditions helped quite a lot.'

Riots

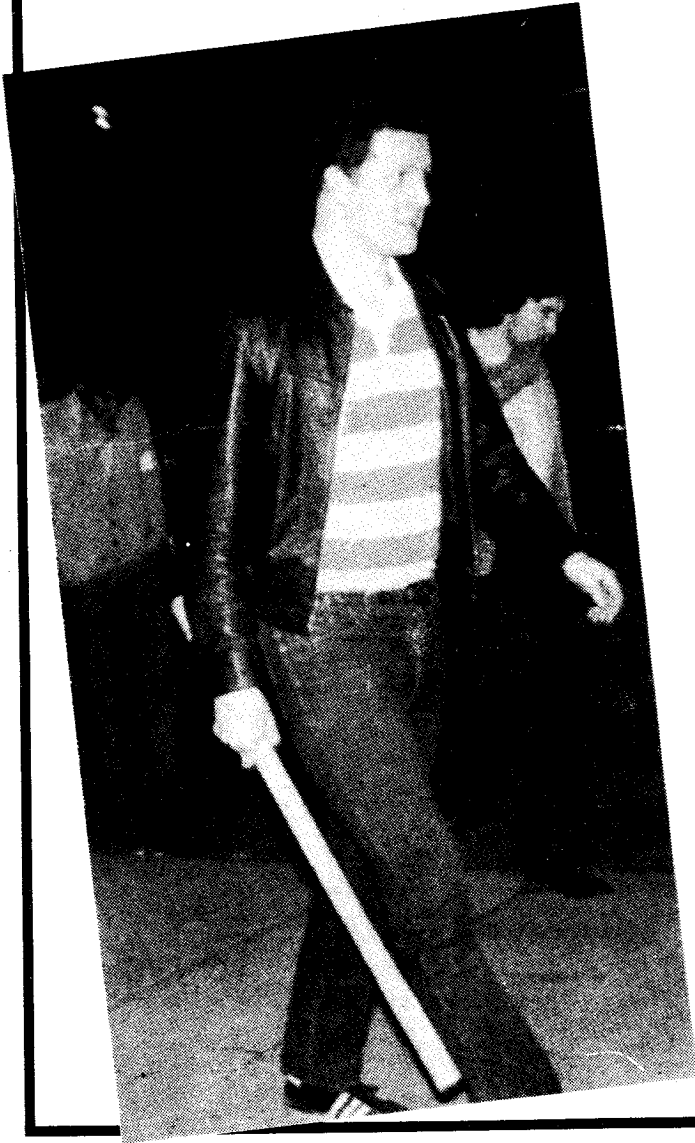
Ray had an hour-long discussion in his all white Public Employees' union branch in London: 'People were discussing to what degree the decaying inner-city areas were responsible or the acts of the police.'

'They wondered, if there would be more riots. Some said that the youths were scroungers because they had carefully not burned down the Social Security building.'

'There wasn't any overt racist response.'



Police and 'unofficial' weapons



ACCORDING to last week's *Now!* magazine, this is a photograph of a plain-clothes police officer 'on patrol in Brixton with a baton'.

Whatever a baton may be, this certainly doesn't look much like a conductor's wand. It does resemble a pick-axe handle.

Either way, it certainly isn't official Metropolitan Police equipment.

It is almost exactly two years since Blair Peach was killed in Southall.

Lord Justice Bridge said in the Appeal Court: 'There is reason to suspect that Blair Peach died from a blow to the head struck by a police officer with an unauthorised and potentially lethal weapon.'

Although no one died in Brixton on the weekend of 12-13 April, police were seen on a number of occasions using truncheons and other implements to batter blacks and whites.

23 April 1979

It is useful to look back at the National Council of Civil Liberties' report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry into the events in Southall on 23 April 1979.

In 1974 assistant commissioner Gerrard of Scotland Yard gave evidence to the Scarman inquiry into Red Lion Square in which he quoted the instructions then current:

'Truncheons are supplied to the police to protect themselves if violently attacked. In using

them officers should aim at the arms and legs as those parts of the body are least likely to suffer injury and avoid the head as much as possible.

Offensive

'The use of the truncheon is to be resorted to in extreme cases, when all other efforts to arrest have failed and a prisoner is likely to escape through the officer being ill-used or overpowered.

'In every instance where a truncheon is used it is to be submitted to the station officer for inspection as soon as possible.'

The NCCL report goes on to say: 'In the absence of any statement by the Metropolitan Police or the Home Secretary suggesting that these instructions have been changed, we take them as the standard by which police use of truncheons on 23 April should be judged.'

The evidence we have received leads to the inescapable conclusion that on 23 April, police officers used their truncheons, not for self-protection but as offensive weapons against people in the crowd.

Never

'In evidence to the Scarman inquiry, assistant commissioner Gerrard said that, in 28 years' service, he had never seen a

long truncheon used by a police officer.

'When asked if they could be dangerous weapons, he agreed that "they must be very effective" and that an officer using the long truncheon would be liable to injure somebody quite badly.

'If the instructions given to the Metropolitan Police concerning the use of short and long truncheons have been changed, then MPs and the public should be told what the new instructions are and what justification there is for the changes.'

SPG

Following the Southall events, the following weapons were taken from lockers of the Special Patrol Group officers who had been on duty on 23 April.

Four police issue truncheons; a leather encased truncheon — approximately one foot long with a knotted thong at the end; a metal truncheon which was encased in leather of about eight inches in length with a very flexible handle and a lead weight in the end; a wooden pickaxe handle; a sledge hammer; an American-type beat truncheon which was almost two feet in length; leather whip; two cases openers or jemmies; a white bone handled knife with a long blade case; two crowbars about three feet in length; a piece of wood about three feet long, two inches in diameter.

Deptford... no more cover up!

By Toni Gorton

ALL along the police investigating the Deptford fire in which 13 black youth died have denied that there was any sign that the fire was the result of a racist attack.

But new evidence will be presented to this week's inquiry into the fire by the Metropolitan Police Scientific branch to challenge this assumption. Apparently on the Sunday morning after the fire police found in the garden an aluminium tube containing traces of sodium chlorate and sugar — a highly explosive mixture.

Spokespeople for the police consistently told the press that nothing had been found which could have been a container for a firebomb — they lied and hid this evidence from the public for almost three months. What else have they hidden?

The New Cross Massacre Action Committee fears a cover-up and is asking for support for a picket of the inquest.

Picket and attend the Coroners Court
County Hall London SE1
from 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
21-24 April

For leaflets and further information contact the New Cross Massacre Action Committee, 74 Shakespeare Road, London SE24 OPT. Tel 01-737 2268.



'Police presence has been maintained at tremendous strength'

tinged with apprehension'

Mick works in the almost all-black engine plant at Ford Dagenham: 'My co-workers were euphoric over Brixton.

'It really surprised me that even some of the right-wing West Indian workers were 100 per cent behind the youth.'

'They'd obviously had experience of their own children being harassed by the police. One Asian couldn't believe it was happening in Britain that people were actually fighting back.

'He saw it in the context of the growing number of racist attacks and police inactivity on them.'

'Asian workers are very conscious right now of the Nationality Bill and a couple of very political Asians linked the Brixton uprising with the election of Bobby Sands — two great victories in one week.'

Doreen, who works in an East London food pro-

cessing plant, said that 'surprisingly the main sentiment seemed to be that if people will go to the lengths of burning down pubs and shops, which is very dangerous for them, there is something obviously wrong.'

'Two older white women said when no black workers were there that the blacks should be deported.'

'The workers generally felt that the real problem is unemployment and unless we get Thatcher out that what we would have is Brixtons everywhere.'

Considered

John is in GEC in Preston: 'There was an initial racist reaction from sections of white workers.'

'Then, as the facts came out, there was a more considered reaction — that Brixton was a community uprising and was due to the government's austerity programme.'

'There are few black

workers in GEC but those I talked to were quietly euphoric, tinged with apprehension.'

'The local Labour Party reacted by bringing forward the date of its rally with Alex Lyons.'

Sharp

'In the North-west there is a growing trend to black fightback. The victory of Anwar Ditta has been very significant and I think there will be very big support for the demonstration against the deportation of Nasira Begum.'

Frank is a fitter in a East London manufacturing plant: 'There were very sharp confrontations between the younger and older white workers' he says.

'The younger ones taking the side of the Brixton youths. The black workers didn't say a lot except they were obviously "walking tall". One said jokingly that he was going down to Brixton to do some shopping.'



Black youth in Finsbury Park, Wanstead and Ealing fight police on Easter weekend

'What happened that weekend was a very positive thing'

Sue, a black single parent who has lived in Brixton all her life, describes what it's like.

MY 12-year-old son has been questioned by police in the road. A few times during the past several months I've been spoken to in the streets by police.

They asked me how many men I had last night and on another occasion one copper asked me if I knew where my little boy was and then simply walked away. I was very frightened until I got home.

These sort of things don't really bother us on their own. But put all these things together with no jobs, great difficulty in getting things on hire purchase, schools which prepare our children for the worst jobs and the dole, then and only then — if you really try to understand the effect of this over a period of years, then no-one will be able to ask why the rebellion happened last weekend.

Only why did it take so long in coming and why did it end after such a short time!

I didn't participate although I spent the better part of the weekend in the streets. It seemed like the whole of Brixton was out in the streets.

We felt that finally we were collectively saying to the government 'Enough is enough' and if you want to continue with harassment and intimidation and police violence against us; if you continue giving us the back end of everything you have to give; if you constantly call us bad names, then this is what you will get in return.

I heard some man on the box during the fighting saying that we were only burning down our own homes and shops. Well, the best thing that could happen to most of the place is to burn it down!

The telly man never really thought about it, but at least now some sun will get into the streets. It's good your paper is here asking us about last weekend. I want to tell your readers that last weekend was a festival, not a riot.

The youth of Brixton — black and white — now know that pubs, banks, shops, and police cars will burn if you put a match to them. We all are peaceful around here, but we are capable of being provoked.

What happened last week was a very positive thing, but now we all around here must get together and fight for what we need and want.

We must stop the terrible police harassment and encourage people to organise themselves so that everytime some copper does something we don't like we will have the muscle to demand something else.

The problem with Brixton is that the people here have no power. Why don't the rich people over in Chelsea burn down their shops — I'll tell you — it's because they have what they want and have a government that will give them more.

At this time the most important thing we should be doing is to make sure that all those hundreds who were arrested last week be discharged. As far as the people of Brixton are concerned they did nothing criminal.

'We don't know many people who are working'

MRS Thatcher says that Brixton couldn't have been caused by unemployment. But she and her class don't have to face life on the dole. Valerie Coultas talked to two people who do. FREDDIE and VAL live in Handsworth in Birmingham. If their frustration and anger is anything to go by the Tories may soon face the sort of militant hostility that has emerged in Brixton right across the country.

Freddie: I'm a welder by trade and two years ago I would've had no problem. But now with welding as such there's no one taking on any welders. I've done all different jobs but now there's just no work at places I've worked before. Some firms no longer exist.

Val: I've only ever worked in factories and shops, so they're the only jobs I could do. When you go in and ask it's no every time.

The only place they seem to be employing women is in the sweatshops as machinists, doing piecework for under a £1 an hour sometimes. Some jobs on offer are for £40 per week for a split shift, hotel work and the like.

I could've taken a job a few months ago. It was working 42 hours a week in a little factory inspecting other people's work, putting up the orders and packaging things to send out for delivery, doing a bit of spraying. I would've walked out of there with £32 a week after tax!

The YOPS courses for young people are a con too. There's a shop down the road where young people were doing up the shop for six months.

Then they got chopped. One girl wanted to stay but they said she had to leave. Now there's other kids up



there. They seem to get their money's worth out of the kids and then employ more youngsters for cheap labour. Ninety-nine per cent of them end up on the dole again. At £23.50 a week they're almost having to pay to go to work.

Freddie: I have to claim for Val and her son Dean because although she worked at Ladbroke's it was only part-time and she's not entitled to unemployment benefit because they say she didn't pay the full stamp. I get £54.03 per week. That has to cover all outgoings, rent, heating, lighting, clothes, food.

Val: You get bored doing nothing all day. We've always worked regular and that suits our temperament. You get bored sitting around. You have to have money to do the

simplest things. If you go shopping you've got to think about how much you're spending all the time.

I have to shop locally, I can't afford to go to Perry Barr or into town very often because of the extra cost. I suppose in the summer I can walk.

Freddie: You become isolated from the mainstream. There's two working classes. Those employed and those unemployed.

Val: We don't know many people who are working. Look at Dean. He needs shorts, swimming trunks, clothes. How can you manage on £54!

Freddie: The unions just shouldn't allow some of the jobs to be advertised, non-union companies should be thrown out of government agencies. So many people administering the YOPS and STEP programmes are

members of unions themselves — unions like NUPE and NALGO — and they're not offering any alternative to these government programmes, given people work on a temporary basis at a ridiculously low level of pay.

Lord Thorneycroft comes across on television saying that Tory policies are the only way of rescuing the country. But once again it's the workers that are footing the bill for the rescue.

Val: They still live OK. They get the pay rises, the slap-up meals, the chauffeur driven cars, bottles of champagne for breakfast.

What was it that amateur jockey drank — Buck's Fizz, champagne and orange juice. Look at how much they're spending on the royal wedding. Twenty eight and a half thousand on an engagement ring.

How much is her dress or the whole wedding going to cost?

Freddie: It's political the wedding. It's being used as a diversion. A royal marriage in the summer time diverts people's attention from things like unemployment.

Val: I'm against royalty altogether. The expense and the hangers on. They live a very nice life for doing nothing.

Freddie: Once upon a time British industry was to an extent in the hands of British capitalists.

What's happening in Britain is a reflection of the capitalist system worldwide. It seems that the multinationals have got such control over the economy that they exercise political control.

While we've got a Tory government in power they'll continue to support this type of economic system.

What we've got to do in England is get the Tories out of power. I'd like to see a socialist system coming directly into power — but the alternative to the Tories now is to build the Labour Party and ensure that it fights for socialist principles.

The best bet is to get behind people like Benn and ensure that a Labour Party under him is a Labour Party that calls for more state ownership of the vital parts of the British economy — the land, building, banks, all the major industries — thereby generating employment and wealth for those people who do the real work in those industries.

I support Benn in fighting Healey for deputy leader of the Labour Party but when he's in the leadership will democracy still be practised? You can support Benn but you have to fight to ensure that he reflects sections of the working class that fought behind him.

The People's March for Jobs will be a success in showing massive opposition to Thatcher's economic policies. The miners and the water workers showed what strongly organised sections can do. I feel strongly that the TUC, which comprises almost entirely the moderates in the trade union, haven't fought when there were jobs and I don't see them leading the fight when people are unemployed.

Val: I wish they would.

Freddie: The value of the march is that the unemployed people realise they're not isolated, that they are thousands and those thousands are willing to protest.

Val: It shows the want to get the Tories out.

Support grows for jobs march in Birmingham...

SUPPORT for the People's March for Jobs is being built in every part of the country and among every section of the labour movement.

VALERIE COULTAS, an unemployed teacher, who has been sponsored to march from Liverpool to Birmingham by the TGWU 5/909 branch, Rover Solihull, describes the preparation that is being made.

Co-ordination of the events around the march, which arrives in Birmingham on 18 May, is being organised at a city level, by the Birmingham People's March Committee. This includes delegates from the unions, the Labour Party and from women's youth and black people's organisations.

There are local committees in the areas through which the march is passing. It will go through the heart of Handsworth, an area with one of the highest levels of black unemployment in the country.

On the Handsworth local committee we have been organising publicity for the march. We are planning militant action to highlight the high level of youth unemployment and the way young people are exploited as cheap labour on the Youth Opportunity Schemes.

They are thrown back on the dole without having been taught any skills.

Birmingham Young CND will be taking up this aspect of unemployment and is organising a large demonstration. I'm a member of the Birmingham feeder

I am on the Birmingham women's organising committee for the march. We are holding a feeder march for women's right to jobs.

There have been vigorous debates on the committee. Members of the Communist Party opposed carrying a national women's banner on the march, because they think it would detract from the broad appeal of the march.

They do not approve of sales of socialist newspapers for the same reason.

Women's rights days on the main march are being held in the North-west, the Midlands, and the South-east regions. This will unite women in the fight for the right to work. Equally important is the fact that the march is going through areas of high black unemployment in

Birmingham, Southall, and Brixton.

In Birmingham we are producing 20,000 copies of a leaflet aimed at women in housing estates and shopping centres. We are also producing a special leaflet for women workers and shop stewards arguing for strike action on 18 May.

This has caused a big debate on the committee. It was agreed that workplaces which didn't strike should take extended lunch breaks to greet the march.

The solidarity tour of the women from the Lee Jeans occupation to Birmingham and the possibility

Greet the People's March for Jobs National march and rally against unemployment

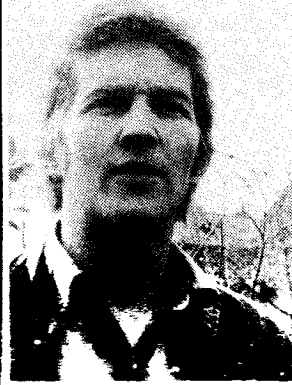
organised by TUC
Sunday 31 May
Assemble noon at Speakers Corner, Hyde Park for march to Trafalgar Square

LIVERPOOL TO LONDON 1-31 MAY
ON THE MARCH AGAINST THE
TORIES

of women from this occupation and from the Royal Pride strike in Manchester being on the march

gives it the vital dimension of highlighting the effect of Thatcher's policies on women.

... and Manchester and London



Jeff West

Jeff West, secretary of Stockport Boilermakers Union:

'ON 4 May, May Day, the march will go through Salford. We will be marching from Eccles to Salford to greet the march.'

'The next day a reception has been organised at Manchester Town Hall. The Manchester Confed has called factory meetings in support of the march on the Wednesday, 6 May.'

'When the march leaves Manchester we want workplace delegations to send it on its way. GEC Openshaw has

already agreed to send a delegation of 50 people.'

'The same afternoon the march arrives at Macvities in Stockport, we are organising a demonstration here to greet the march.'

Andy Lilley, secretary of Ealing Trades Council and a member of the engineering union AUEW:

'WE'VE set up a North and West London Committee representing all the major trade unions and Trades Councils in the area to organise the activities and support for the march.'

'For us the main event will be the march from Brent to Southall on Friday 29 May.'

'Calls have gone out to every engineering factory in the area for industrial action on the day. We're looking for big support from the Heathrow airport and factories like Ford Langley and Hoovers.'

'The most enthusiastic support so far has come from the black community in Southall where a joint committee of trade union and community organisations has been set up with regular meetings of over 40 delegates. 'This will be a big boost to

the fightback of blacks who are suffering the worst affects of redundancies and attacks from racists and fascists as well.'

'We were originally hoping for London wide action to welcome the march on the Friday. But from the start we've had an uphill battle against full time union officials and some members of the Communist Party who seem determined to have a low key, local event.'

'But we'll still be pushing for the biggest possible turnout on Friday and for the national demonstration.'



Andy Lilley

Photos: BOB MURPHY (Socialist Challenge)

A PERVERSE jury has decided that Barrie Prosser, the prisoner no one kicked to death, was unlawfully killed.

What a strange verdict after being told by prison officers that nothing of the sort took place. Even the stipendary magistrate decided that there was enough evidence to commit your friendly screw, Melvyn Jackson, for trial.

The campaign against the Plod on the Beat and the Screw in the Nick is evidently reaching scandalous proportions.

They're fair cops, guv

Often a kind-hearted prison warden or police officer tries to help some prisoner get a good night's sleep. Just because they bang the prisoner's head against the wall or kick his testicles is no reason for persecuting the forces of law and order.

They are only doing their best, and there is a shortage of sleeping pills due to health service cut backs.

If all the allegations about police cruelty were true, the jails would be so full of coppers that there would be no room for all the people they have 'fitted up'. This explains why the police investigate and uphold only two per cent of the complaints made against them.

They would do more, but so much of their time is taken up with necessary

duties like re-cycling dope they have impounded, and arresting black youth on 'sus' charges that their days are quite full.

Assault

The police are often unfairly charged with not following up cases of alleged police assault by arranging medical examinations.

This is not because

Lowdown

they want to cover things up, but because the police have a real sense of public duty and want to keep costs down and do not like spending money on doctors.

Unfortunately the enemies of law and order will not give up. They have pointed to the fact that last year more than twice the number of people died in custody than in 1979. This is nothing but a campaign

of disruption against decent police officers.

The so-called victims went out of their way to get themselves arrested, and then provocatively died in custody in order to smear the police.

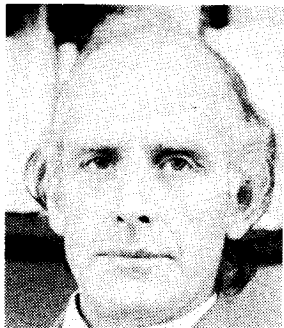
Discredit

Barrie Prosser obviously took a leaf out of their book. His stomach was ruptured as was his oesophagus; he had

severely bruised feet, legs, elbow, groin, hands, hips, face, eyes, and anus.

He had managed to achieve all this using only a prison mattress and a plastic drinking mug. Diabolical ingenuity knows no bounds when people are determined to discredit our prison service.

Readers are asked to send information and short articles which they think could be used in this column, to: Bob Pennington, *Lowdown*, Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1.



Tom Litterick Memorial Fund

Tom Litterick died in 1980. Between 1974 and 1979 Tom was Labour MP for Birmingham Selly Oak. He rapidly established himself as one of the few left-wing Labour MPs who could almost invariably be guaranteed to line up on the right side, including on 'sensitive' issues like the Prevention of Terrorism Act, which he constantly voted against.

Selly Oak CLP have established a memorial fund in his memory. Before he died he was closely associated with the work of CND; the memorial fund will be used to help the activities of CND in the Birmingham area.

Cheques/postal orders should be made out to Tom Litterick Memorial Fund, and sent to Selly Oak CLP, c/o 10 Green-end Rd, Moseley, Birmingham 13.

Tribune: will the real lefts please stand up

By Davy Jones

DESPITE the massive campaign by the trade union and Labour bureaucrats to prevent his candidacy, Tony Benn insists that he will stand for the deputy leader of the Labour Party. And support for his candidacy from the rank and file of the labour movement is building up.

The leadership election has thrown the *Tribune* group into chaos with leading 'left wingers' like Eric Heffer appealing for Benn to think again.

At last week's *Tribune* meeting a three hour heated debate took place over Benn's decision to stand. A majority of the 50 members present appeared to oppose Benn including Stan Orme who demanded that the meeting vote on Benn's decision.

Meeting chairperson Ian Mikardo refused to call a vote while Benn and Reg Race suggested a name vote of all those present at the meeting.

Tribune MPs who opposed Benn included Robin Cook, Joan Evans, Stan Newens, Norman Buchan, Jeff Rooker, Jack Straw, John Silkin, John Prescott and Eric Heffer. In a statement circulated to the *Tribune* meeting Heffer argued:

'There is a real danger that the left as well as the Labour Party can be divided. That should be avoided, because in the long run, that can only do harm to the party.'

Joan Maynard MP, a supporter of Benn, answered this criticism in a *Tribune* article as follows: 'The majority of Labour MPs have never hesitated to be divisive

MPs supporting Tony Benn

Norman Atkinson (Tottenham), Ron Brown (Edinburgh Leith), Bob Cryer (Keighley), Martin Flannery (Sheffield Hillsborough), Ray Fletcher (Ilkeston), Stuart Holland (Lambeth Vauxhall), Robert Hughes (Aberdeen North), Robert Litherland (Manchester Central), David Marshall (Glasgow Shettleston), Joan Maynard (Sheffield Brightside), William McElvey (Kilmarnock), Andrew McMahon (Glasgow Govan), Bob McTaggart (Glasgow Central), Michael Meacher (Oldham West), Ian Mikardo (Bethnal Green and Bow), Reg Race (Wood Green), Jo Richardson (Barking), Allan Roberts (Bottle), Ernie Roberts (Hackney North and Stoke Newington), Ernie Ross (Dundee West), Dennis Skinner (Bolsover), Stan Thorne (Preston South), Michael Welsh (Don Valley), and David Winnick (Walsall North).

when it suited them... in the weeks before the Wembley conference Michael Foot and other parliamentary leaders were stalking the country telling us that we must accept the decision "whatever the outcome".

'Yet within days of the conference coming to a decision which they did not like these very same people were declaring their determination to overturn it at the next conference in October. So much for party unity.'

The Labour left has scored a number of important victories over the last year. The right wing is on the counter-attack spearheaded by Labour Solidarity and tacitly supported by Michael Foot.

The reaction of the majority of the so-called 'lefts' in *Tribune* is not only dangerous but suicidal. To buckle under the right-wing counter-attack will leave the door open for the right to roll back all the gains of the past period.

Militants inside the Labour Party should rally to support Benn's candidacy as an excellent opportunity to

The following appeal is circulating inside the labour movement in support of Benn's candidacy:

We give full support to the candidacy of Tony Benn for deputy leader of the Labour Party.

We believe that the campaign offers the best opportunity to discuss and organise to win policies which the labour movement needs in the face of the Tory attacks.

We call for every branch, committee, and conference of the trade unions and Labour Party to discuss the election for deputy leader of the Labour Party.

Benn for deputy leader of the Labour Party

● Where possible pass an emergency resolution in your union or Labour party branch supporting Benn's candidature and committing the union conference delegates to support him.

● Invite Benn to speak at union conferences on his platform and campaign.

● Amend labour movement conference resolutions which call for support for unilateralism, withdrawal from the EEC, for the 35 hour week and against the cuts, to add: 'Therefore this body supports the campaign of Benn for deputy leader of the Labour Party.'

● Start the discussion in the workplaces and Labour branches on the policies of the candidates in the Labour leadership battle.

● Start the debate on bringing union democracy into line with Labour Party democracy, especially in relation to the election of the leadership.

● Question all Labour candidates for national and local elections on their position on Benn's platform and campaign.

develop a class struggle movement to kick out the Tories and to fight for socialist policies. The *Tribune* group, riddled with supporters of Labour Solidarity and other weak-kneed 'lefts', is proving an obstacle to building such a movement.

Shopworkers should stay with 40-30-30

By Chris Jones, Bolton USDAW, in a personal capacity

THE Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) holds its annual delegate meeting from 26-29 April. The central debate at the conference will be the election of the Labour leadership.

USDAW proposed the famous 40-30-30 formula adopted by Labour's special conference in January. Any reversal of that policy at the USDAW conference would open the door to the right wing throughout the Labour Party to step up their campaign against the 40-30-30 formula.

The victory of the USDAW resolution at the special conference caused the right wing union leadership immense embarrassment. In their eyes USDAW is a moderate union and should stay so

in the future.

To find themselves allied with the most left wing members of the Labour Party separated them from their moderate friends in other unions and upset the moderates within the union.

Options

Resolutions on the leadership elections to this conference outline three options: to stay with the 40-30-30 formula, to go for 33-33-33, or to support one member one vote. The union executive has yet to

say which option it supports.

No doubt it would have preferred to back Michael Foot's 50-25-25 formula but no resolutions to that effect have reached the conference agenda!

Tony Benn will speak at the eve-of-conference rally organised by the Broad Left in the union. The rally is an excellent opportunity to win delegates to defence of the 40-30-30 formula, as proposed in the Manchester Co-op Wholesale Society branch conference resolution.

Furthermore it can help build support for the candidature of Tony Benn for deputy leader of the Labour Party. A resolution from Swansea Smiths

Food branch to support Foot and Benn for leader and deputy leader should be supported.

Victory

Many USDAW members think their union is weak and inadequate. A victory for the right wing at this conference will make it much harder for the left to continue its fight to build a strong, more democratic union.

Sid Tierney has been re-elected president with an increased majority over Broad Left candidate Audrey Wise. Shopworkers should not allow the right wing to follow up this victory at the USDAW conference by overturning the 40-30-30 policy.



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Support for Benn is building up across the country



Black labourers from Bophuto Tswana wait for a train to work. Their earnings are on average a quarter of those of white workers

Controlling black workers

THE South African government's recent decision to allow black trade unions to operate in the country is one of the few definite changes that supporters of the regime can point to.

There is no denying the importance of this development, not so much because of what it concedes as what it indicates about the growing power of the black working class.

The building of black unions was started long before 'reform' was ever heard of.

Since 1973 strikes and other forms of industrial action have won important material gains for black workers, although the huge gap between white and black workers' wages remains.

There are now more than 100,000 workers in independent black trade unions covering all the important industries. But because of the rigid restrictions imposed by the government's trade union laws none has been able to register and take advantage of its supposed benefits.

Meanwhile strikes are dealt with as before — police attacks on strikers, and imprisonment and deportation of strike leaders, are everyday events.

The government's aim in changing the law on black

The wages of white workers employed in the same jobs as blacks are on average about twice as high as those paid to blacks.

But whites also benefit from getting the best jobs while black workers are kept at the bottom. So average white earnings overall are more than four times those of blacks.

unions is made plain in the following quotation from a leaflet put out by the National Party in a recent by-election:

(The change in union law is) to the advantage of all South Africa because:

- The creation of more

The white trade union view

THE activities of black trade unions will inevitably extend beyond purely labour matters and are bound to spill over into the political and social spheres, leading to untenable pressures.

Black trade unions are more likely to make unreasonable demands than existing trade unions, with detrimental effects on the position of those persons who at present enjoy trade union rights and on the economy in general.

The admission of blacks to registered trade unions will result in these unions being swamped with concomitant erosion of the vested rights of other groups who at present enjoy registered trade union rights.'

— Arie Nieuwoudt, president of South Africa's largest trade union federation, the all-white South African Confederation of Labour.

skilled job opportunities increases the growth rate.

- An increased growth rate gives South Africa an economic power base in the military struggle for survival.

- Labour unrest will be

In 1980 the lowest wage paid by British employers in South Africa for a working week of some 45 hours was:

British Petroleum, £25; British Leyland, £24; ICI, £23; Johnson & Firth Brown £20; Rio Tinto Zinc, £19.50; Shell, £13; Rentokil £12.

restricted to the minimum.

- The abolition of statutory work reservation will stimulate the influx of foreign capital ... Since it became known that the government accepted the recommendations of the Wiehahn Report in principle, more than R500,000,000 has entered the country...

- The position of the white worker among others will be protected more efficiently — statutory work reservation protected only one out of every 200 white workers...

Twenty-seven black trade unions which exist already and have a membership of some 70,000 are now being effectively brought under the discipline and control of the law.

This includes: a ban on political activities; control over their membership; access to their constitutions; access to their financial statements and balance sheets, and control over their funds by a state inspector...

It is not true that white workers will have to make way for blacks, nor that whites and non-whites will, necessarily, have to share facilities. Make sure of the facts and vote National for the sake of progress and stability.

The sun also se

SOUTH Africa's 'whites only' electorate goes to the polls next Wednesday to choose a new government.

There is little doubt that prime minister Pieter Botha's National Party, which at the moment holds 148 out of 176 parliamentary seats, will be returned to office, where it has been for the past 23 years.

The Nationalists have established a solid political base among whites by building up a system which has assured great prosperity for the white minority by virtue of the ruthless repression that is needed to hold down the exploited black majority.

That policy will certainly prove popular at the polls. But the apartheid system is meeting with steadily mounting opposition at home and abroad.

Since the Soweto uprising of 1976, Botha and the leading faction in the National Party have been trying to shore up apartheid by 'fine tuning' of the system, the better to deal with criticism and opposition.

Inevitably this has provoked unrest among some whites, worried that it might be the slippery slope they have already seen Zimbabwe go down.

There has been a growth of right-wing political groups, ranging from far-right terrorist groups, through the die-hard Reconstructed National Party, to the right wing within Botha's own party.

But sections of big business and 'liberal' white opinion, centred mainly in the opposition Progressive Federal Party, want Botha to carry his 'reform' of apartheid even further.

So far Botha and his supporters have been unable to decide what course to follow. They have announced some moves, such as the abolition of the most flagrant racist symbols — separate park benches and public toilets for different 'racial' groups, for example — and the restricted recognition of black trade unions. But the National Party has back-tracked in the face of criticism; a hesitation which has proved worse than doing nothing.

So Botha has decided to call this election (18 months early) to decide whether he can afford to take further measures or whether he must hold the line at what has been done so far.

Despite all the talk of 'reform', very little has changed in South Africa for the black majority — nor will it so long as policies are decided by gangs of white politicians squabbling over how best to defend white interests.

Only the destruction of apartheid and the establishment of democratic majority rule can lead to real changes in the lives of the black people of South Africa.

Life in apartheid's cities

THE three million black workers and their families who live and work in South Africa's cities are supposed to be the main beneficiaries of the recent 'reforms'.

But anyone who strolls around one of the 'townships' into which the black population is compulsorily herded would find the government's claims hard to believe.

Take the most famous and biggest of the townships: Soweto, on the outskirts of Johannesburg. It has an 'official' population of 1.4m. But everyone knows that the real population is much higher — at least 2m.

The poverty in the rural areas drives many people into the cities, even though their presence there is illegal and they are subject to imprisonment and deportation back to the countryside.

Until recently booming South African industry was eager for more workers and 'illegal' migrants often looked attractive: their insecure position meant that they were unlikely to insist on higher wages or stick up for their rights.

So employers didn't ask too many questions. Each year between 100,000 and 200,000 workers are arrested and tried for being in the cities illegally. But a worker who works for only six months and has to serve six months in prison will still earn more than if he had remained in a rural area.

Soweto

So there are at least half a million people living beyond the official pale in Soweto, for whom no official provision is made.

The result is terrible overcrowding. Homes which according to government plans should house a family of four or five have on average seven people living in them. And



what houses!

Soweto has a few 'model' suburbs, built for the tiny black middle class and shown off internationally to prove how pleasant it is to be black in South Africa. But 98 per cent of Soweto's people live in what looks like a giant concentration camp — an institution which was invented in South Africa — by the British during the Boer war.

The typical home is a building some 20ft by 20ft divided into four rooms, one of which serves as a kitchen. The roof is made of asbestos sheeting and inside there is no ceiling. The floor is simply trodden earth or ashes.

Toilet facilities are outside. 'running water' is a tap out back. The front door is made of heavy steel; inside there are no doors at all. There is no electricity.

The two million people of Soweto are served by two cinemas and one (recently built) supermarket. Social life centres around state-run beer halls, from which the local authority gets 44 per cent of its revenues, and illegal 'she-beens'.

Everything but the simplest needs have to be bought in down-town Johannesburg, where white retailers now rely heavily on black customers.

For the 'privilege' of living

ts on white outh Africa

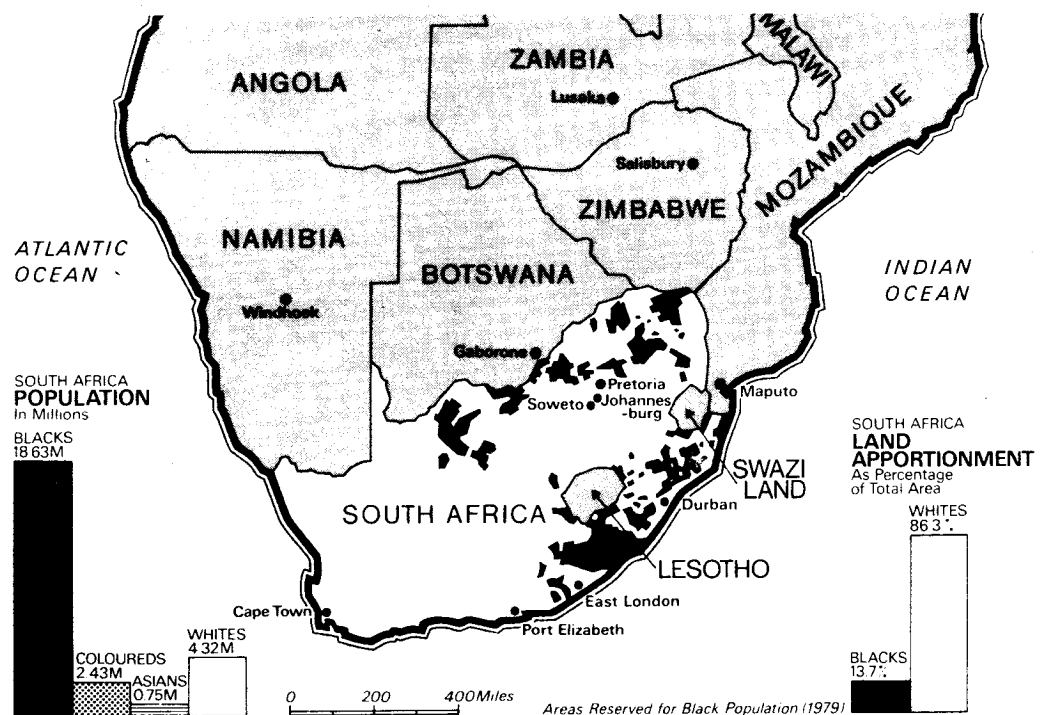
With a week to go to South Africa's whites-only elections, BRIAN SLOCOCK examines life for blacks in the giant concentration camp from which British companies are among the main beneficiaries



this bleak and oppressive situation of apartheid the average household has to pay a monthly rent of about £11, and this is now being put up to £17. In 1977 the average income of a Soweto household was put at £136 but 19 per cent of the population had an income of less than £75 a month — which meant that they were below the official subsistence level, and unable to suffer from malnutrition and the diseases it causes. Since then things have got worse as unemployment has been put to at least 20 per cent among black workers. A recent survey of three areas in Soweto found an average household income of

less than £80 a month and half of all households below the subsistence level. The recent rent increases will push this figure even higher. Forty thousand Sowetans live an even harsher life — they are 'migrants' who have found legal jobs in the city but are classed by the government as living in the rural 'homelands'. They are therefore unable to bring their families with them and have to live in ten vast barracks-like compounds. In some cases conditions are so bad in the countryside that migrant workers ignore the law and bring their families with them, sometimes setting up 'home' in a curtained-off cor-

ner of a dormitory. The poverty and harshness of life in Soweto breeds a high rate of violent crime — murder, rape, assaults and robbery. But the police rarely interest themselves in such matters; their job is to enforce the apartheid laws through military-style operations designed to catch illegal migrants or to shut down free-enterprise shebeens — to protect government revenues from the beer halls. This is what life is like in prime minister Botha's 'new' South Africa for the vast majority — just like it has always been and always will be as long as apartheid survives.



The area's reserved for South Africa's 18.6m black people are marked black on the map — the total area is 13.7 per cent of the country. South Africa's whites number 4.3m

The heartless 'homelands'

ACCORDING to the official apartheid doctrine, the urban areas of South Africa belong to the whites, while the large majority of black people have their 'homes' in rural areas assigned to them by the government.

This is supposed to justify the complete lack of rights for black people in 'white' South Africa, and all the repressive laws and policies restricting their movement and freedoms of speech and organisation. Some 3 million black people do still have one elementary right — to actually live in the cities where they were born or where they have lived and worked for decades. However, since 1968 no black person has been able to acquire these rights except by birth. Only someone born in the city or who has worked continuously for the same employer for ten years or lived legally in the city for 15 years continuously can qualify.

Contract

Since 1968 all black workers moving in from the countryside are classed as 'migrants' and are employed on contracts that expire after a year. Even if they are then rehired by the same boss (as very many are) they must first go back to their 'homeland' and take up a new contract. This is not considered as continuous employment or residence. Now even these slender rights are under attack. The government has recently come up with a new gimmick of giving the 'homelands' independence. Obviously 'independence' for bits of South Africa totally dependent on the South African government for finance and the South African army and police to keep unpopular governments in power is a sick joke.

But there's an even nastier joker in this pack — black people are assigned to homelands by 'tribal' origins, usually based on their names, and then lose their South African citizenship. Thus black people born and brought up in the city may suddenly find themselves citizens of Transkei, Venda, or Bophuthatswana, or some other place they have never seen and have no desire to go to. The moment they step out of line — by committing some crime like becoming unem-

Crime

ployed, for example — they can be deported back to their 'homeland'. One thing that the National Party leaders have insisted upon in this election campaign is that there will be no going back on the apartheid 'homelands' policy. So what is life like in these little pleasure spots marked out by Botha and his colleagues as the 'homes' for 20m black people? They are the bits of South Africa left over after the whites took what they wanted for the mines, cities, and profitable large-scale farming. Some of them contain potentially fertile farmland, but according to an official government commission set up in 1954, none of them, even if farmed with the most modern techniques, could support the population they are meant to. For example, one region in the Zulu 'homeland' Kwazulu could support 13,000 if fully developed. It then had a population of 30,000. Today 100,000 live there. The existing population of the homeland can only make a living by working in South

African cities and industries. In one 'independent' state, Venda, two-thirds of adult men earn their living in this way; 82 per cent of the Venda's population are women, children and old people. Only a fifth of the income earned by Venda's inhabitants, including food grown for family use came from any sort of work in Venda. In 1975 the average income per family earned in the Venda was £13 a month; including the earnings of migrants, the average family income was £52 a month. But migrants' incomes do not all come back to their families. Forced to live apart from their families, sometimes for years at a time, migrant workers often spend much of their earnings in the city or even break off ties altogether.

In 1978 the South Africa government spent £363 on the education of every white child.

In the same year it spent £27 for every black child in school.

spots marked out by Botha and his colleagues as the 'homes' for 20m black people?

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Isolate apartheid South Africa!

ONE important objective in Botha's 'reform' strategy is to change South Africa's international image and make it easier for the capitalist powers to co-operate economically and militarily with the racists.

With the election of Reagan, moves are already being made in this direction and the recent offensive to re-establish sporting relations with South Africa is a small taste of what's to come.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement has responded by launching a national campaign under the banner 'Isolate Apartheid South Africa — Sanctions Now!'

Activities planned so far include a national consumer boycott day of action on 25 April, a month of action against Shell and BP during June, and a series of regional trade union conferences.

There is also to be a conference on South Africa's nuclear plans, a national trade union week of action in October, and a Stop the Apartheid Bomb rally on 31 October.

Information from: Anti-Apartheid Movement, 89 Charlotte Street, London W1P 3DQ. Or from your local AA group.

Where you can buy Socialist Challenge

Scotland

ABERDEEN: SC sold Saturdays outside C&As — for more info ring Colin, 574060.
DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4-5.30pm, Friday 4-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.
EDINBURGH: SC sales every Thursday 4.15-5.15pm Bus Station, St. Andrews Square and bottom of Waverly steps 4.30-5.30; Saturday 11.30-2pm East End, Princes St. Also available from 1st May Books, or Better Books, Forrest Rd. More info on local activity from SC c/o Box 6, 1st May Bookshop, Candlemaker Row.
GLASGOW: SC sales every Thur/Fri 4.30-5.30pm at Central Station. Also available at Barretts, Byres Rd; Clyde Books, High St; Glasgow Bookshop Collective, Cresswell Lane; Hope Street Book Centre.
HAMILTON: SC on sale 8-11 every Sat, outside County Bar Almada Street, every Sat outside Safeway 1.30-5. For more info contact Paul, 17 Clyde View or John at 54 Elliot St, Hamilton.

Wales

CARDIFF: every Sat in Bute Town 10.30-12. Also available 1-0-8 Books, Salisbury Road.
NEWPORT: every Sat in town centre 11-12.30
SWANSEA: SC sales outside Co-op, Oxford St, 11am-1pm, Saturdays.

England

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 4.30-5.40, Sat 10-4. For more info phone 643-0669.
BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.
BRIGHTON: SC sales regularly every Sat outside Open Market, London Road, from 11am-1pm.
BRISTOL: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. More info from Box 2, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Montpellier, Bristol 6.
BURNLEY: SC on sale every Sat morning 11.30-1pm St James St.
CHESTERFIELD: SC supporters sell outside Boots, Marketplace, Saturdays 11.30am-12.30pm.
COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 461138.
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD: SC sales in Time Square, Saturdays 10.30-1.30pm.
HUDDERSFIELD: SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peaceworks.
LEEDS: Every Saturday 11-1 at Lands Lane Pedestrian Precinct and 10.30-12.00 at Headingly Arndale Centre. Corner Bookshop, Woodhouse Lane.

SC Events

ISLINGTON: Sat 25 April evening social, an African evening with African music, food and films. Ring Davy 01-359 8180 (day) or Erica (01-226 2600) for tickets.
HARINGEY: Tues 28 April, public meeting US Hands off El Salvador. Speakers from El Salvador Solidarity Campaign & Socialist Challenge &

What's Left

RATES for What's Left. 5p per word or £4 per col. inch. Deadline: noon Sat. prior to publication. Payment in advance. Phone 01-359 8180.

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ALL London Rally. Victory to the Hunger Strikers! Political status now! Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Thursday 30 April, 7pm. Speakers: Alastair Logan, John La Rose, Michael Holden, Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! Admission 50p ticket/unemployed, 75p at door.
'MARXISTS and the Irish Question' Public meeting of the Communist Workers Organisation, Sat 25 April, 2.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sp, London WC1.
MEN against sexism journal, Achilles Heel, 60p from St Marks Rise, London E8.
ANTI-SEXIST men's newsletter, 30p from 190 Tottenham St, London SW17.
ATHEIST magazine 'Freethinker', centenary issue, 40p from 702 Holloway Rd, London N15 3NL.

International Marxist Group notices

NATIONAL LESBIAN/GAY Fraction 16 May National centre 11 am. All cdes welcome even if not active around this question. Main item: perspectives document, orientation to labour and womens movement. Pooled fare. Childcare if there is advance notice, and accommodation. Ring

Revolution Youth notices

MEMBERSHIP CARDS: Cards now available for members of Revolution Youth. All branches should place orders with national office.

MANCHESTER SC supporters sell 11-1pm Sat at OLDHAM outside the Yorkshire Bank, High St; at BURY in the shopping precinct and at Metro Books; at BOLTON in the town centre; and in MANCHESTER outside the central reference library in St Peter's Square and at Grassroots and Percivals Bookshop. Tel: 061-236 4905 for further info.
NEWCASTLE: SC on sale every Sat 11-1pm outside Fenwicks. Also available at Days of Hope bookshop, Westgate Rd. For more info ring Phil or Pete on Newcastle 737507
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.
SHEFFIELD: SC on sale Thursday, Pond St, 4.30-6pm; Saturday, Fargate 10.30-12.30pm.
STOCKPORT: SC sold every Saturday, 1pm, Mersey Way. Can be delivered weekly: phone 483 8909 (evening), 236 4905 (day).
SWINDON: SC on sale 11-1 every Sat., Regent St (Brunel Centre).
TEESIDE: SC on sale Sat lunchtime in the Cleveland Centre, and in Newsfare, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, and outside Woolworths on Stockton High Street.
WOLVERHAMPTON: SC sales on Thur/Fri at Poly Students Union from noon-2pm and British Rail 4.30-6pm; and Saturday near Beatties, town centre from 11am-2pm.

What did you achieve in the election campaign?
 We were the only organisation to stress the need for workers' unity. We fought the sectarianism of the Communist and Socialist Parties. At our 80 meetings we had more trade unionists than ever before.
 But very importantly we attracted a number of SP and CP members. Often they would argue and debate with each other in the meetings. Thus we

London

BRENT: SC supporters sell at Willesden Junction every Thur at 4.30pm.
EALING: SC supporters sell every Thursday, Ealing Broadway tube, 4.30-5.30pm.
ENFIELD: SC available from Nelsons Newsagents, London Rd, Enfield Town.
HILLINGDON: SC supporters sell every Friday, 4.30-5.30 at Uxbridge tube station; every Saturday 10.30-12.00 outside Woolworths, Uxbridge shopping centre.
KILBURN: SC sales every Sat, 10am in Kilburn Square, and Thursday 8.30am at Queens Park tube.
LAMBETH: SC available from Village Books, Streatham; Tethric Books, Clapham; Paperback Centre, Brixton; Oval tube kiosk. Also sold Thur and Fri evenings and Thur mornings outside Brixton tube.
NEWHAM: SC sale every Saturday, 11am to noon, Queen's Rd Market, Upton Park.
PADDINGTON supporters sell at Portobello Rd market every Sat at 12 noon.
WEMBLEY: SC sales Fri 6.45am at North Wembley BR Station.

Is your town or city mentioned above? If not, send in details to this sales column.

Belt & Braces' **accidental death of an anarchist**
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French elections: fighting for workers' unity

LAST weekend the French Trotskyists of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR) held a festival in Paris, as the highpoint of its campaign to get Alain Krivine on the presidential ballot. The Fête was attended by over 10,000 people, 7000 of whom packed the giant marquee where Krivine spoke on the Sunday afternoon.

Like other sections of the Fourth International in Europe, and organisations from Africa and Asia, the International Marxist Group had a stall at the Fête. **BOB PENNINGTON** who attended on behalf of the IMG International Committee spoke to Alain Krivine on his campaign.

What did you achieve in the election campaign?

We were the only organisation to stress the need for workers' unity. We fought the sectarianism of the Communist and Socialist Parties. At our 80 meetings we had more trade unionists than ever before.

But very importantly we attracted a number of SP and CP members. Often they would argue and debate with each other in the meetings. Thus we

provided a forum for discussion between rank and file militants of the two main workers' parties.

This just does not happen in France, either at the level of the parties, or in the trade unions. Generally it is impossible to get common agreement between the socialist unions and the Communist led CGT (Confédération Générale Du Travail) to turn out a common leaflet.

The only people that gain from this are the rul-

ing class, so our whole campaign was based around the fight for the unity of the working class and their organisations.

Did your campaign have an impact in the factories?

We went to 25 factories to do meetings, most of them at factory gates. In other places, although we wanted to do meetings, the CP leaders in the factory blocked us and we were unable to speak to the workforce.

We organised a petition among trade unionists and industrial workers which called on the workers' organisations to work in common struggle. Already over 170,000 people have signed this. In a number of unions and factories, groups have been formed to unite against the sectarianism of the leaderships.

Did you gain many new members in the campaign?

We have made more



Alain Krivine

contacts among trade unionists than ever before. This summer we are planning a party school where we are expecting a minimum of 700 new contacts and supporters. In fact we hope to reach the 1,000 figure, and that many of them will join.

Why did you not get the necessary 500 signatures to get on the presidential ballot?

We collected nearly six hundred signatures. Then

at the last minute the CP and SP leaders threatened to expel any of their signatories if they did not take them off my forms. The SP alone blocked 250 signatures.

This made things impossible. A signatory can only sign once, so people who had signed for Lutte Ouvrière or the PSU could not then sign for us.

Who are you asking people to vote for on the first ballot?

As the main theme of the campaign has been for worker's unity and a CP/SP government we do not think we can now turn round and say vote Lutte Ouvrière, who have not called for the unity of the workers' organisations.

We are therefore asking for a vote for any of the workers' candidates in the first round. In the second and final round we shall of course call for a vote for Mitterand who will be the sole challenger to Giscard.

Socialist Challenge national sales day

PLANS for our National Sales Week, from 30 April to 6 May, have been finalised in most areas. From the list of activities proposed by our supporters, it looks like being a great success. Local activities include:

- Aberdeen:** Selling on the Mastrich housing scheme.
- Birmingham:** Selling on May Day march and organising stalls at May Day festival.
- Cardiff & Newport:** Selling at Welsh TUC and organising sales in Welsh valleys.
- Crawley:** Selling while canvassing for Labour Party candidates.
- Coventry:** Covering local

May Day events including all day Trades Council exhibition.

Edinburgh: Selling at May Day march.

Glasgow: Using the sales week to launch an ambitious programme of public sales at local factories (Hooever, Willis, Rolls Royce) and on housing schemes. Also selling at May Day demo.

Hemel Hempstead: Organising stall in May Day market plus sales at local industrial estate.

Huddersfield: Will be giving away free copies of Socialist Challenge to every marcher on the eastern leg of the Peoples March starting out from here on 2 May.

Leeds: Organising sales at the Peoples March events being held from 2 to 4 May when it passes through the city.

Leicester: Selling on St Peters and St Matthews housing estates.

Liverpool: Covering the beginning of the Peoples March.

Manchester: Selling at events along the route of the Peoples March which passes through Salford on 4 May, Manchester on 5 and 6 May and Stockport on 7 May. Also plan to step up factory sales, currently held at General Engineering in Bury, Belliot Walmsleys in Bolton, Delta and Ferranti Measurements in Oldham, Schreibers and Mather and Platt in Manchester.

Nottingham: Covering May Day march.

Newcastle: Selling at May Day events.

Oxford: Sales at May Day events and local estate sales.

Portsmouth: Only two supporters here who cannot organise anything



Having a cop at Socialist Challenge

special but whose sales are increasing!

Preston & Burnley: Will sell at May Day march, concert and exhibition — where they have their own stall. Also at local NUT cuts meeting, the Engineering Confederation conference on Unemployment and the Burnley May Day rally.

Sheffield: Selling at May Day events plus activities organised for Peoples March. Also considering an estate sale.

Swansea: Selling at the Welsh TUC in Porthcawl.

Wolverhampton: Stepping up their regular sales and considering an estate sale and a pub run.

Brent: Organising estate sales in Paddington area and planning to distribute old issues for free in advance. Will also be starting up factory sales along route to be taken by Peoples March when it arrives.

East London: Organising mammoth Socialist Challenge Fund event. A 'May Day Banquet' will be attended by about 200 people who will partake of a four course meal, hear international speakers in-

cluding Grenadan High Commissioner and enjoy other goodies organised by supporters.

Haringey: Will be using the sales week to launch more public sales in the area.

Islington: Selling the paper while canvassing for labour candidates.

Lambeth: Organising a mass street sale in Brixton as well as estate sales.

Outer West: Organising a 'May Day Festival' for Socialist Challenge, on 2 May where they hope to raise lots of money! See ads.

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 Show where you stand with one of our new 'Solidarnosc' T-shirts, only £2.99 including post and packing. Sizes medium and large.
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Letters Letters Letters Letters Letters LETTERS

Once more on the Labour Party

To join or not to join?

BOB Pennington does less than justice to the need to build a campaigning left wing in the Labour Party in his reply to Chris Harman of the Socialist Workers Party (9 April).

Bob makes two very important points. First, that any Marxist worth her or his salt would understand the nature of the struggle for democracy in the Labour Party and therefore recognise its importance.

Secondly that Marxists have a responsibility to support the extension of democracy and the erosion of state control.

What Bob did not state explicitly was that all Socialist Challenge supporters, both inside and outside the Labour Party, should organise to ensure a victory for the left.

This is the problem for Chris Harman — why else would he assume that it is a call to join the Labour Party? He fails to see that there is a direct political relationship between what happens in the Labour Party and in the trade unions.

The fact is that the decisions at the party conferences are decided by the block votes of the unions.

I would ask comrade Harman if he thinks it is objectively in the best interests of the working



Does it matter who is deputy?

class for the right-wing reformists to reverse the gains of the last Labour Party conference?

If, as I suspect, he does not then the solution is quite simple: organise support in the unions for Benn as next deputy leader.

Then the question arises: How can the Socialist Workers Party support Benn while abstaining on the struggle within the Labour Party?

One last point: Do we think Benn is another Marx, Lenin, Trotsky or Cliff? No, certainly not. But if, like good Marxists, we want others to see a true reflection of Benn's politics, we first have to give him a place in the sun.

ROB JONES,
Member of Hackney North & Stoke Newington CLP

A valid arena for work

I HAVE read with interest your recent articles by Bob Pennington and Chris Harman on the Labour Party.

It was a pity that the Socialist Workers Party didn't become more involved with the Socialist Unity initiative of the International Marxist Group, especially with regard to standing left candidates in elections.

One of the lessons to be learnt from that experience was the extent of the hold of reformism over the vast majority of the working class. As result, I would be opposed to the far left standing candidates at forthcoming local or general elections.

Many socialists have recently recognised the need for us to modify our attitude towards the Labour Party in the light of changing circumstances.

This, in my opinion, is much better than adopting rigid postures of the 'I'll have no truck with reformism' variety. The work-



Photo: LARRY HERMAN

ing class wants to know what we have to say about the major issues of unemployment, cuts, the threat of nuclear war, and so on, rather than abstract debates on reform or revolution.

And, to be honest, the Labour left is at least talking in a language that the working class understands.

A memorable headline from one of last year's issues of *Socialist Worker* read 'Learn Polish'. It seems to me, witnessing

the struggles going on in the Labour Party, that the Labour left has been doing just that. One thing that the SWP should begin to accept is that the Labour Party is a valid arena for political work.

Whether it decides to have people on the inside or not is a question of strategy and tactics, not of abstract principle.

STEVE ROSE,
Big Flame (personal capacity)

Labour left are bureaucrats, too

GEOFF Bell's article 'The making of North Islington's social democrats' (2 April) casts the left wing in the same bureaucratic mould as the right, leaving working class militants at a loss to know what this struggle was about.

The only reference to the programmatic basis of this struggle was the 'accusation' and 'alleged' failure of O'Halloran to implement local party policy on the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Otherwise the impression given is one of a bureaucratic power struggle between rival factions

bearing no relation whatsoever to the pressing problems faced by working people, either in Islington or elsewhere.

The left social democrats in the party are seasoned practitioners of 'takeover' politics.

Instead of a class-struggle policy and the education of the membership on political issues, they preoccupy themselves with getting the 'right people into the right positions' and building an electoral machine within the party as well as outside.

The danger with Geoff Bell's article was that it could easily miseducate

Socialist Challenge supporters to being sucked into the bureaucratic methods which have long been stock-in-trade of the right and left leadership of the party.

Moreover, as the article stated, the 'left's takeover' is now being used to launch a witch-hunt against the left.

Presenting the struggle as the article did in terms of a 'take over' which 'has led to the present splits in the local party', can only facilitate the success of such a witch-hunt.

BRIAN LYONS,
Sheffield

Workers Revolutionary Party: attempt to gag left press

By Brian Grogan

VANESSA Redgrave, the Workers Revolutionary Party's best known member, has issued writs against the printers of left newspapers *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Press* because they carried articles explaining the anti-working class character of the WRP.

Using the capitalist legal system to intimidate and suppress labour movement journals is part and parcel of the openly anti-working class practice of this degenerate organisation.

Led by Gerry Healy, the WRP's main public activity for several years has been a campaign of disruption against the Fourth International.

The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party in the USA — co-thinkers of the FI — and Tariq Ali in Britain have been subject to the absurd accusation that they are leaders of both the FBI and the KGB.

This is not the first time that the WRP — or its predecessor, the Socialist Labour League — has resorted to this type of activity.

In 1966 Ernie Tate, then a leading member of the FI, was hospitalised after being beaten up. Tate was selling literature that

exposed the nature of Healy's organisation.

Two labour movement papers, *Labour Leader* and *Peace News*, were obliged to apologise for publishing the details of this incident after Healy threatened to financially bankrupt the papers through legal action.

The WRP has also engaged in a systematic fingering of class struggle and Trotskyist militants in the factories.

Alan Thornett, a leading steward and Trotskyist militant at BL in Cowley, has been branded as a 'scab' and 'police agent' in leaflets handed out at the factory gates by WRP members.

This is a practice of the WRP which has been pioneered and systematically pursued in the United States where leading Trotskyist militants in the factories are similarly branded. Co-workers are visited.

The information on

which these elements base their operations would normally only be known to management or the state secret police.

It is not only in Britain and the USA that the WRP carries out such anti-working class activity.

In Iran its agents have attempted to discredit militants of the FI as imperialist agents. This charge has been taken up by elements in the regime playing on the fact that a number of leading Trotskyists had returned to Iran from exile in the United States and Britain.

Similar slanders have been taken up by the Stalinists inside the FSLN in Nicaragua.

This charge was given a vestige of credibility because of the criminal activities of the Simon Bolivar Brigade, which engaged in a series of adventures against the revolutionary forces, under the banner of Trotskyism.

The WRP must be aware that only the Stalinists and pro-capitalist forces gain by such activity.

Socialists should support the decision by Sean Matgamna, the editor of *Socialist Organiser*, to defend his article against the intimidatory threats of the WRP. The newspaper wants a labour movement inquiry to investigate the charges in Matgamna's articles, an approach which

is a far cry from the bourgeois methods of the WRP.

If, as seems likely, the WRP rejects this proposal, *Socialist Organiser* has to be supported and allowed to defend itself in court by raising the necessary funds.

The WRP has become an instrument of disruption against class struggle and Trotskyist militants inside the labour movement. It would be irresponsible not to do everything possibly to expose this sad development.

Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner, Reg Race and Ernie Roberts are among over 100 signatories to the petition condemning the WRP's use of the courts against the labour movement press.

Send donations to Jonathan Hammond (Hon. Treasurer), c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Cheques payable to 'Labour Movement Press Defence Fund'.

A LABOUR INQUIRY, NOT THE COURTS

We, the undersigned, condemn Vanessa Redgrave's and the WRP's use of the courts against the labour movement press. We support the proposal that a labour movement inquiry be set up to investigate the statements made in the *Socialist Organiser* article.

NAME ORGANISATION

.....

Return to Labour Movement Press Defence Fund, c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.



Alan Thornett, BL Cowley militant, branded a 'police agent' by the WRP.

Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

Anwar Ditta: 'I want those six years of my life back'

ON 14 April 1975 Anwar Ditta temporarily left her children in Pakistan while she and her husband got a home together in Britain.

It was 14 April 1981 when Kamran, Imran and Saima finally flew into Manchester airport. Anwar has lost six years of their childhood. She talked to *Jenny Flintoft* about her feelings now.

There were so many photographers at the airport: BBC, ITV, press photographers. And there was the welcoming group — relatives and members of the defence committee.

Somebody had made a banner — it said 'welcome home kids'. The children didn't say anything when they saw me — they just cried. And Samera, (the fourth child who was born in England) just grabbed hold of them and hugged them.

I'm really enjoying having them — just ordinary things like giving them all a bath. But there's problems too. When I heard they could come I thought my troubles were over.

But now I know they're only just beginning. Because those six years have really harmed the children's lives. They hardly speak any English. — they only know a few words.

I'm really worried about their education and their

future.

Shuja (her husband) has lost his job because he went to Pakistan to get the children.

His employer never said a word to him. Just sent me the P45 while he was in Pakistan.

How are we going to pay the mortgage? how can I buy clothes for my children? They need warm clothes, it's cold for them here after Pakistan.

Every day I feel more and more angry towards the Home Office. They've taken five years of our children's lives away from us.

I'm still planning to sue the Home Office. Nothing can get those years back. Nothing.

But at least if we get some money it will help with the children's education.

I'd like Socialist Challenge to thank everybody who've been helping and supporting me. I'll never forget the people who've helped me. Never.



Photo: STEVE WILLETT

Anwar Ditta's children arrive at Manchester airport. In the front from left to right: Shuja Uddin, Imran, Sima, Kamran, Sumera. Behind: Nasira

Begum — fighting deportation, Anwar Ditta, Jaswinda Kaur — fighting deportation, and Moshin Zulfiquar — Asian Youth Movement.

Fight the deportations of Jaswinder Kaur and Nasira Begum

JASWINDER KAUR
Demonstration
16 May in Leeds

Further details from *The Friends of Jaswinder Kaur*, LAP Box JK, 29 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds, LS2 9HD.

NASIRA BEGUM
Demonstrations
6 June in Manchester
15 June in London

For further details contact *Friends of Nasira Begum*, c/o 595 Stockport Rd, Longsight, Manchester 12

What we need is positive action

By Judith Arkwright

WINE, asparagus tips sandwiches, and the luxurious surroundings of the Penta Hotel in London was the bizarre setting for a discussion on the massive increase in women's unemployment.

It may have been fitting for Baroness Sear, Liberal spokeswoman on unemployment, the New York business-woman of the year, and the personnel manager of Ford, who were among those attending the National Council for Civil Liberties' conference on positive action earlier this month.

Women in Britain are concentrated in the lowest paid and least skilled jobs more than anywhere else in West Europe. Unemployment for women has increased by 207 per cent since 1975.

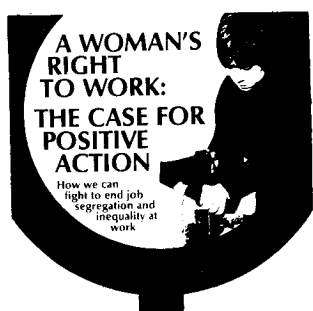
In 1911 the number of women in clerical work was equal to that of men. Sixty years later women occupied two-thirds of these jobs. In 1911 women had equal representation in skilled and semi-skilled jobs, but by 1971 we were concentrated in semi-skilled work.

And it is women's jobs that are going to the wall first in Thatcher's onslaught. So discussion on positive action is important to women workers, though it hardly seems relevant to the likes of Baroness Sear.

Speakers from the United States did give some interesting examples of how the affirmative action programmes there have operated.

Women Employed is an action group in the US which campaigns to get women into male-dominated jobs. Kathy Blunt, a founder member of the group, described their efforts to get the Harris Bank, which is contracted to the government, to draw up a programme of affirmative action.

Women Employed produced its own pro-



Obtainable from The Other Bookshop 329 Upper St London N1 50p + 20p p&rp. Bulk orders, 20 or more, 40p each plus postage.

gramme and the bank spent \$1m in legal costs resisting its proposals.

The bank lost the case and was forced to pay \$12m in back wages to compensate for past discrimination against the women.

This 'American way' implies fighting for quotas of women to go into certain jobs and grades. Both employers and trade unionists at the conference were sceptical about this approach.

The personnel manager of Ford said that his company had tried to encourage women and blacks into skilled jobs, and he blamed them for apparent lack of interest.

The reason why they are reluctant to put themselves forward for such jobs is because of the past discrimination women and black people

Women seek equality in Telecoms

LIKE so many other employers, British Telecoms has an equal opportunity policy. All grades of engineering are meant to be open to women.

Yet while there are 100,000 men in the main engineering grades, there are only some 600 women. Positive action is needed to enable women to overcome the obstacles to equality at work.

In the Post Office Engineering Union women make up just 2.5 per cent of the membership, and even then this is not reflected at the various levels of the union.

Several London branches of the POEU are backing a conference resolution calling for implementation of the TUC's charter on equality, as well as an investigation by the union into positive action.

The POEU has withdrawn from the Women's TUC and it has ignored events the TUC and NCCL conferences on positive action. Few members will be aware that the union supported a motion on abortion rights at the Labour Party conference.

Women in British Telecoms are meeting on 5 May to discuss these issues. Details from: Post Office Women, tel. 01-238 8792.

have experienced — lack of education, spending time to bring up children, and so on. That is why quotas are needed, and qualifications for a particular job may have to be lowered to compensate for past discrimination.

Quotas do imply legal sanctions on employers to carry them out. While we should support this, it is not a substitute for the trade unions campaigning on this question.

A system of quotas begins to challenge the whole structure of the system. It shows that it is not women or black people who are to blame for their lack of training, confidence, or ability to obtain skilled employment.

Ford UK employs 15,000 women out of a total workforce of 55,000.

Women are excluded from skilled work at Ford because of protective legislation which prohibits them from working shifts.

The unions don't want to apply for an exemption order because, given the present level of unemployment, they are anxious to keep the jobs for men.

The trade unions have to lead the fight against such divide and rule tactics, not be part of them. These jobs are not 'men's' jobs — women have as much right to a job as men.

The NCCL conference provided a wealth of information which can arm us in the fight for positive action. The trade union leadership should begin to work out a strategy for fighting for a women's right to work.



A victory but be prepared for future action

Abortion: Corrie through the back door

By Ann Potter

THE defeat of the Corrie Bill, which was an attempt to erode the gains of the 1967 Abortion Act, was a tremendous victory for women. But there is no room for complacency.

The 1967 Abortion Act has never been fully implemented, and the grounds for abortion do not allow women the right to choose.

Under Thatcher the attacks on abortion rights are being stepped up.

Doctors for a Women's Choice on Abortion have pointed out the increasing difficulty for women to obtain safe, legal abortions. The cuts in the health service are just one of the problems we face.

Late abortions are extremely difficult to obtain. The charity clinics cannot afford to have ultra-sound equipment, which measures the size of the foetus. This is a requirement for late abortions, so women have to pay £10 to get this done at a hospital.

As the number of health service abortions declines because of the cuts, more and more women are being forced to pay extortionate prices in the private clinics. In Scotland this can be as much as £400.

While NHS facilities are run down, the charity sector which has acted as an essential safety net for women is subjected to continual harassment. Petty rules and regulations can result in clinics being shut down by the Department of Health and Social Security.

Charities are now required to record the time of payment for an abortion, as well as the date on which it was carried out. They have wasted money printing posters, which they are often required to change. They had to change the wording from 'help and advice' to 'advice and help', and this was after that poster had been approved by the DHSS.

A recent ruling demands that all those receiving free treatment must be resident in this country for three years. This nasty piece of legislation particularly affects women seeking abortions; providing the required proof means further delay. Women with non-English names, many of whom are black and already subjected to racist treatment, will find it particularly difficult.

Getting an abortion on the NHS in this country becomes more of an obstacle race every day as the anti-abortionists and their friends in parliament try to get Corrie in through the back door.

The heart of the problem lies with the lack of NHS abortion facilities. This was raised at the recent labour movement conference on abortion, and a Bill will be presented during the present parliamentary session.

It aims to make the provision of abortion facilities mandatory on area health authorities, something the 1967 Abortion Act has failed to do.

As the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign puts it: 'It isn't easy to get an abortion now — but it will become a great deal more difficult if nothing is done.'

Kollontai: 'Women will never be handed their rights on a plate'

Jenny Flintoft reviews Kollontai's newly published novel and looks at her eventful life.

WOMEN have played no part in the revolutionary movement. That's what the average person could well be forgiven for thinking. Who knows Nadezhda Krupskaya as anything but Lenin's wife, or Inessa Armand as anything but (speculate, speculate) his mistress?

Who cares that Rosa Luxemburg was the German Social Democratic Party's most brilliant theorist? Who could say anything at all about her activist compatriot Klara Zetkin? And what is remembered of Alexandra Kollontai, the only woman in Lenin's government? Her beauty, her love affairs and a theory, not hers at all, that sex is like a glass of water.

Born into a world of ball-gowns and debutantes, Kollontai became one of the most militant Bolsheviks, a prolific writer, and a tireless worker amongst factory women.

Violently repudiating bourgeois feminism, she nevertheless fought fiercely on women's issues, hampered constantly by the foot-dragging (and frequently downright hostility) of her comrades.

tionalist, she rejoined the Bolsheviks after the Mensheviks failed to oppose the 1914-18 war. She translated Lenin's War Theses into German, and travelled to Scandinavia and the USA, propagandising against the war.

Agitator

In June 1917 she was working with Petrograd's laundry women, who toiled long hours for a pittance in appalling conditions. During their strike she persuaded them to add the Bolshevik anti-war and anti-government slogans to their own demands.

At the 4 April Petrograd Soviet she was the only Bolshevik delegate openly to endorse Lenin's famous April Theses. Lenin heavily relied on her as an agitator — she spoke at four or five meetings a day, writing pamphlets in between.

After the October Rev-

olution she took charge of the Commissariat of Social Welfare, in constant contact with peasant and working women. As she told the eighth party congress, legal equality was meaningless while women were oppressed in their daily lives.

Wanting to call explicitly for the death of the nuclear family, she desisted in deference to

Lenin. She did however criticise the bureaucracy's threat to the women's organisations.

Throughout 1919 and 1920 the growing Workers' Opposition also criticised the expanding bureaucracy. Sympathising with the Opposition's aims — workers' control over production, the ending of large-scale employ-

ment of bourgeois specialists — Kollontai hesitated to commit herself for fear of jeopardising her work in the Zhenotdel (the party women's department eventually set up in September 1919).

She finally joined in February 1921. By then, increasing numbers of workers, weary of famine, fuel-shortages, epidemics, and atrocious housing were rallying to the Op-

position, which had a firm base in the unions.

Written for the tenth party congress, Kollontai's Workers' Opposition pamphlet deplored the party's alienation from the masses.

Despite their pertinent criticisms the Workers' Opposition was lambasted as petty bourgeois and syndicalist by Lenin and his supporters. Their attacks on the rather confused and unrealistic programme of the Opposition were marred by some personal innuendos and squalid attempts to discredit Kollontai.

Furthermore Lenin took the historic and disastrous step of banning party factions.

Kollontai, now isolated in the party, was expelled from the Zhenotdel's directorship in 1922, and effectively condemned to political inactivity. Then Stalin sent her to Norway as a member of the Russian trade delegation. This was the beginning of a diplomatic career which lasted until 1945.

Her eleven languages, her tact and sympathy, and the warmth, wit, originality and sincerity which had made her so popular as an agitational speaker ensured her success.

But it was still exile. In Russia her ideas were systematically misrepresented and she was subjected to vicious personal abuse.

Demoralised, saddened by the ending of her second marriage, and sick with anxiety for her son, her comrades, her party

and the working people of the Soviet Union, Kollontai sought solace in writing fiction.

She was too disillusioned to fight now; it seemed futile. She hid her real feelings behind mechanical appeals for party unity.

In 1930 she told her secretary Marcel Body: 'I've put my principles into a corner of my conscience and I carry out as well as I can the policies dictated to me.'

Comfort

Throughout the 1930s news filtered through to Scandinavia of the torture, murder and suicide of Kollontai's old comrades.

Her chief comfort now was, as always, the loving support of women friends, especially Zoya, a friend from childhood, and Isabel Palencia, Republican Spain's ambassador.

Personal relationships had always been important for Kollontai; at the funeral of American socialist Jack Reed she said: 'We all call ourselves communists, but are we really?'

'Don't we rather draw life's essence from those who come to us, and when they're no longer of any use to us let them fall by the wayside, neglected and forgotten? Our communism and our comradeship are dead letters if we don't give ourselves to those who need us.'

Kollontai died in 1952, the last of the old Bolsheviks (apart from Stalin), having given most of her adult life to the Revolution. Not one word of official tribute appeared in the Soviet press.



The two faces of Kollontai



Divisive

In the harsh conditions of revolutionary Russia, Kollontai's belief that real political change had to be accompanied by a transformation in personal and family relationships seemed a luxury, and her campaign for a separate party women's organisation dangerously divisive.

First joining the Bolsheviks in 1904, she became a Menshevik in 1906. A convinced interna-

A Great Love

IT is in her fiction that Kollontai develops the themes that today seem the most modern in her work. So it is in *A Great Love*, recently translated by Cathy Porter.

Natasha, a Bolshevik Party worker gradually faces the fact that her married lover Senya will never really see her as a person in her own right.

A Great Love is widely believed to be about Lenin and Inessa Armand. Dora Russell, a friend of Kollontai's sixty years ago, rejected in the *Times Educational Supplement*, the view that Senya could be Lenin, he merely represents the almost universal male prejudices of the time.

It is highly unlikely that Kollontai's story is based on any one particular relationship. Senya is a cardboard cut-out — the stereotype of a male revolutionary immersed in his work. Anyuta, Senya's wife, is sick, suicidal and 'petty bourgeois'.

Distillation

It is inconceivable that Kollontai would have written this about Krupskaya, whom she liked and respected. It is much more likely that the story represents a distillation of all Kollontai's experiences and observations of male behaviour over a long period.

If any one relationship is exploited particularly it is probably Kollontai's affair with Petr Maslov in 1909. Maslov was married to a sick wife and had five children.

Kollontai, fascinated by his intellect, felt his interest in her was mainly sexual, and believed him incapable of treating her as an equal.

Unfortunately, Kollontai's fiction style was frequently unimaginative and clichéd: 'Then passion came, sweeping them off their feet with a suddenness that took their breath away. Natasha lost her

head completely and fell deeply in love.' This could have come straight out of *Women's Own*.

Her characters too, are not developed very convincingly. Only Natasha is seen from the inside. We know nothing of Senya's thoughts, and Anyuta hardly exists at all. Everything is presented too unequivocally — no chance of making up our own minds about

A novel is not a political pamphlet. We are told Anyuta is conventional, unimaginative, yet kind and generous — but we never see these traits — no scenes or episodes reveal her character.

There is no hint of the absorbing political ideas in Natasha's head. But Kollontai does bring out something never talked about in revolutionary politics — the need to feel needed by one's comrades, to feel one's work appreciated.

Pamphleteer

The novel ends with Natasha leaving Senya forever. Departing, she reflects on Senya's destruction of her love for him. A simple, effective ending — but Kollontai is too much the pamphleteer to leave it at that.

She ruins the whole effect with a final polemical sentence: 'So learn from this, all you men who have made women suffer through your blindness, and know that if you injure a woman's heart you will kill her love!'

The whole novel is in fact too polemical and too explicit — it lacks the irony, wit and subtlety which would have made it far more powerful.

Yet it is moving and convincing, and it is Natasha (who is really Kollontai) that makes it so. Vulnerable, lonely in spite of her friends, easily swayed by sexual passion, she is also strong, independent and devoted to her work.

Together with *Thirty-Two Pages* (the second story in the trilogy) *A Great Love* portrays the same conflicts between personal relationships and work, between loving and living an independent life as those experienced by women today.

Stop the missiles

World Disarmament Campaign

DANGER! This campaign could disarm CND

By Brian Heron

IN THE autumn of 1982 the general assembly of the United Nations will hold a special session on the problems of world peace and disarmament.

The UN has already organised disarmament weeks and days, and 1982 is to be disarmament year.

The general assembly will be presented with a monster petition containing millions of signatures demanding world peace and disarmament, organised by the World Disarmament Campaign.

In Britain this campaign is led by Brigadier Harbottle, who intends to canvass the whole population. This grandiose scheme is in inverse proportion to the number of people the campaign organises so the WDS is looking to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament for its troops.

Leading supporters of the World Disarmament Campaign like Lord Fenner Brockway and Philip Noel Baker want to reap the rewards of millions of names provided by the work of thousands of CND activists.

The national council of CND on 7 February took a long discussion 'on aspects of CND's relationship with this campaign'. The minutes of the meeting report that 'at least three lines of thought were expressed in a variety of ways:

Diversion

'1 WDC is too gradualist, a diversion, petition not worth the effort, no WDC grass root support.

'2 WDC varies from area to area in its radicalism and the level of CND co-operation depends on the style of the local WDC.

'3 WDC is a good way of reaching those who would not otherwise be reached by CND. We should push the WDC petition and co-operate fully with the WDC initiatives especially during CND disarmament week.'

It was agreed to encourage CND groups to 'utilise the WDC initiatives during the coming year'.

In other words, for the moment it is left to the regions and local groups to decide their attitude.

Pressure

But as the UN special session on disarmament approaches the pressure will doubtless increase to participate in the WDC, and therefore CND groups should be clear about this campaign: it represents a dangerous blind alley.

The World Disarmament Campaign has only one policy plank —

The World Disarmament Campaign petition

THESE are the demands for which the World Disarmament Campaign is seeking millions of signatures:

1. The abolition of all nuclear weapons and all weapons of destruction.
2. The abolition by agreed stages of conventional arms, leading to
3. General and complete disarmament and
4. The transference of military expenditure to end world poverty.

general and complete disarmament of the whole world, conventional weapons as well as nuclear weapons.

The agencies through which the WDC hopes this worthy aim will be achieved are the various international conferences, peace conventions and the United Nations — indeed any forum willing to fill its platform with speakers of worthy sentiment and little practical consequence.

The World Disarmament campaign explicitly rejects unilateral nuclear disarmament.

In 1983 the first Cruise missiles are due to arrive in Britain and CND's first target is to stop them arriving. The alliance between Thatcher and the Reagan administration means that

a mass movement has to be built capable of directing its fire on the policies of the Tory government.

Of course, petitions can have a role, but only if they are an adjunct to generating mass action. The most powerful action we can generate against Thatcher's war policies is united working class action.

While the prospects for such a mass movement are infinitely more promising than in the 1950s or '60s, there is still much to do — a clear commitment to unilateralism has yet to be won in the trade unions and Labour Party.

Petitions appealing for general disarmament are exactly what is wanted by those like Michael Foot whose aim is to fudge the

issue. They want to continue to edge away from a commitment to disarm *this* government of its weapons.

General appeals for 'peace' are worse than useless. First, they offer no definite objectives by which peace can be fought for. They present hopes that can be readily agreed to without committing anyone to anything.

Secondly, it is wrong in principle to approach all conflicts with a simple appeal for peace, which is a stock-in-trade of the Kremlin bureaucrats.

For example, should we approach the struggle in El Salvador or the uprising of the blacks in Soweto with an appeal for 'peace' and 'general and complete disarmament'?

Oppose

On the contrary, we should *oppose* the disarmament of those in the front line of the fight against Thatcher and Reagan, such as the revolutionaries in El Salvador.

The two different approaches to this problem were highlighted during the Vietnam war. The Kremlin and its supporters



More than 10,000 people demonstrated a nuclear free Europe and opposed outside NATO headquarters in the placing of Cruise missiles. Over Brussels last weekend. They demanded 1,000 people came from CND groups

Youth CND in conference

By Richard Rozanski

ABOUT 200 delegates attended Youth CND's national conference last weekend in Birmingham.

One day of the conference was devoted to discussing some important constitutional questions to ensure the continued effectiveness of YCND as a body which unites and mobilises all sections of youth.

First, it was agreed to recommend to CND national council that the upper age limit be 25.

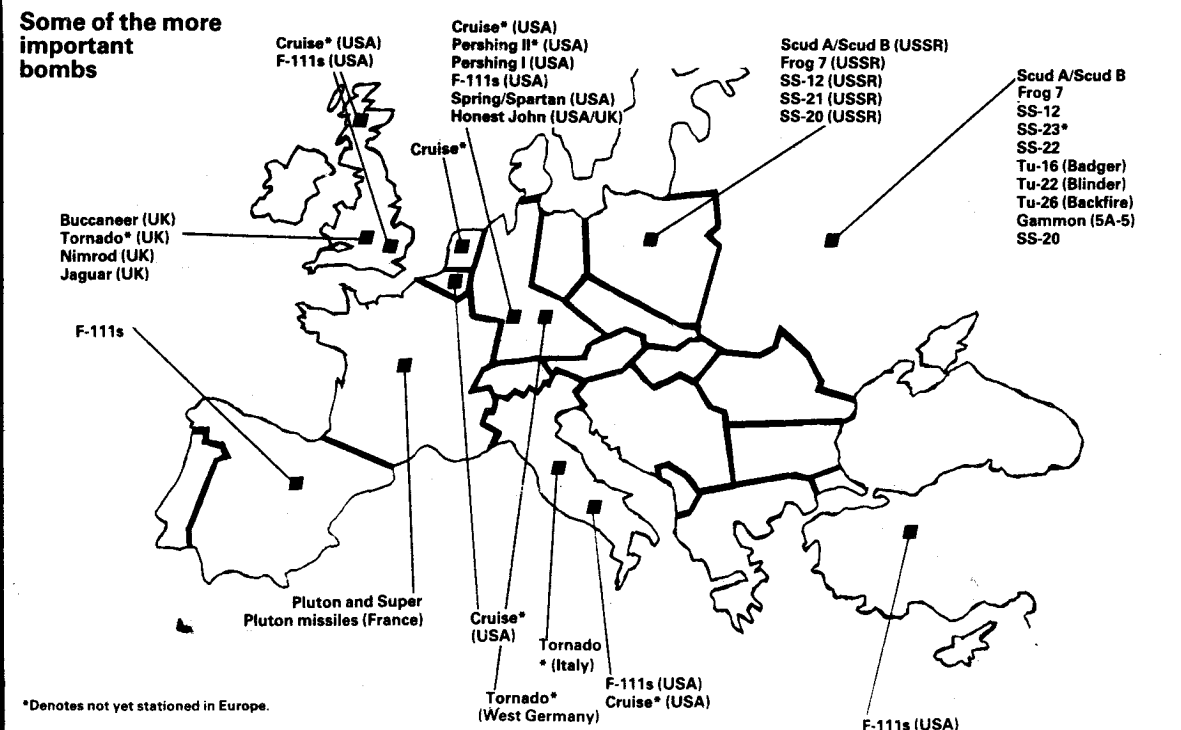
Second, it was decided that the new YCND national committee will discuss the problem of

YCND's autonomy with the CND leadership.

And third the conference re-affirmed that YCND was open to all who supported the aims and objectives. A resolution that no organisation participating could put its own policy and objectives above those of CND was defeated.

The conference decided to mobilise all-out for the national CND demonstration in October, and for the Scottish CND demonstration on 5 and 6 June. It was also decided to hold a YCND week of action in August, to coincide with Hiroshima day and to send a 'jobs not bombs' contingent on the Peoples March for Jobs in May.

THEATRE NUCLEAR WEAPONS IN EUROPE



Europe's missiles (right). The map is from *Sanity*.

Out soon:
New Socialist Challenge pamphlet
**'CND 1958-1965:
Lessons of the first
wave'**
By Julian Atkinson and Tony Southall

This new pamphlet is a detailed, 54-page account of CND's early history, its victories and mistakes, by two veterans of that period. *Tony Southall* was a founder of Croydon YCND in 1959, and chairman of Cambridge University CND in 1960-62. In 1961 he joined the Committee of 100 after the arrest of 36 members of the original '100'. He worked full-time for the Committee during 1961 and 1962.

Julian Atkinson was active in Lee and Eltham YCND, marched and sat and carried on the fight as National Secretary of the National Association of Labour Students Organisations (NALSO). To get your copy promptly send 55p (inc p&p) to Paul Smith, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Manchester marches against missiles

By Jude Woodward

MANCHESTER city-centre ground to a halt on Saturday as five marches converged into a mass demonstration of 15,000 chanting: 'No Cruise, no Trident'.

Organised by North-west CND and Manchester against the Missiles, the demo was the culmination of an Easter week march across the Pennines from Leeds.

Eight thousand youth were the backbone of the march and many more joined us as we passed. Black youth

from local estates brought the spirit of Brixton to the march as they defied attempts by Anderton's police to stop them joining the Youth CND contingent.

In the space of a couple of hours the membership of YCND doubled, trebled, and quadrupled as hundreds of new members joined up.

Manchester YCND's calling for a North-west carnival on 6 August, an idea supported by MAM. Revolution Youth made an impact selling 150 copies of *Revolution*.

The overwhelming sentiment was thoroughly anti-Tory, particularly from the youth chanting: 'Maggie

Thatcher, on yer bike, we don't want a nuclear strike.'

Chris Sinha, from the Trans-Pennine march committee won a massive cheer at the final rally when he said: 'This is my message to Michael Foot — stop the prevarication, stop the vacillation, we want the Labour Party clearly committed to unilateral disarmament.'

'We want to see a mass movement against Cruise and Trident, and we want the Labour Party at the head of it.'

Only four Labour Parties and a couple of union branches were represented by their banners, although there were many workers on the march.



Photo: DI UDALL (Socialist Challenge)

THREE thousand people marched on Saturday from Hampstead to Dollis Hill (above), the site of a nuclear bunker. As well as this North London CND, there were four other CND marches in the London area.

Brum backs Lee Jeans occupation

By Chris Palmer, Walsall

SUPPORT has built up in the Birmingham area for the Lee Jeans occupation in Greenock.

Christine and Anne-Marie, two young women from the occupied plant, spent three days last week visiting a number of factories and speaking at meetings in and around Birmingham. This is a diary of their solidarity trip.

Tuesday 14 April, 7.30 pm. Three hours after their arrival, Christine and Anne-Marie speak at Walsall women's group. Christine is nervous because she has never spoken in public before. A collection of £37 is raised.

Wednesday, 10.30am. Southalls sanitary towel factory. The representative from the shopworkers' union USDAW promises an appeal to the branch, which has already donated to the Ansell's strike fund.

11.30am, HP Sauce. We're met by Don Bennett from the Transport Union, who introduces us to John Bradley of the union's white-collar section ACTS. They promise donations and a shopfloor collection.

12.30pm, BL Longbridge. We are refused entry to the factory, so the union reps join us in a pub. They promise that the branch will send money immediately and that they will propose a shopfloor collection at the next joint shop stewards meeting.

Lucas

One suggestion is that a boycott of Lee Jeans should be organised in the TGWU.

1.30pm, Lucas Aerospace. Again we have to meet in a pub. Brian Salisbury and Roger Griffiths are helpful and besides offering financial support they give us the names of convenors in several local factories.

2.10pm, Ansell's brewery strikers. A noisy welcome here — chanting and singing. Christine speaks up when one worker suggests that the Lee Jeans factory is too small to fight. The striking workers

donate £26 and promise more.

We're invited to their social and strike meeting. Everyone agrees that those in struggle must stick together.

3.30pm, TRW engineering works, Wednesbury. Ian Moseley donates £10 immediately and promises to get further support in the area, including from the nearby Ottermill factory which we haven't time to visit.

4.30pm, Cadbury Schweppes. José Ashby is helpful. She wants us to speak at an emergency shop stewards meeting, but Christine and Anne-Marie haven't time.

7pm. We meet Pat Hickey and Steve Griffiths from Rover Solihull, which we would have visited had they not gone on strike that morning. Both promise financial support, and Pat will put a motion to his union branch calling for trades council support.

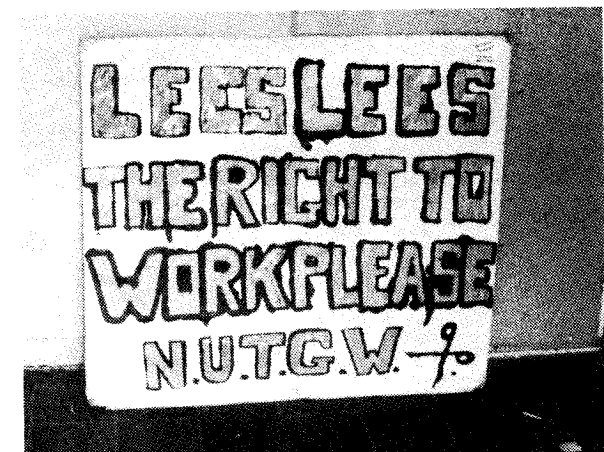


Photo: DI UDALL (Socialist Challenge)

Labour Party Young Socialists back Benn

The annual conference of the Labour Party Young Socialists held over the Easter weekend agreed to support Tony Benn as deputy party leader, and to affiliate the YS to the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The militant tendency again dominated the discussions and direction of the 2000 strong meeting although not without a challenge from a handful of delegates from Barricade, a youth paper connected with Socialist Organiser.

Militant supporters argued that there was no real danger of nuclear war and only a socialist transformation of society could end what

threat did exist.

Although driven to affiliate to CND they showed no signs of seeking to build it.

Discussions on the women's movement, on sexism in the LPYS, on unemployment and other subjects failed to produce any real campaigning perspective.

Ireland turned into the major debate with Militant being self-congratulatory about their record on Ireland which they see as in 'the tradition of Connelly and Larkin'.

They wouldn't agree to the demand for political status of the hunger strikers, wouldn't discuss gay rights and initially wouldn't receive a speaker from the FDR of El Salvador.

They did agree to raise the age limit for membership — from 25 to 30.

7.30pm, Socialist Challenge meeting. Christine speaks again, much less nervously than before. She remarks on how much help they've received from socialists. Pat Hickey comments on how the struggle at Greenock is the kind of lead Birmingham needs.

Mark France from YCND points out how it's no accident that it's youth who are leading the way in Greenock, Brixton, and CND. A collection raises £43.

Thursday, 10am, Rover Tyseley. We are thrown off the site by the industrial relations officer who considers our presence inappropriate. A union deputation led by Bob Whiskins meets us at the gates and is very constructive.

Tories

The union reps point out how all workers are now in the same boat because of Tory policies. Money, including regular donations, is promised.

It's now back to the station, where Anne-Marie and Christine start the long journey back to Glasgow, tired but elated by the support they've received. They promise to see us again for the People's March and the Birmingham May Day rally.

Civil servants call for all out strike

CIVIL servants are anxious to step up action on their 15 per cent pay claim.

Air traffic control assistants have voted for selective strikes, and engineers have decided to back them. The leadership of the civil service unions is also under mounting pressure to call all-out strikes in the departments of employment and health and social security.

VIV LACEY, Manchester regional secretary CPSA Department of Employment, explains how the civil servants could win.

Civil servants are furious that as ordinary working people we should suffer pauperisation and that we shouldn't be able to fight for our living standards.

Civil service pay has been worked out retrospectively on the inflation rate, so we've fallen behind other workers, and now the 7 per cent offer is way behind inflation.

Thatcher is determined to hold down public sector pay. If she beats the civil servants, then she'll go on to defeat postal workers, town hall workers, and others who make up a substantial section of the trade union movement.

Dockyards

Other trades unionists should be giving us practical support, not simply by passing resolutions, but by giving assistance where it is at all possible.

In the dockyards, where the government sent in the Navy to complete ship repairs, industrial workers said that they wouldn't work under the direction of the Navy. That's exactly the kind of response we want.

When Labour was in government it

had a very poor line on civil service pay disputes, so the Labour Party leadership has to recognise that all workers are entitled to a decent standard of living.

They should be condemning the strike-breaking tactics of the British Navy, orchestrated by the Ministry of Defence. Tony Benn, in his challenge for the deputy leadership, should say that strike breaking by the armed forces is unacceptable under any circumstances.

Labour Party

We need declarations of support for the strike from all levels of the Labour Party.

The 80 per cent turnout by the half million civil servants for the half-day strike over the Navy's scabbing is extremely encouraging. We need an escalation where civil servants across the board are called out *en bloc* for an indefinite period, or perhaps for 10 days.

The views of the members have been quite adequately expressed country-wide. At a mass meeting in Manchester a fortnight ago, for example, a vote was taken on the strategy of all-out strike action and there was a clear majority in favour of that.

Since then there have been calls from around the country for an all-out strike, but it's been shown on many previous occasions that the leadership doesn't really have the guts for a fight. We have to force a response from the Council of Civil Service Unions.

In Manchester we have meetings of activists from the various unions where they can argue their own strategies. We need to forge a direct input into the council nationally. That's where the decisions are being taken.

Widespread rent strikes in Scotland

TENS of thousands of council tenants in Scotland are on rent strike.

Among them are some 5,000 tenants in Renfrew district who are refusing to pay a 35 per cent rent increase, and 1,500 in Dumbarton who are withholding a 46 per cent rise.

Next to CND, the recently-formed Scottish Tenants Organisation is the fastest growing organisation in Scotland. Delegates from 88 tenants groups attended its first AGM last week.

There was an angry response to Donald Dewar MP, opposition spokesperson on housing, when he argued against the strikes, on the basis that there were 'proper democratic means' of dealing with the rent rises.

The most warmly greeted speaker was Dundee councillor Frank Christie. The council has been taken to court for opposing council house sales, and Christie said that applications to purchase homes 'will be put in the bin'.

Dundee district council has a policy of no rent rises, but it is planning to put up rates by a massive 152 per cent. The Labour council justifies this on the basis that half its rates come from the commercial sector.

Renfrew district is one of the main areas of the strike. Numerous local meetings were held before several thousand tenants voted overwhelmingly not to pay rent and rates rises.

The Labour councillors' excuse for a 35 per cent rent rise is that they claim there would not be working class support if they defied the government. This is hardly confirmed by the fact that meetings of as many as a thousand tenants forced the council to reduce the rent rise from a planned 57.5 per cent.

Tommy Macnamara, one of the organisers of the strike in Renfrew, says that the struggle could be toughened by a refusal to pay the full rent, and that pickets will be placed outside rent offices.

Press freedom launch in North-east

By Malcolm Wright, NUJ

MEDIA managers will not be sleeping quite so easily in the North-east of England, where a regional committee of the Campaign for Press Freedom has just been formed.

Speakers have visited trades councils and Labour Party branches in the area, and we are running a course for trades unionists on 'Handling the Media' on three Saturdays during May.

The course is being held at the recently-opened Darlington Media Workshop, where people can learn how to produce leaflets and posters.

We have been asked by the white-collar union ASTMS to organise a course on the media for local members, and we plan to make this a regular workshop.

It includes the selection processes in newsrooms, how to write your own press releases, how to counter bias by demanding the right of reply, the ownership of the press, and alternatives.

CPF North-east is monitoring local media to make sure news coverage is fair and accurate. If it isn't we will be making complaints. We want local trade unions and pressure groups to do the same.

We aim to put representatives on every listeners' and viewers' association linked with local radio and TV stations.

We plan to produce a poster giving media spokespersons a 10-point guide on how to deal with reporters. Also to be produced is a series of leaflets, booklets, and slide shows explaining how existing papers, radio, and TV stations in the region are owned and run.

CPF North-east is investigating the possibility of setting up a radical weekly paper in the region. Meanwhile we are supporting papers like *Durham Street Press* and Newcastle Trades Council's paper *Workers' Chronicle*.

We are helping with a one-day seminar on Women in the Media to be held in May at the Leeds University Centre, Middlesbrough.

Information on CPF North-east from: Malcolm Wright, 29 Stanhope Rd, Darlington. Tel Darlington (0325) 484374 or 54621.

There are also CPF regional committees in the North-west (contact Philip Turner, 28 Ellesmere Rd, Manchester M21 12R) and in Scotland (contact Joe Lynch, 115 Rowan Rd, Cumbernauld, Glasgow).

●The Campaign for Press Freedom is holding its AGM on Saturday 9 May, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. It starts at 10.30am.

Setback for NUT leaders over Lambeth Six

THE executive of the teachers' union received a major snub at the NUT's conference on the weekend. The union's right-wing leadership wanted to suspend standing orders to debate a motion which would have strengthened its ability to discipline members who take militant action over the cuts.

But the conference voted to reject this move. The background to the debate was the disciplining of the Lambeth Six — the South London teachers who have been suspended from the union because they called on NUT members to support a half-day strike by Lambeth council workers.

The executive ruled out of order attempts at the conference to secure the reinstatement of the six.

Against the advice of the union leadership, delegates passed a motion declaring 'deep concern' over increased arms spending at a time of education cuts. The motion said teachers had a 'prime responsibility' to speak out against the arms race.

Socialist Challenge



National Demonstration
**Support the
 Hunger Strikers**
 Sunday 26 April 1.30pm
 Assemble Kilburn High
 St (Kilburn tube)



Don't let Irish prisoners die!

By Penny Duggan

BOBBY Sands MP is close to death. Margaret Thatcher has refused to discuss with three southern Irish MPs who met Sands over Easter, in the latest sign that the British government intends to make no concessions to the H Block and Armagh prisoners' demand for special status.

Those who declare that these 'criminals and terrorists' can never be given different treatment from other prisoners have short memories. Special category status was given to Republican prisoners in 1972 by William Whitelaw.

It was withdrawn in 1976 as Britain changed its policy to the pretence that all was 'normal' in the Six Counties.

Yet in every way the prisoners are treated by special procedures. They are picked up under special laws. They are tried in special one judge, no-jury courts. And the Northern Ireland Secretary Humphrey Atkins has admitted that

they are special in that 'their sentences are much longer'.

There is overwhelming support for the prisoners' case among the Catholic population in the north of Ireland. The establishment media has attempted to dismiss the vote for Bobby Sands as being a vote against the Unionist Harry West.

But the Catholic voters did not follow the call of the traditional anti-Unionist political party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party to spoil their ballot papers.

They voted for Bobby Sands as an H Block/Armagh candidate. They clearly see the fight for the prisoners' demands as a fight against Britain's at-

tempt to rule the north of Ireland, and as a first step to forcing the complete withdrawal of Britain from Ireland.

The massive vote for Sands in Fermanagh and South Tyrone has been followed by an increasing number of street demonstrations across Ireland in support of the prisoners. In turn the British army has stepped up its campaign of harassment and repression.

Over Easter two youths were cold-bloodedly murdered by army landrovers which ploughed into the crowd at 50mph. And throughout Ireland H Block activists and supporters have been arrested and harassed.

The labour movement in Britain has been slow to show support for the prisoners. In recent weeks a number of Labour, Liberal, and Welsh Nationalist MPs appealed to the government to make 'an imaginative breakthrough' on these issues.

The appeal pointed out the prisoners' willingness to compromise and adopt a flexible approach. Signatories of the appeal requested a meeting with Michael Foot but he refused to meet them.

Benn

Left leaders like Benn and Heffer have also refused to declare their support for the prisoners despite the massive vote for Bobby Sands.

In a statement to the House of Commons press conference organised by the 'Don't let the Irish prisoners die' committee last week, Sands' sister Marcella appealed:

'It would be criminal of the government if it allows my brother to die before making a move. In the eyes of the world he is a political prisoner, and it's up to the government to implement the five demands now before he dies.'

This weekend's demonstration needs to be a massive display of solidarity with the Irish prisoners.



IRISH HUNGER STRIKER

BOBBY SANDS



- Age 27
- Union: National Union of Vehicle Builders and ATGWU
- 'On the blanket' since 1977
- Began hunger strike on 1st March

DON'T LET HIM DIE!

SUPPORT THE PRISONERS 5 DEMANDS

1. The right for the men to wear their own clothes
2. The right to refrain from prison work
3. The right to free association
4. The right to organise recreational and educational facilities and receive one visit, letter and parcel per week
5. Restoration of full remission of sentences

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