

# Socialist Challenge

The picket lines outside Grunwick and the fire stations were maintained throughout the Xmas and New Year period. They demonstrated the desire of the Fire Brigades Union militants and the Grunwick strikers to win their struggles. But what both groups of workers confront is an important and powerful obstacle: the Labour Government and the TUC leaders.

For it is an open secret that if the TUC had decided to back the FBU, organise solidarity actions, and campaign against the 10 per cent norm, the strike could have been approaching a successful conclusion.

Instead FBU members stand outside their fire stations, isolated and cold. If they are defeated it will have been the TUC, acting under Callaghan's instructions.

**GRUNWICK**  
**FBU**

## OUR COMPANIONS OF HONOUR

Jack Jones claimed that he accepted his high award [Companion of Honour, or Capitalism's Hireling] not for himself but for the trade union movement as a whole in recognition of its services to the nation. This is somewhat of a distortion as the award was not offered to Arthur Scargill, the Grunwick strikers, or the FBU.

It was offered to Jones as the foremost Labour lieutenant of Capital. And there can be little doubt that he deserves it, though in all fairness it should be shared with Tom Jackson, Len Murray, Roy Grantham, and Hugh Scanlon (RIP). It is thanks to them that the Labour Government has been able to serve British capitalism, a fact recognised even by the anti-Labour ruling class commentator, Peregrine Worsthorne. He wrote in last Sunday's Telegraph:

'Labour includes in its ranks a significantly higher proportion of rulers, with an instinct for Government, than does the Conservative Party .... Labour looks now, both steady and astute, realistic and ruthless ....'

Exactly! Steady and astute in defending capitalism. Ruthless in dealing with any working class opposition.

One lesson we have to learn from 1977 is that when a Labour Government is in power all the political weaknesses of the labour movement come right out into the open and cripple the class struggle.



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES

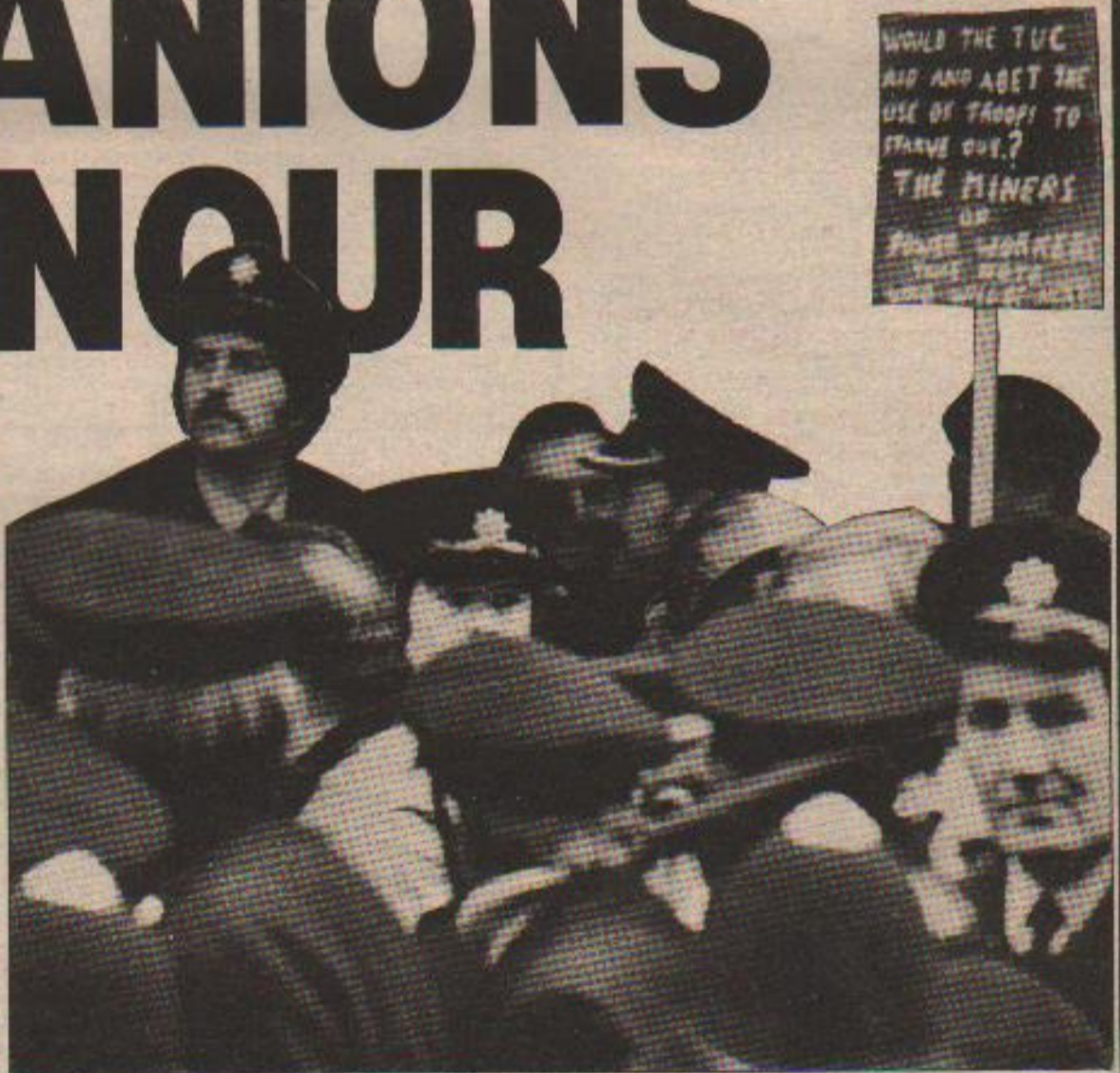


Photo: MARTIN SLAVIN

**REVIEW OF THE YEAR Pages 7, 8, 9 & 10**

## Editorial

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.  
Editorial 01-359 8180/9. Distribution 01-359 8301.  
Advertising 01-359 8371.

### The Tenth Year

TEN YEARS AGO the world was shaken by a succession of startling events. The National Liberation Front in southern Vietnam launched its New Year military offensive which shattered American morale and succeeded in inspiring a mass movement against the war throughout the world. A few months later France was shaken by a general strike involving ten million workers occupying their factories. The ensuing political crisis shook the entire Gaullist apparatus and 'order' was restored only with the aid and collaboration of the French Communist Party.

Three months after the May events in France, the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact subordinates invaded the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic to destroy the Prague Spring and Dubcek's 'socialism with a human face.'

The developments of 1968 brought on to the political stage a new layer of militants not bound by the dogmas of either social democracy or Stalinism. Consisting initially of students, their influence spread to newly-radicalised workers and the result was the largest growth experienced by the revolutionary movement since the Twenties.

What has happened over the last ten years has revealed the strengths and the weaknesses of the far left. It is a fact that, in general, only the Trotskyist segment of the revolutionary left, or that which retained many of the elements of Trotskyism, has managed to survive and grow over the past decade. The Maoist groups are in crisis, which is due to the precarious and unstable political situation which exists in China. Some have moved to explicitly reformist positions; others have broken with their past and embarked on terrorist incursions — a reflection of petty-bourgeois impatience and despair.

The dilemma which has confronted the bulk of the non-Trotskyist left has been the attitude it should adopt towards the mass organisations of the working class. In Italy, the *Il Manifesto* current operates as a public left faction of the Communist Party. In Portugal, the PRP (BR) referred to the Socialist Party as a 'social-fascist' party and announced the imminence of armed insurrection. The latter organisation has virtually disappeared, and the former could well return to the PCI.

This does not mean that the Fourth International or other currents not afflicted with the above diseases should show any signs of complacency. Our central strategic task is to find a road to the masses in this period. Portugal marked an important failure in this respect. We should try and make Spain a success. If the French elections in March result in a victory for the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, the far left will face a serious test. The next General Election in Britain will confront the far left in this country with important choices as well.

In that sense the appearance of Socialist Unity is a small and modest step forward. If supported by the Socialist Workers Party it could become a real pole for attracting forces in favour of class struggle.

The last ten years have also seen the rise of new autonomous movements — women's and gay liberation being the most important — which have forced the Marxist left to think and formulate its ideas on sexual politics. Furthermore what has been brought home with a vengeance is the central importance of socialist democracy as the only serious alternative to bourgeois democracy. The revolutionary left has only recently begun to take these questions seriously. One of the results in Britain was the launching of *Socialist Challenge*.

In the coming year we will continue our fight for socialist unity, but we will in addition stress the necessity of fighting for democratic rights throughout the world. We will give extended coverage to political prisoners throughout the world and try and launch campaigns for some of them with the help of supporters groups in this country.

The best way of showing that Jimmy Carter's 'concern for human rights' is utter demagoguery is to put our own ideas into practice. The tenth year will test our capacities on many fronts. Whether we pass these tests depends on us. Denouncing the 'betrayals' of others will no longer be regarded as a sufficient excuse.

### The economy in 1978

# '... not better, much the same'

by CPS

ACCORDING TO popular belief, British industry is beset with restrictive practices, defended almost to the last barricade by recalcitrant trade unions whose members are, by comparison with workers in other countries, lazy and irresponsible. This is the popular interpretation of the idea that productivity in British industry is too small in comparison with Britain's competitors.

Were productivity higher, that is, were the labour cost of producing goods and services lower, then the goods and services produced would be cheaper. So people would want to buy more, and this increase in demand would generate increases in employment in order to produce the higher output. Further, the increase in demand would make it worthwhile for capitalists to invest in more factories and more machines, and the higher profits would provide the funds for this increased investment. Finally, higher investment would generate further increases in productivity, and so the cycle continues.

#### NOT VICIOUS

This cycle is clearly a 'virtuous' one rather than a 'vicious' one, because it produces self-sustained growth. Moreover, if the increases in productivity which begin the cycle are oriented towards the export-producing sector, then the cycle could be 'export-led' and therefore could anticipate the increase in imports caused by the increase in demand consequent upon full employment. This would avoid the necessity for the sort of 'stop-go' policies which have characterised the British economy since 1945. Lastly, since productivity growth would enable earnings to rise without a corresponding rise in prices, everybody benefits.

Now it is quite true that productivity, measured as output per head in manufacturing industry, has grown more slowly in the UK than in other major European countries. Over the period 1955-1973 manufacturing productivity increased at an average annual rate of about 5

per cent in West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands, as against 3.2 per cent in the UK. This may not seem a big difference, but the cumulative effect over nearly 20 years is substantial. From the beginning of the period to the end, manufacturing output per worker increased by just over three-quarters in the UK, compared with nearly one and a half times in the other five countries.

Furthermore, because of low productivity growth, unit labour costs (growth of money wages divided by growth in output) have risen much faster in the UK. Between 1964 and 1974 unit labour costs in manufacturing industry grew at an average annual rate of 2.7 per cent in the USA, 4.7 per cent in France, 5.5 per cent in West Germany, 5.8 per cent in Italy, and 7.1 per cent in the UK. And because of low productivity growth, in the decade or so to 1973, real earnings per head in manufacturing industry in every comparable country (except the USA) grew at at least twice the rate achieved in the UK.

#### STRONG PRESSURE

So what then are the prospects for 1978? First of all there will be strong pressure to keep wage increases as low as

possible, on the argument that Britain cannot afford rises in unit labour costs higher than her competitors. And secondly, there will be pressure to improve productivity by increasing the amount of output produced by each worker.

These two phenomena comprise what is meant by 'the restructuring of capital'. It is a response by the capitalist class to the fact that the rate of profit is too low to maintain accumulation successfully. Money that would be used for investment in industry if profits were high enough is instead used for speculative purposes or is invested overseas. But this situation cannot be maintained for ever, since the money so used ultimately has its source in the production of goods and services; for these to expand their productivity has to increase.

So capital must be restructured, through mergers, takeovers and bankruptcies, in order that British capitalism be made more efficient. Which industries then will do well in 1978? Food manufacturing, chemicals, especially soap and detergent, mechanical and electrical engineering, especially industrial plant and steelwork, and electronic computers have all more than matched increased import penetration with higher export sales in the last few years. The same can

hardly be said for metal manufacturing, vehicles (except tractors) and textiles. Indeed, over manufacturing industry as a whole from 1968 to 1976 imports rose from 17 per cent to 25 per cent of the UK market, and this will probably increase thereby reinforcing the necessity for restructuring.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT UP

Now it is true that all forecasts suggest a small rise in living standards next year after the severe squeeze of this year. Earnings will rise slightly faster than prices, but profits are still too low to support any sustained expansion of investment. Consequently, the growth of national income will not be sufficient to reduce unemployment. December unemployment stands at 1,428,000 or 6.0 per cent of the workforce, and the Government subsidy training programme covers another 33,000 people. But the labour force is growing by 10,000 a month, and all forecasts suggest a steady increase in unemployment. Thus real growth in the economy will be small, and more people will be without jobs. Those with jobs will see a small rise in their living standards, and investment may recover slightly if profits continue to increase — but the basic picture is one of continued recession in order to continue the restructuring of industry. Indeed we could say of the British economy as was once said of the dying Prince of Wales: 'He is not better, he is much the same'.

**SOCIALIST UNITY STEERING COMMITTEE**  
Sunday, 15 January, at noon  
Venue: please note change — 328/9 Upper Street London N1.  
(nearest tube: Angel or Highbury and Islington)

## OUR POLICIES

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

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

- To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.
- To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

- 1** The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of the workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.
- 2** Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

- 3** The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.
  - 4** In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.
- The Communist Parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Euro-communist' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and seeing internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.

### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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

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

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

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

In 1977, the women and the men who had marched out of George Ward's gates to demand basic trade union rights made an indelible mark on history.

Whatever the eventual outcome of the strike at Grunwick — now in its 16th month — the pickets who massed in support of the predominantly Asian strikers showed the intolerance of the workers movement for the sweatshop conditions that continue to glorify the flag of free enterprise.

The leaders of that movement well deserve Fleet Street's accolade as their People of the Year. The Labour Government, which has bowed to the Law Lords, and despatched coachloads of uniformed thugs to Willesden. The TUC, which dutifully took the 11 July mass picket for a tour of NW London's back streets, and has obstructed every attempt to deprive Grunwick of its essential services.

The Rats of the Year award is reserved for the leaders of APEX and the postal workers' union. As 1977 drew to its miserable close, APEX suspended from union membership the Grunwick strikers who upset the TUC by fasting on its doorstep, while the UPW imposed fines of up to £500 on its members in the Cricklewood sorting office who had refused to handle Ward's mail.

Socialist Challenge has no difficulty in selecting our People of the Year. They are the Grunwick strikers who continue to battle against such despicable opposition within the workers' movement, quite apart from the array of state forces assembled against them.

These are the comments of some members of the Strike Committee about their experience of the struggle.

JAYABEN DESAI worked as a dress machinist before she took a job at Grunwick in 1974. She had left the Gujerat state in India to live in East Africa when she married, and in 1968 the family came to Britain. Grunwick is her first experience of a strike. It is unlikely to be her last.

'So many Asian people say that the unions do nothing for them', she says. 'So they don't join or they stop paying their dues. But what they must do is raise their voice and ask the leadership what's going on.'

'They have to stand together, organise themselves, and join with the trade union movement.'

'The Government doesn't want to do anything about Grunwick — that's what we've observed the whole year. I think we have done everything possible. But the union hasn't acted properly, and the TUC didn't move.'

'The support for us has not died. From the rank and file it is the same. The TUC has to use that support, that strength and that power.'

PAT COLLINS worked at Grunwick for six years as a van driver. On 11 July — the first day of mass action — Pat and six other drivers marched out of the gates to join the strike. He has no doubt what it would mean to lose it.

'Other workers in a similar situation', he says, 'will feel there is no point in striking, and probably not much point in being in a union. That's why it would be a big blow to the whole movement.'

'It's been a wonderful fight. I've been very surprised that people who knew nothing about trade unions could

become so active. I wasn't in a union for most of the time at Grunwick, but now I feel that the only hope the working class has got is to belong.'

'I've spoken at meetings on what was happening inside the firm, the threats and so on. And the farce of Ward's so-called ballot, when we were all crowded into the canteen so people could look over your shoulder to see what you marked and you were left in no doubt what would happen if you wanted a union.'

MAHMOOD AHMAD who comes from Pakistan, worked at Grunwick for just three weeks before the strike began. The struggle, he says, has changed his life.

'It's all been experience. I've been learning all the time. Before the strike I couldn't have spoken to a crowd of people, argued my case in court, spoken to MPs about our problem. Now I can speak to a crowd of two thousand...'

'I've become much more politically aware. I'm thinking of carrying on with some of the issues I've come across: fighting NAFF and the National Front; dealing with the problems of immigrant people in this country. I've joined the National Council for Civil Liberties and I'm a member of Brent Trades Council.'

'I think the strike has encouraged Asians to take an active role in the unions. About half the Grunwick strikers are women and you just wouldn't expect Indian women to be involved in a strike, getting on to a picket line and arguing their case, because they thought that wasn't right. Now they're the leading people.'

# People of the year



Members of the Grunwick strike committee. Top left: Mahmood Ahmad, Bill Heywood; seated: Vipi Maglani, Jayaben Desai; standing front: Pat Collins, Kamlesh Gandhi.

## Students fight for nursery

by MARY ROCHE

THE NURSERY at Liverpool Polytechnic is safe from closure — temporarily. It is financed by the students' union, and if students vote to close it at next month's general meeting, they would be kicking out 20 children, putting four people out of work, and forcing parents with children at the nursery to leave their courses.

The attempt to close the nursery is being led by the student union president, a rugby fanatic, who wants to use the money for sports facilities — for himself and his friends.

The Women's Group and Socialist Society at the Poly

have established a Nursery Defence Group to link up with the campaigns of the National Organisation of International Socialist Students and of Broad Left members. Local community papers and the Women's Action Group in Liverpool are demanding that Social Services provides the backing to expand the nursery.

Our defence group has scored its first success by mobilising students to vote to keep the nursery open. This is the kind of local activity that is necessary if the campaigns of the National Union of Students against cuts, unemployment and discrimination are to be more than paper policies.

## Paper censors women's adverts

by PAULINE STANTON

THE IMAGE of women is, of course, routinely fashioned and distorted by the newspapers, which at the same time are happy to suppress news and information on women's rights. In Hull, this censorship also extends to the advertising columns.

When the Hull Working Women's Charter Group recently held a conference entitled 'Women's Oppres-

sion', we attempted to advertise it in the *Hull Daily Mail*. When the secretary of the group first rang the paper she was told — after a pause — that as the title of the conference might cause offence(!), she would have to personally come into the office to place the advert.

When then ensued was a

ridiculous charade of taking the advert in, being told by the counter staff that it would have to be dealt with over the phone and then, no, it couldn't, etc. The advert never appeared.

Meanwhile, the National Front is regularly allowed to advertise in the paper, as is the anti-abortion Life outfit. The National Abortion Campaign has had its adverts banned.

The Working Women's

Charter Group in Hull has complained to the local branch of the National Union of Journalists and to SLADE. We have also written to the editor of the *Hull Daily Mail*, which happens to be owned by Westminster Press — the company resisting the demand for a closed shop by journalists in Darlington because this would be a threat to 'press freedom'!

## Interview with West Midlands FBU strike leaders



Photo: MARTIN BLAVIN

FBU picket of TUC General Council on 21 December.

maintain neutrality. They keep talking about orders. Well, I read that in the Nuremberg trials as well'.

### NO ICE

The latest offer from the employers cut no ice with either of the men. Pete pointed out: 'Ten per cent to some of our members is not a wage increase in money terms, it is a wage cut. At present some of our members qualify for the family income supplement. But with ten per cent on the basic wage they won't get it.'

'In money terms we're talking about perhaps a £3 increase in take home pay with the loss of all those allowances which firemen can get at present to help feed and clothe their children.'

Both Pete and Geoff argued there were even problems with the present FBU claim of average manual earnings plus 10 per cent. The average wage being advocated is that published in the New Earnings Survey which is at least ten months out of date when it is published. Neither is under any illusion about the difficulties of winning even that claim.

In this respect, said Geoff, the betrayal of the TUC 'cannot be minimised.'

### ACCEPT CONDITIONS

'They went against their own Congress ruling for free collective bargaining. They told a union that was on official and national strike to accept the Government's conditions, the same conditions the Congress voted against by accepting free collective bargaining'.

But if the TUC sell-out made the strike more difficult to win, it and the strike itself has had other effects. Effects which will bring little comfort to the leadership of the TUC. Geoff Poxon's final comment was on how the struggle as a whole had affected the strikers.

'Political consciousness has risen a hell of a lot. It's hard to gauge, but I think it has. They're more ready to stand up for themselves, and they're more ready to stand up for other people. That is the main thing.'

# 'They're crucifying us!'

**GEOFF POXON** is secretary of the 'E' division of the Fire Brigades Union's West Midlands region. **PETE BILSON** is chairperson of the Wolverhampton branch of the FBU. Just before Christmas they were interviewed for Socialist Challenge by Bruce Young.

'This isn't a strike in the normal sense', argued Geoff Poxon, 'where an employer has limited resources. If you take on the Government, they haven't got limited resources.'

'They call in the army, they call the police force, they call in the media. They call in the whole damn structure of the State. And they're mobilising against us very, very effectively; to crush a group of workers'.

Geoff Poxon and Pete Bilson are leading members of the FBU in Wolverhampton. They were militants before the strike began, and they are militants now. But as Geoff Poxon said: 'The greatest political lesson of anybody's life is a strike', and both men have learned a lot from the first strike in the history of the FBU.

Reviewing the progress of the strike, Pete made the point that the Government has operated a two phase strategy. 'The first one was a shame campaign and the second was a starvation campaign'. But for Bilson, 'the

biggest stab in the back came in the form of the Finance and General Purposes Sub-Committee of the TUC and its

## TUC votes

THE TUC General Council voted by 20 to 17 not to support the FBU strike on 21 December. Those who voted to defy the Congress policy of opposing the 10 per cent limit were: Scanlon (AUEW), Drain (NALGO), Daly (NUM), Patterson (TGWU), Smith (UCA-TT), Jackson (UPW), Weighell (NUR), Allen (Shopworkers), Eccles (GMWU), Baker (GM-

rejection of the firemen's case'.

Geoff Poxon detailed the point: 'You've got hypocritical people like Scanlon, whose members are getting 17 per cent rises under the table. You've got Lawrence Daly and other so-called socialists. And they go out and crucify 35,000 people, for what? For a socialist

government?'

'No, for the sake of the CBI, the Tories and the Lib-Lab pact'.

Geoff said he was not 'politically naive', but even then the decision of the Finance and General Purposes Committee surprised him: 'We expected them to come out and say, same as Grunwick, we support you —

WU), Sirs (Steelworkers), Chalmers (Boilermakers).

Basnett (GMWU), Bottini (Agricultural Workers), Dyson (Dyers and Bleachers), MacGougan (Garment Workers), Maddox (Bakers), Lloyd (UC-ATT), Spanswick (COHSE), Christopher (Inland Revenue).

Harry Unwin (TGWU) abstained. Jack Jones was on holiday.

and then forget it. I never expected financial support, but I expected verbal, moral support. But they even turned that down'.

The failure of the TUC to support the strike meant that organising the strike and the support it attracted fell on other shoulders. So how could the

strike be won?'

For Pete Bilson: 'Solidarity is essential. We have used our ultimate weapon — by striking — and we have to win, because once we've used that ultimate weapon, there is nothing else we can use. We have to maintain this strike not just for our immediate claim, but for all claims that might occur within the fireservice in the future'.

For Poxon, the key to maintaining the strike was money: 'If we don't get the finances in we'll lose eventually. So it's all to do with how to organise collections, contributions. It's organisation of the left and the trade unions that counts.'

'I think this strike shows that the left is disorganised. It's rallied tremendously, and the public have, around the banner of the fireman's strike, but it's still disorganised'.

### POLICE SYMPATHY

When the strike began, there were reports of many members of the police showing their sympathy for the strike. The experience in Wolverhampton suggests differently. Geoff thought that 'initially they were all in favour', but 'now, let us be

truthful, they haven't helped us at all.'

'We've had old age pensioners giving us 2p, but these policemen who're earning the equivalent of £80 and £100 a week and who are riding on our back — their secretary says that if the firemen get 30 per cent, they want 30 per cent — haven't the guts to do anything themselves.'

### NO WAY

'We've asked them if they'll have a collecting box at the police station; no way they'll touch that. They say they must

## Behind army moans

Xmas was the excuse used for a series of moan stories about the scab troops. Collections were held, donations were solicited and the popular press was full of sob stories about the scabs in uniform.

Amidst the garbage a few interesting facts emerged: \* The major appeal for the scabs collected £100,000. Of this £40,000 came from one source — Lloyds Underwriters, who manage the world's insurance business.

\* Doing very nicely are the scab troops in Barnstaple. They are

billeted in the poshest hotel in the town — the Imperial. It costs £11 a night.

\* On 14 December young Army officers at Weymouth, Dorset decided that merely scabbing on the strike wasn't enough. So 20 of them in troop carriers stopped outside the fire brigade headquarters and pelted the pickets with eggs and onions...

A spokesperson for the Army commented: 'This doesn't sound very much like the way our lads behave'.

# Whatever happened to the miners' pay claim?

asks RICH PALSER

It was just six months ago that the miners' national conference decided to reject productivity dealing, and instead submit a claim for £135 a week. Since then the right wing on the NUM executive, led by Gormley and Daly, have tried manoeuvre after manoeuvre to reverse or over-ride that decision.

They began by continuing to negotiate a nationally agreed productivity deal. A national ballot of the union membership was then held, which again resoundingly rejected an incentive scheme. So the executive came up with a loophole. They sanctioned the negotiation of incentive schemes at local level which — by creating different wage rates in each area and splitting support for the £135 claim — have precisely the same effect as a national productivity deal.

But weakening the fighting unity of the union is exactly what Daly and Gormley are

after, and now they hope that the more local deals that are concluded in easily-worked pits and areas, the less support there will be for a fight for the national claim.

### COMMUNIST PARTY

This was recognised by the left wing on the union executive, based on Scotland, Kent, Yorkshire and the South Wales areas. But at the same time, lefts like Mick McGahey of the Communist Party have continued to pledge themselves to 'increased productivity'. And

no steps were taken to begin to organise a fight for the £135 claim.

A call for a national delegate conference to plan the action for the £135 claim, if rejected by the right-wing dominated executive, should have been called by the areas supporting the claim.

This conference could have been built into a really authoritative national conference, through the sort of campaign launched in the Yorkshire area during the ballot on the national productivity deal — with speakers sent to pit-head mass meetings, special issues of the area papers explaining the purpose of the conference, and so on.

Instead the left tried to stop the attempts to split the union by using the courts. Kent area NUM tried to get the courts to halt the national ballot on an incentive scheme, and were re-

jected. Yorkshire, Kent, and South Wales areas applied to the courts to stop the executive endorsing pit-based productivity schemes. This, too, was predictably rejected.

'I believe this judgement should firmly convince any trade unionist that it is useless hoping for justice in the courts of this land' said Arthur Scargill after the event.

### CHANCE DIMINISHES

With each week that goes by — and each local incentive scheme that is introduced — the chance of a unified fight for the £135 claim diminishes. The left in the union has waited too long already. Gormley and Daly may well be exposed as being union splitters, but once having split the union it will be too late to do anything about it. It is not too late to organise a national delegate conference now.

# A New Year message from British Leyland

## Work harder, lose jobs

Leyland management's New Year message to its employees is rather like a Christmas tree — much the same all the year round. The message is short and simple: 'We are in crisis; you carry the can'. PAT HICKEY, shop steward at Rover

Leyland's Managing Director, Derek Whittaker identifies the problem as 'low production, poor productivity, a declining market share and serious financial losses'. Whittaker uses the familiar trick of trying to set one group of workers against the other. He points to Ford as the main enemy for Leyland workers, because 'they planned to take 30 per cent of the UK market, and oust Leyland from the market leadership — permanently'. In the *Leyland Mirror* he notes that Ford had taken overall leadership in the first 11 months of 1977 and that if they achieved their aim 'we have failed'.

He goes on to reveal that the Joint Management Council had

drawn up a plan to deal with this situation. The JMC is the top union/management participation body. The proposals which the JMC rubber-stamped include: improved continuity of production (ie, no strikes — important in view of the other proposals); elimination of restrictive practices — or forget about one operator, one job; reduction in manning\* levels and improved productivity — or redundancies and speed up.

Following the vote on the corporate bargaining package the company are in no mood the hang fire. These 'improvements' are to be implemented in the first six months of 1978 — or else 'the company will reduce in

Solihull, argues that if the effects of corporate bargaining and participation schemes are to be met, a fighting unity across Leyland plants is vital.

size and jobs will be lost'. A rather strange alternative, since the company's proposals involve substantial loss of jobs as well as a worsening of conditions.

### PARTICIPATION

The participation committees have been centrally involved in the discussions on these proposals. These bodies have been praised by the Communist Party as creating a 'situation in which the labour force have greater control over their future by taking part in major company decisions'. Of course the participation committees have done nothing of the sort. They have participated in discussion on the implemen-

tation of decisions taken elsewhere. It is rumoured that the actual figures being discussed involve the shedding of about 9000 employees. But the participation committees are keeping quiet about such 'details'.

It is clear that manning levels will be a central issue for Leyland management in '78. A recent dispute at Radford Axles points to the future. Despite massive lay-offs as a result of the strike, Whittaker declared that manning levels was a 'fundamental principal' and he would not concede on this issue.

Although plant leaderships are well aware that the Radford dispute was helping management sharpen the axe for other plants, nothing was done to support the strike or prepare the membership. Discussions around the incentive scheme on the Joint Negotiating Committee are another aspect of this attack on manning.

### UNITY

The old answer of each plant going its own way will not be sufficient to meet the new problems. It is necessary to fight these attacks when and where they strike. But we must also fight for unity across Leyland cars at rank and file level, to combat the centralised strategy of Leyland management, and the 'unity' of the union leaders in the joint union/management committees.

It is essential to deal with the trade union officials and replace existing plant leaders with a leadership committed to struggle, to defend the interests of Leyland workers. That task can only be carried out in the struggle for a fighting unity in Leyland cars.

\* Normally our reporters try to avoid the use of words like 'manning' which historically reflects the domination of men in the workforce. In this case we cannot think of an alternative, as 'staffing' would refer to white collar workers. We will be publishing an Under Review article on the use of language in the near future — Eds.



## Left wins Cowley vote

Workers at Leyland Cowley assembly plant have delivered their verdict on two year's betrayal by Reg Parsons, notorious transport workers' union senior steward. In the union's recent biennial elections Parsons was thrown out of the carpeted office provided by Leyland management and workers pinned their hopes on Bob Fryer. The vote is a triumph for revolutionary militants of the 5/293 branch of the Transport and General Workers' Union — a branch which has constantly stood firm against attacks from officialdom. JOHNNY HAINE reports from Cowley.

The votes for Bob Fryer are an affront to union bosses. Fryer led TGWU workers for 16 years, until he was betrayed by union officials three years ago. And to rub salt into the wounds of both Leyland and union officials, workers also elected as deputy senior steward Alan Thornett, leader of the Workers' Socialist League.

Over the past two years, vigorous efforts have been made to reduce the TGWU to a tame tool of management. Parsons

played the role of front man for district secretary David Buckle in these moves. This Parsons-Buckle duo consistently attacked the unity of the workforce by destroying the joint shop stewards' committee and attempting to set up yet another tame TGWU branch.

Now, the workers' vote has called a halt, forcing the officials to 'postpone' the verdicts of kangaroo courts set up by Buckle with the intention of

eliminating the revolutionary left.

But, important as the votes are, the struggle is far from over. Leyland, realising the possible effect of a revolutionary leadership on the plant, refuse to recognise Thornett. This cynical affront to workers' democracy must be challenged — and little reliance can be placed on the TGWU officials who have time and again tried to stab Thornett in the back.

### FIGHTING POLICY

Apart from this important recognition issue, key tasks face workers on the plant. Fryer should mount a fighting policy at once — a policy which gives Cowley workers the chance to fight back against

the government-backed Leyland offensive. Top of the list must be the rejection of corporate bargaining and the submission of a £100 a week claim with cost of living provision. Despite the difficulties an attempt must be made to remove the shackles of the Labour Government's wage controls.

### WITHDRAWAL

Secondly, complete withdrawal from the participation fraud is essential, to be replaced with a fighting, independent shop stewards' movement. The involvement of the entire workforce is crucial in fighting for such a programme of action. Only by the most open form of workers' democracy can Fryer and Thornett win, hold and consolidate, their renewed leadership and carry the workforce forward.

## Has the AUEW claim been burnt?

Compare the following two statements: 'Our Labour Government's achievements on behalf of the working class justify its expecting trade unionists to have reasonable regard to the Government's pay guidelines if we are to continue our attacks on inflation.'

That was John 'Jesus' Boyd, General Secretary of the Engineering Union, writing in the union's journal in November. Contrast it with:

'This National Committee instructs the Executive Council, through the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, to seek by negotiation a minimum time rate of £70 for skilled workers, £55 for labourers, the rate for semi-skilled workers to be in accordance with the existing formula.'

### UNANIMOUS

This resolution was passed unanimously by the national committee of the Engineering Union on 14 November. The claim will mean an increase of 66 per cent in the minimum time rate, which currently stands at £42 a week.

Many engineering workers already receive a similar weekly wage, but for the more poorly paid sections of the industry an increase in the minimum time rate will mean major increases well above the Government's 10 per cent limit.

Nor will better paid workers simply benefit from increased overtime and shift allowances. A victory over the Engineering Employers' Federation — who will resist any such increase in the minimum time rate — would open the way for better paid workers to further increase their wages above the minimum.

### NATIONAL ACTION

In addition, the claim includes demands for a 35-hour week and 35 days holiday a year, which if won could go a

long way to reducing unemployment in the industry. Neither the EEF nor the Labour Government are going to readily concede the claim. National action will be required to win it.

There are few signs of any preparation for a national fight being made by the union leadership. Scanlon, fresh from voting against supporting the firefighters at the TUC, is no more likely to lead a fight



JOHN BOYD

for the claim than is John Boyd.

The same national committee meeting which decided on the claim also instructed the AUEW's district committees to call 'special meetings' of shop stewards to begin the process of mobilising the membership to win the full claim; these meetings should take place before the National Committee is reconvened.

It said that the national committee should be recalled as soon as the EEF replied to the claim, to consider what action should be taken if the reply is not favourable.

Militants should demand that these special shop stewards meetings take place, and argue within them for a national conference of delegates elected from these meetings to plan the struggle over the claim. It is only by full rank and file control over negotiations and action for the claim that a national struggle will be launched.

The recent Broad Left national conference called for a shop stewards and convenors national conference in the New Year. It is time the Broad Left came out of its long sleep and began to organise that conference, so that the Scanlons and Boyds are not allowed to get away with treating their own members with the scorn they have shown for the firefighters.

## Left Broad Left candidate

The Broad Left in the Engineering Union will be fielding a candidate with a difference in the union elections to be held in the West Midlands No 16 Division next March. Mick Rice, a shop steward at Lucas BW3, is standing for secretary of the newly-created Birmingham South district — on a programme well to the left of the run-of-the-mill Broad Left candidate.

It includes demands for a 35-hour week with no loss of pay, a sliding scale of wages which would automatically compensate for rising prices, and opposition to racial and sexual discrimination.

Rice is also demanding greater democracy within the AUEW, and to back this up his election campaign will make strenuous efforts to bring the issues to the membership. Plans are underway to visit branch meetings throughout the new district, together with arranging meetings at factories and with shop stewards committees.

The local rag, the *Evening Mail*, will undoubtedly be intervening on the side of the right wing, and whether or not the left obtains a right of reply, it is planned to produce campaign leaflets and organise door-to-door canvassing.

Bitterness grips the young

## Unemployment will not go away

Samuel Beckett suggests that there are three types of laughter suitable to our age: the bitter, the hollow, and the mirthless. For young people on the dole in this bright New Year, the first category is the most appropriate response to the Government's latest brain wave, writes JIM MASTERS

The Youth Opportunities Scheme (sic), which is shortly to be implemented, will not provide full-time permanent employment at normal wage rates for a single unemployed person.

It is supposed to offer temporary employment, vocational training, or further education for up to 230,000 young people. But it is nothing more than an extension of the existing rag bag of derisory stop-gap measures, which include:

Work experience, under which youngsters are released from school to work for a local employer for free. The benefits are supposedly the practical experience of work, and a character endorsement of their keenness to be a wage labourer.

### MENIAL TASKS

Then we have the Job Creation Programme, providing a 'socially useful' job for between six weeks and a year. In practice this often means that young people are sent out to do humiliating and menial tasks.

There is a Young Employment Subsidy of £10 a week for eight to 26 weeks for employers who give a full-time job to an unemployed young person. In short, State-subsidised workers who will then rejoin the dole

queue. Under the Job Release scheme, those within a year of retirement are offered a grant of £23 a week to quit. This is meant to release jobs, but two thirds of those who have taken up the scheme have been unemployed, so in future it will be restricted to employed workers.

### HIGHLY IMPRESSIVE

The new Youth Opportunities Scheme will expand all these brilliant opportunities so that any school-leaver who is still out of work the following Easter will qualify for a place of some sort — and receive a highly impressive £18 a week for up to a year.

The Government's strategy (if it could be described in such an exalted way) is to improve the value and flexibility of young labour, in the hope that deflation will eventually allow them to be absorbed into full-time employment. The fact that all the experts now acknowledge that new investment in technologically advanced equipment means fewer jobs seems to have passed the Government by.

The campaigns on unemployment have been fragmented and sectarian — the left needs to take up these issues in the labour movement on a broader and



more effective basis. Trades councils should be encouraged to set up unemployment sub-committees which will launch united campaigns and monitor the operations of these schemes.

### PROPER RATES

The youth should be encouraged to organise, join their appropriate union, and demand full-time employment at proper wage rates. The Government's scheme poses dangers to many in education and the public sector, through the temporary employment of youngsters and adults at a fraction of the union rate for comparable work.

Socialists should take the lead in demanding full-time employment and union wages through a programme of useful public works. If the government

says that there is 'no money' for such a programme we should demand an open inquiry by workers, the unemployed and sympathetic experts into the finance and credit institutions of the City who do have the money. Private finance organisations who refuse to make their funds available should be nationalised.

### LONG-TERM DOLE

With or without the long awaited 'boom' from North Sea oil, many adults and young people face a prospect of long-term unemployment. Workers in employment will be blackmailed into accepting low wages, speed up and worsening conditions. Socialists must take the lead in defending the interests of the whole working class.

## Anti-Fascist Struggle

### Bristol gives NF the Bullet

by MIKE EAUDE

OVER SEVEN HUNDRED turned out in the cold to picket the National Front in Bristol on 22 December. Sefton school, with 25 per cent black pupils and on the edge of the city's main black area, was the scene for this biggest and broadest mobilisation yet seen in Bristol.

Only a paltry 22 fascists were counted going into the meeting to hear Captain McWilliam, the medalled NF candidate in the Bournemouth by-election. He was speaking in support of the NF candidate in an Avon County Council by-election.

The anti-fascist mobilisation extended well beyond the far left. Parents and teachers at the school and local residents turned out in force. Quakers, liberals, the Bishop of Bristol, trade unionists, Labour Party members, students and all the left swelled the numbers.

Fifty to sixty young blacks were also present and in a militant mood. Their presence and personal hostility to the NF challenged the peaceful orientation of the picket's broad co-ordinating committee.

Six people were arrested, two on assault charges, and one on a more serious charge. A special bank account is being opened to defray defence expenses. Contributions should be sent to: B Deakin, 25 Nevil Road, Bishopston, Bristol 6.

### CP flees from anti-fascist slogans

by K. HASSELL

FIVE HUNDRED people in Sheffield responded last month to a call by the Engineering Union district committee to march against racism and fascism. But few rank and file trade unionists were present — thanks to the inactivity of the Communist Party.

Although the CP dominates the AUEW locally, it was the far left which succeeded in winning the political basis of the march. Two AUEW branches endorsed the call by the Sheffield Anti-Fascist Campaign — for the slogans 'No platform for fascists', 'Fascists out of the unions', and 'End all immigration controls' — and these were

adopted at the open planning meeting for the demonstration.

On the day of the demo, 10 December, the CP refused to allow a speaker from the Anti-Fascist Campaign, and it was left to AFC militants and comrades from the Socialist Workers Party to organise the defence of paper sellers threatened by a dozen thugs from the National Front and the British National Party.

We were treated to speeches from three Sheffield Labour MPs — Flannery, Hooley, and Maynard — who denounced the NF, appealed to reason, and sought the protection of the law. It just so happens that the policy of the Communist Party is virtually indistinguishable from this genteel approach.

### Searchlight editor challenges racist

BILL JARVIS is a well-known racist in the Birmingham Labour Party. He has claimed that the decline in social services is due to the 'large number of immigrants' present in the city. Though Jarvis was backed up by his union branch [Post Office Engineering Union], his statements were condemned by the Birmingham Trades Council of which he is the President.

A massive press campaign, spearheaded by the local Evening Mail, was launched in his support and early last year he was returned to office by a small majority of 10 out of a total of 250 delegate votes.

This year Jarvis is being opposed again. His opponent could not be more appropriate: it is Maurice Ludmer, a member of the National Union of Journalists and Editor of Searchlight, a well-known anti-fascist magazine. Ludmer is widely respected for his anti-fascist work in the local labour movement.

All Socialist Challenge readers and supporters in Birmingham are urged to participate in the fight to ensure Ludmer's victory, which could have important local repercussions for anti-racist and anti-fascist work.

All the above reports were sent by local Socialist Challenge correspondents. We would urge readers elsewhere to send us brief reports from their localities for this column to be able to appear regularly.

## Picket Bolton fascists' meeting!

A MAJOR political storm has erupted in Bolton over the council's decision to allow the National Front to hold a public meeting in the Town Hall on either 10 or 24 February.

It was only last July that the same council banned a multi-racial cultural festival planned by the Trades Council on the grounds that it was 'provocative' and 'likely to lead to disorder'. Now the leader of the Tory council is evoking the notion of 'democratic rights' to justify the Front's meeting, and already blaming the left for any possible violence that the meeting might provoke.

### KEEP QUIET

The police, who campaigned vigorously to get the Trades Council's festival banned, have remained silent. But the most deafening silence came from Bolton's Labour Group who decided they would not oppose the decision to allow the Front to go ahead. One prominent Labour councillor is reported to have threatened resignation from the Party if the meeting is not allowed to take place.

Not all members of the Labour Group took up such an appalling position however. Cllr. Lawrence Cunliffe resigned his position as deputy leader over Labour's role and spoke of a 'gag' placed on anyone who wished to oppose the meeting. Both of Bolton's Labour MPs have also opposed the decision. So the Labour Party are clearly split over the issue.

Fortunately the trade union movement has so far shown a much greater measure of united opposition to the meeting. The Trades Council are planning to organise a mass picket of the



Fascist leaders John Tyndall [centre] and Andrew Footaine at Hyde last October. Their failure then makes it all the more vital to prevent the Nazis obtaining any foothold in the Greater Manchester area.

meeting and are contacting trade union organisations throughout the North West. Colin Barnett, secretary of the North West TUC, has similarly pledged a mass picket. Whilst Sid Vincent, area organiser of the NUM, has announced that the miners will turn out in force on the picket and that the NUM is considering withdrawing the use of facilities and financial

support that it gives the Labour Party because of Labour's non-opposition.

The picket has to be a large one — a very large one. The Front has been anxious for some time to get a foothold in the Greater Manchester area and after the set-backs it received in Hyde and the rest of Manchester recently, it is clearly intent on establishing a foothold in

Bolton. The banning of the Trades Council's festival last summer may well have given them the green light.

It is vital that we begin to mobilise now. Co-ordination is taking place through the Trades Council's sub-committee on racism and information and details should be obtained from: Neil Duffield, 52 Yewdale Gardens, Bolton.

Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)



## THE WORLD IN 1977

RICHARD CARVER reviews the year when everyone ran flat out to stay in the same place.

1977. Sadat and Begin, Charter 77 and Bahro, the neutron bomb and Star Wars, punk and skateboards, and the Silver Jubilee. And farewell to Gandhi, Bhutto and Bandaranaike, to Rabin and Bert Lance, to Agee and Hosenball, to Marx and Chaplin, and Presley and Prentice. Farewell too to the unity of the Communist Parties.

Yes, a lot happened in 1977, but nothing on the scale of the victories in Indochina and Angola which requires a complete reassessment of the world political scene. Many of last year's developments could change the face of world politics. But not yet.

Since the defeat of the Portuguese revolution and the anti-imperialist victory in Angola early in 1976 there has been no fundamental shift in the balance between the classes on a world scale. And in that sense 1977 looks very like 1976 — a year of shifting and shuffling and wait-and-see, with massive explosions just around the corner but never quite happening.

Nowhere is this more obvious than in Western Europe. Much of the year was spent waiting for governmental changes: in Britain the fall of the Labour Government; in France the victory of the Union of the Left; and in Italy the entry of the Communist Party into government.

### GOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT

In the event, the Italian Communist Party arrived at a governmental agreement (though not with ministerial posts) with the right-wing Government without any ballyhoo. After all, its policies now are hardly different from when it was in 'opposition'. In France the Union of the Left has all but fallen to bits and the long awaited govern-

ment may have to be long-awaited for a while longer. And even in Britain the opinion polls now raise the unheard of prospect of Labour returned at the next election.

Of course none of this alters the fundamental social forces at work. A working class upsurge and the accompanying crisis of the traditional parties is still long overdue in each of these countries...but not in 1977.

### UNEVENNESS

The same sort of staggering, stuttering, grunting unevenness marked the international capitalist economy over the last year. Already 1976 had seen the beginnings of a hesitant and inflationary upturn, particularly in the strongest capitalist economies: the United States, West Germany and Japan. That recovery has continued into 1977 though it has faltered as the year progressed. But the crisis of overproduction has continued. With a vast excess of productive capacity it has proved difficult, if not impossible, for even the strongest economies to attract productive investment.

The weaker imperialist countries have fared worse. The inflationary increase in consumer demand which helped the partial recovery in the US, West Germany and Japan could not be repeated in countries — Britain and Italy, above all — with high inflation and balance of payments deficits. In such conditions the ruling class was forced to do the exact opposite: hold down consumer demand by 'austerity' measures which constituted a brutal attack on working class living standards.

But there is no cause for complacency on the part of the imperialist strategists. Nothing decisive has turned in their favour. With the significant exception of Britain, where austerity

was policed by the trade unions, the working class has generally been successful in nullifying the impact of government policy on their pay packets — even in places like Italy and Spain where the fight back has run in the face of the workers' parties themselves.

The rise in industrial production has been most marked in the dependent or semi-developed countries, such as Brazil, Iran, South Korea and Hong Kong. In each of these cases this has been achieved at massive cost to the working class, in terms of both extreme poverty and severe political repression. This increase in production has sharpened trade rivalry between the imperialist and dependent countries and among the imperialist powers themselves — and this in the context of an overall contraction of world trade.

As always, while it is possible to make these broad generalisations about the economy, there are no such easy conclusions in politics.

### TWO FORUMS

There were two obvious forums for developments in world politics: the Helsinki recall conference in Belgrade and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. On the face of it neither held out the promise of Kissinger-style 'detente' lasting much longer. Although we are promised a new SALT agreement in the near future, US arms developments — such as the cruise missile and the neutron bomb which Jimmy Carter claims are not covered by SALT — are bound to provoke a response from the Soviet Union — and justifiably.

If you took any notice of the human rights rhetoric at Belgrade you might be reinforced in the view that East-West relations were crumbling. But not so. The stuff about the sanctity of human life is strictly for holidays and is not to be used when you are concluding an arms deal with the Shah of Iran or faced with dissidence in Poland,

Czechoslovakia or East Germany.

Equally Carter and US Imperialism Inc. have no interest in stimulating an opposition in Eastern Europe which could 'destabilise' the West. Hence Solzhenitsyn and Bukovsky are trumpeted for their perceptive observations on the Decline of the West while Marxists like Bahro and Biermann are ignored in jail or exile.

### SOVIET BUREAUCRACY

The Soviet bureaucracy has become even more uneasy in its relations with the imperialist powers since the running sore of 'Eurocommunism' chose 1977 to spill its unpleasant contents on a half-suspecting world. The significance of Eurocommunism is dealt with elsewhere in this review. For the moment it is enough to say that the Soviet bureaucracy brought Eurocommunism on itself. Where its policies have not been inherited wholesale from the Moscow line, Eurocommunism's criticisms have their root in the brutally undemocratic practices of the East European regimes.

The loss of these instruments of foreign policy in the imperialist countries has tended to force the Kremlin into an ever closer relationship with the imperialist governments themselves. There was an appropriate symbolism in the visit of Soviet President Brezhnev to Paris, when he refused to meet the French Communist Party leader.

In this context the perennial problem of the Soviet regime only becomes more acute: how is it possible to increase the Soviet sphere of influence — primarily for strategic reasons — without upsetting the international status quo by exporting revolution? 1977 offered no answer to that dilemma as the Soviet Union stood by helplessly while the Americans took the initiative in the Middle East, and two states, both supplied with identical Soviet weapons, slugged it out in the Horn of Africa.

North America

# A good year for human wrongs

THE FIRST year of the Carter administration has been one of severe attacks on the US working class. Civil rights were threatened in a number of areas.

The Hyde Amendment virtually ended abortions on Medicaid. Since a third of all abortions were funded by Medicaid, this is a serious setback for working class women. Allen Bakke, a white engineer, got a court to rule in his favour that positive discrimination for blacks in college entry was illegal, while former beauty queen Anita Bryant organised a nationwide anti-gay campaign.

In the labour movement itself things were more positive. Steelworkers Fight Back organised a serious opposition to the right wing leadership of the steelworkers union and the end of the year saw a national miners strike in defence of union rights.

The dominant political issue in Canada continues to be the national question in Quebec. The Parti Quebecois government, elected at the end of 1976, has spent most of the year preparing a national referendum on the Quebec question. The Canadian ruling class has organised an anti-Quebec campaign, less through fear of the bourgeois PQ than of the militant Quebec working class.

In a worsening economic situation the Canadian unions have tried to negotiate a British-style Social Contract — with a signal lack of



Anti-black demonstration in Chicago

success. The end of the year saw revelations of the extensive surveillance operations carried out by the RCMP, the federal security police, against working class and Quebec nationalist organisations. One of the

objects of the RCMP's attention was the Trotskyist movement. The three groups of supporters of the Fourth International unified in August to form a single section in the Canadian state.

West Europe

# Strong state

AUSTERITY was again the keynote in Western Europe last year. Yet, with the exception of Britain, it was an austerity which didn't work. In France, Spain and Italy workers were able to maintain living standards, while in the Netherlands and Belgium there were mass strikes to demand indexation of wages to keep pace with inflation.

Nevertheless, there were positive developments for the ruling class as well. In Portugal the Soares Government miraculously managed to hold together until almost the end of the year, while in Spain, equally miraculously, the uneasy transition from dictatorship to bourgeois democracy continued with the first elections in 41 years.

Still, the Iberian peninsula remains imperialism's weak flank. The Spanish working class in particular has suffered no decisive defeat and in strike after strike has shown its refusal to accept the dictates of either the right-wing Government or the mass workers' parties. It is those parties which must take the credit for the maintenance of bourgeois rule in Spain. It was their consistent failure to organise a defence of democratic rights or living standards, and even on occasions their open scabbing, which isolated the more militant sections of the working class in their fight to do away with the Francoist regime at one fell swoop. Then, in October, the Socialist and Communist Parties, signed the Moncloa Pact, a 'social contract' which aims to solve the Suarez Government's biggest outstanding problem — the economic crisis — at the expense of the working class.

The Moncloa Pact has its counterpart in the Italian six party



Schmidt consoles Scheiber's w

governmental pact, which legitimised the months of tacit Communist Party support for the Christian Democratic Government. Nevertheless, opposition to this class collaboration continues to grow. In the unions class struggle groupings have begun to emerge while, more negatively, Italian society has been paralysed by violent confrontation between far left and right.

In France, it has been a year of political realignment, with the break-up of the Gaullist monolith and the Union of the Left. The French Communist Party is unwilling to follow its Italian and Spanish counterparts in going all the way to governmental power, preferring to consolidate its working class base against erosion by the Socialist Party. The year's most ominous development has been the stepping

Middle East

# A star is born



Palestinians during night operation near Jordan

PEACE or war? The question everyone was asking about the Middle East by the time 1977 was out. We won't provide an easy answer here. Much of the left has too quickly dismissed the possibility that the Israeli-Egyptian rapprochement could lead to the smashing of the Palestinian movement and the consolidation of capitalist rule in the area.

At the beginning of the year Egyptian President Sadat looked the most unlikely superstar. In January tens of thousands of workers demonstrated against food price rises, forcing the Government to reverse its decision.

This was a massive turnaround only weeks after the defeat of the mass movement in Lebanon and it looked like curtains for Sadat. His policy of Infitah, an economic opening to imperialism, had manifestly failed and the upsurge of the masses was bound to scare off those few investors who

had been foolish enough to bank on Egypt's future.

At first the new right-wing Israeli leader Menachem Begin looked as unlikely to negotiate with the Arabs as Sadat was to survive. But that left out the other variable in the equation: the enthusiasm of the Carter administration for a solution which would both maintain the Zionist state and stabilise the newly rich Arab bourgeois regimes.

One thing is clear: such a solution will not work until the Palestinian resistance is finally and physically liquidated. But that is not completely ruled out. The Palestinians have been effectively disarmed since the Syrian invasion of Lebanon, and the military protection of the newly 'rejectionist' Syrian regime can give them little hope. The Tripoli pact of anti-Egypt Arab states can offer the Arab masses nothing, even if it survives longer than

Israel certainly sees that armed confrontation will be necessary to impose its solution. Even as Sadat was announcing his intention to visit Jerusalem Israeli jets were bombing South Lebanese villages. Still, it is a long way from knowing what needs to be done to actually doing it. Many other people have tried to smash the Palestinians... and they are still there.

The Iranian dictatorship finished 1977 in true form, arresting some 12,000 oppositionists in a few brutal days of murder and renewed repression. No doubt Carter's human rights policy has the Shah trembling in his boots. But the year has also seen the emergence of open opposition to the Shah, with numerous open letters circulated in intellectual circles over the summer and massive mobilisations towards the end of the year.

Africa

# Solidarity with fighters

IN AFRICA 1977 was a year of increasing imperialist intervention — in one way or another. When it came to direct military intervention it was the French who made the running.

Their first outing was in April when French troops and military supplies were sent to Zaire to bolster the Mobutu dictatorship against Katangan separatists. This came after revelations of an imperialist plan for the invasion of Angola, based on Zaire.

Giscard continued to work towards the establishment of a reactionary alliance of French-speaking African states. The next chance came towards the end of the year, when French backing for the Moroccan and Mauritanian occupation of the Western Sahara took the form of direct military support.

The major imperialist power, the United States, seemed content to take a back seat. In Zaire it was at pains to stress the 'non-legal' character of its support for Mobutu, and the latest Anglo-American plan for Zimbabwe was presented as more Anglo than American.

The Owen-Young proposals contain nothing startlingly new. They represent yet another attempt to patch up a neo-colonial regime, a project which has so far won the support of neither the Smith Government nor any of the significant black nationalist organisations. Smith still refuses to give up white settler power and prefers to try and negotiate an 'internal settlement' with those sections of the black nationalists not directly engaged in the armed struggle.

The Patriotic Front, which has the backing of the front-line states, is not ready either to negotiate with Smith or to accept the Owen-Young proposals. Consequently they have been the object of the most brutal



Ian Smith

assaults by the white security forces often in Mozambican territory.

It is not just the imperialists who are in disarray. Soviet foreign policy in East Africa took a blow when war broke out between Ethiopia and Somalia — both Soviet-armed and backed. The issue was the fate of the Somali nomads living in the Ogaden controlled by Ethiopia. With the Eritrean nationalist movement continuing to make gains and the growth of an urban opposition, the Ethiopian dictatorship is looking more and more



## Wins admirers



of the West German witch-hunt against the left, boosted by the activities of the Red Army Fraction. The Social Democratic Government is now at the height of its confidence, with the almost total backing of a quiescent working class — so much so that it feels quite confident about murdering oppositionists in jail and orchestrating a witch-hunt against some of Germany's most prominent intellectuals. The West German strong state is regarded with envy by capitalist politicians from London to Madrid, in a year which has also seen an increase of inter-governmental co-operation to root out 'subversives'.

On a more positive note, the past year has been one of consolidation and extension of the women's movement. In southern Europe in particular it is winning increasing support from working class women

and is an important influence on the national political scene. In Spain the independent women's movement has grown fast, and many of the most important industrial struggles have been led by women workers. In Italy a number of aspects of women's oppression, such as abortion, are central to the crisis of working class political organisations and the national political crisis.

1977 has also seen a growth of international co-ordination of the women's movement. Socialist-feminist conferences in Paris and Amsterdam in the summer provided a basis for continuing international co-operation, while a number of campaigns, such as abortion and women's unemployment, are taking on an increasingly international dimension.

## Freedom still priority



unstable. In the racist stronghold of South Africa it was another year of repression and resistance. The most symbolic event was the murder in jail of black consciousness leader Steve Biko, with its undisguised barbarity and judicial cover-up. This was quickly followed by the outlawing of all the major opposition organisations and a number of black newspapers. Nevertheless, it is an indication of the strength of the opposition that the regime was not

able to repeat the mass murder of summer and Christmas 1976, despite the continuing strength of black student protests.

International solidarity with the blacks of South Africa grew in 1977 — so much so that the United Nations felt obliged to impose an arms embargo — 15 years too late! Solidarity with the southern African struggle will continue to be the top priority of the international workers' movement in 1978.

## Latin America

# Iron heel begins to rust

1977 HAS been a year of rising working class struggle in Latin America, and, significantly, this has spread right into the heartlands of the continent's military dictators. The end of the year saw a copper miners' strike in Chile — the first openly declared since 1973 — and mass strikes in defence of living standards in Argentina. Wage increases of around 40 per cent made a large dent in the junta's wages policy.

In Brazil there were the largest mobilisations for nearly ten years over the summer. Despite mass arrests

there have been repeated student demonstrations, stoking a crisis which has even led to division among the political supporters of the dictatorship.

But the most explosive confrontations have again been in the semi-democracies of the northern half of the continent. In Colombia more than 50 people were killed as the Government tried to put down a general strike in September. Nevertheless, workers continued to demonstrate against the Government's pay policy and its attacks on democratic rights. 300 union leaders

were jailed in Peru after a nationwide general strike against price rises in July, but there too major strikes continued in the copper mines and elsewhere. In December there were further strikes against the austerity plan, imposed by the demands of the International Monetary Fund.

In both Colombia and Mexico the demands of the mass struggle have proved a powerful stimulus towards the reunification of the revolutionary forces. In both cases substantial organisations have come together to form sections of the Fourth International, each of about 1,000 members.

## East Europe

# Charter 77 symbol of 1977

CHARTER 77, the Czechoslovak human rights manifesto, was a good symbol for events in Eastern Europe last year — and was probably intended to be.

Launched by a group of intellectuals, the manifesto quickly stimulated an intense debate on human rights among the working class itself. Inevitably this was met with repression from the bureaucracy, with exemplary sentences being handed out to Charter 77's most prominent representatives, and heaven-knows-what being dealt to the hundreds of unknown activists who have circulated the document.

The rising struggle in the workers states was the most important new element in the political situation in 1976. It began to challenge the glib — and slightly arrogant — assumption of Western revolutionaries that it would be an upsurge in the capitalist countries which would spread to the working class of Eastern Europe. That mood of militant challenge to the bureaucratic regimes has spread in 1977.

One of the main features has been the increasing convergence of intellectual and working class opposition. In Czechoslovakia the initiative came from the intellectuals,

in Poland quite the reverse. The Polish workers, backed up by the intellectuals of the Workers Defence Committee, won an important victory in 1977, securing the release of most of those jailed for their part in the June 1976 strikes against food price rises. The regime continued its assault on democratic rights on a more surreptitious level, as shown by the murders of a couple of supporters of the Workers Defence Committee. The Polish opposition, the most politically sophisticated in Eastern Europe, began a process of political differentiation in 1977, with a more moderate sector, not specifically committed to workers' democracy, splitting away from the mainstream.

The dramatic events in Czechoslovakia and Poland stimulated the growth of an opposition in the most quiescent of the workers states. In Rumania Paul Goma launched an open dissident movement modelled on Charter 77, but was forced into exile by the end of the year. In the summer and autumn the miners of the Jiu valley, the vanguard of the Rumanian working class, struck in defence of living standards. When President Ceausescu went to negotiate with the strikers he was denounced as

a representative of the 'proletarian bourgeoisie'.

In East Germany too there has been a more open working class opposition since the expulsion of the poet Wolf Biermann at the end of 1976. For example, a human rights protest in Berlin as poignantly timed to coincide with the opening of the European security conference at Belgrade. That was embarrassing to the East European bureaucrats, no doubt, but equally so to Carter and the Western champions of 'human rights'.

From East Germany too came the most important theoretical contribution to come from the workers' states, not just in 1977 but for many years past: Rudolf Bahro's *The Alternative*. The East German regime, with its usual concern for stimulating a critical spirit, has jailed the author.

But the outlook for the opposition was darkest in the Soviet Union. The Kremlin bureaucracy seemed determined to underline its desire to stamp out all forms of opposition including, ironically, those who were doing nothing more than calling on the Soviet Union to implement the Helsinki human rights agreement to which it has been a signatory.

## South Asia

# Dictators fall-right wing gains

THREE of South Asia's dictators — Gandhi, Bhutto and Bandaranaike — disappeared in 1977, and the fourth, Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh narrowly escaped a military coup.

India's Indira Gandhi was first to go, overconfident after two years of 'Emergency' that the masses were still behind her Congress Party. But the relaxation of repression only gave the signal for opposition to come out in the open.

In the absence of any real alternative from the working class parties it was the right-wing opposition which seized the advantage, joined by many defectors from Congress. So it was Janata — an unstable alliance stretching from fascists to Maoists — which formed the new Government. But mass unrest was still sufficient to force the release of a large number of political prisoners.

In Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was equally overconfident in the election result, but he made sure of things by rigging the poll. This quickly backfired as mass unrest spilled out onto the streets. There were even indicat-

ions that the working class was beginning to organise its own demonstrations, independent of the official opposition parties. But it was the military, backing the Pakistan National Alliance, which took the initiative and instituted a barbaric return to martial law. The elections they promised have yet to materialise.

Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka also cut short a long period of Emergency rule to try and gain a popular mandate. In a truly remarkable electoral reverse it was again the right wing which benefitted, but this time leaving the Tamil independence movement as the main opposition. The right quickly tried to deal with that threat by pogroms against the Tamil population.

In a year when nuclear power became a political issue in many countries, in Australia it occupied the centre of the stage, along with the attacks on civil rights by federal and state administrations. For a while it seemed that the Fraser Government, installed two years ago by a royal

*coup d'etat*, might fall. But in the end the staggering political bankruptcy of the opposition Labour leadership outweighed the widespread opposition to Tory rule, and Labour was trounced at the polls.

Indochina remains as inscrutable as ever, with atrocity stories common currency in the bourgeois press and, sadly, nothing coming out of Cambodia to make us disbelieve them. Undoubtedly, many of the reports are smears, but socialists still have a duty to subject these regimes to the harshest criticism, particularly since Vietnam and Cambodia now appear to be at war.

In China the Mao era is decisively ended. Nothing remains of Mao's 'mass line' as Hua and Teng (back for a third bite at the cherry) bring in more of the baggage of Stalinism to deal with the increasingly mythical 'gang of four'. The bureaucracy is taking pre-emptive action to make sure that the masses never return to political life as they did in the late 1960s. But Hua's success is far from guaranteed.

## The year of Eurocommunism

# Crisis in the workers' movement

One person has had more than his fair share of headline space in 1977: Santiago Carrillo, general secretary of the Spanish Communist Party. Carrillo denounces Moscow bureaucracy. Moscow bureaucracy denounces Carrillo. Carrillo backs Spanish monarchy. Carrillo backs US military bases. Carrillo denounces general strike. Carrillo crosses picket line at Yale...and is denounced in his turn.

The first impression is one of gross political buffoonery. He just seems like everyone's favourite target — from the Trotskyists and the Kremlin bureaucrats to the imperialist ideologues who doubt his sincerity. But behind the comedian is a deadly serious development. For Carrillo symbolises 'Eurocommunism' — a phenomenon he would not doubt deny but which is none the less real for that.

There is nothing specifically 1977 about Eurocommunism just as there is little uniformity in the many phenomena which go under that name. But the past year has seen the culmination of two crucial developments in the growing rift between the East and West European Communist Parties.

First, the revisionism and class collaboration which has long been political practice of the Communist Parties of capitalist Europe is rapidly becoming enshrined in the programmes of these parties. Parties which abandoned the dictatorship of the proletariat in favour of the defence of bourgeois democracy as far back as the 1930s have now got around to dropping the idea in theory, to the dismay of their erstwhile mentors in Moscow.

### MOSCOW'S BEHEST

But this has more than a formal significance. It also reflects an increasingly right-wing practice, not at the behest of Moscow, as in the 1930s or the post-war period, but from the particular interests of the national parties themselves. Even this in itself is not what most worries Moscow. The danger is that this growing accommodation to their respective national bourgeoisies could mean these parties' final abandonment of the Soviet

Union.

The class collaboration of these parties is becoming more and more routine. The Italian and Spanish parties don't simply defend bourgeois democracy — that has been their stock-in-trade for decades — but support the entire apparatus of the bourgeois state, even against the workers in struggle. And the day-to-day interests of the working class are having to take second place to the governmental aspirations of Carrillo and Berlinguer.

### AUSTERITY VEHICLE

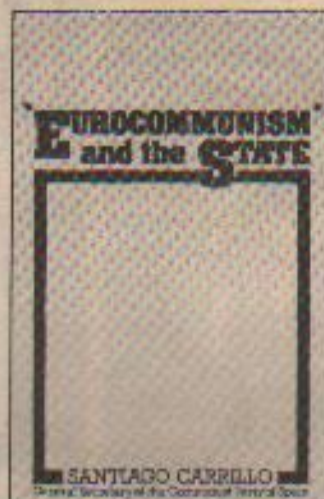
So Berlinguer is prepared to back a year of government attacks on living standards, praising austerity as a vehicle of social change, while Carrillo withholds his support from strike after strike. No doubt part of the reason for the break-up of the French Union of the Left was the Communist Party's fear that the Spanish electoral campaign — where the Communist Party was overtaken on the left by the Socialists — would repeat itself.

But a second aspect of Eurocommunism has emerged into the full light this year with the publication of Carrillo's *Eurocommunism and the State*. For the first time a West European Communist Party leader has produced more than a routine denunciation of 'human rights violations' in the workers' states. Carrillo's is a theoretically coherent critique of the whole basis of bureaucratic rule in the workers' states which, in its more positive aspects, owes a lot to Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed*. To say it is coherent does not mean we agree with it, but its significance is that now everything is up for grabs.

Unwittingly the Eurocommun-



Carrillo's book, 'a coherent critique of the basis of bureaucratic rule in the workers' states'.



ists have provided a massive stimulus both for oppositionists in the workers' states, many of whom explicitly identify with the Western parties, and for a thorough debate on workers' democracy in the Western workers' movement. For the Eurocommunist parties are still caught in the cleft stick of Stalinism: their rapturous support for bourgeois democracy is not matched by any similar enthusiasm for proletarian democracy, particularly not within their own parties or union federation.

Nevertheless it has been this aspect of Eurocommunism — the most dramatic expression of the crisis of Stalinism — which has provoked Moscow to its most extreme responses. Carrillo's book brought an unprecedented public rebuke from the Moscow journal

*New Times*, while both the Swedish and British parties had pro-Moscow splits.

All this upheaval, at the same time as a deepening social and political crisis, presents increased opportunities for the far left. Sadly it has not always been able to measure up to the task. The debate on workers' democracy has so often been marred by a combination of sectarianism and political accommodation towards Stalinism that the attempts of the Fourth International to open up such a debate over the past year have been doubly welcome.

On balance 1977 was a good year for revolutionaries, though there are important exceptions. The obvious ones in Europe are Italy and West Germany, where the entire spectrum from Mao-centrists to Trotskyists has been

thrown into disarray. In Germany repression has only increased the isolation of the far left, while in Italy political bankruptcy and the logjam in the workers movement has turned left politics into a game of musical chairs.

In Portugal the picture is not as bleak as might have been expected. While some organisations, such as the PRP, have disappeared from the face of the earth, others, like the Trotskyists of the LCI, have made modest advances. Elsewhere in Europe things are far more positive. In Spain the Trotskyists, newly unified, have been in the leadership of a number of important struggles and are growing into a position to challenge the large centrist groups that dominate the far left.

In Scandinavia, particularly Sweden, the revolutionary left continues to grow, while in France a united far left slate got astonishing results in the municipal elections in April. Even in Britain, home of the most pervasive sectarianism and disunity, there are signs that a unification of the revolutionary left is more than just a pipe-dream.

Outside Europe the forces of the Fourth International also registered significant advances, unifying sections in a number of places and winning new organisations to Trotskyism in others, particularly in Latin America. Yet the crippling weakness of revolutionaries in Africa and Asia, above all the Indian sub-continent, still remains.

The crisis of Stalinism and the emergence of cracks in the Socialist Democratic monolith in Western Europe will bring us new opportunities in 1978. It is up to us to seize them.

## British troops around the globe Rattling the sabre

Ireland and the Green Goddesses; Bermuda and Belize; Mogadishu and Assen; Hong Kong and Zimbabwe. The common denominator is the presence of British troops at some time in 1977.

Of course there is only one military representative of British imperialism in the last mentioned: Lord Carver, the Resident Commissioner. But the increasing tendency for Britain to throw its military weight around raises the threat that there may be a few more in Zimbabwe before 1978 is out.

### DAZZLING SUCCESS

The first of Britain's overseas ventures was the dazzling success of the Special Air Service Regiment in dealing with the South Moluccan school siege in the Netherlands. The tactic there was to poison the water supply to appeal to the hijackers' good will and release the hostage children. Only a mind trained in the occupation of Belfast or Derry could have thought of that one.

Still, the SAS surpassed itself at Mogadishu. In the Netherlands they didn't have the chance to join in the slaughter — an omission that was righted when it came to dealing with the Red Army Faction. The three Britons who led the attack had had their training with the Sultan of Oman, who continues to receive British troops on loan to deal with an uppity population.

Of course, the increased co-operation between European governments in compiling information on 'subversives' and dealing with them in this heavy-handed way was meant to be a secret. Inevitably, perhaps, it was British Home Secretary Merlyn Rees — everyone's Idiot of the Year — who let the cat out of the bag over the Mogadishu

operation.

The two Caribbean outings — Belize in July and Bermuda in December — were on a far larger scale. When Britain first sent its Harrier jump-jets to 'protect' the Belizeans from Guatemala two years ago, NATO military observers sat in ships along the shoreline watching this unresisted display of military hardware. The 1977 expedition too was little more than a showcase for British military technology. Except, of course, that some people — like *Socialist Challenge* — put around the malicious rumour that British intervention was not unconnected with Belize's considerable offshore oil deposits.

### TROOP PROTECTORS

In Belize there was at least the pretence that the troops were protecting the population against the Guatemalan dictatorship. The Bermuda expedition was not even dressed up in those humanitarian terms. Two blacks faced the death sentence. The colony's millionaire Prime Minister was afraid of popular reaction, so deferred the decision to Foreign Secretary David Owen. Owen, a humanitarian in the Gaitskellite mould, told the racist administration to go ahead with the executions, and sent the gunboats to deal with the inevitable militant protests.

Owen must be jostling with Jimmy Carter for recognition as imperialism's 'Man of the Year'. Apart from the heroic defence of white racism in Bermuda, Owen had the distinction of being the

first British Foreign Secretary for some time to visit the South African and Rhodesian Prime Ministers.

The imperialist powers have left direct military intervention in Africa up to the French this last year. But when it comes to political interference Britain makes all the running. No doubt the bulk of the Owen-Young plan for an undemocratic transition to a neo-colonial Zimbabwe was formulated in Washington. But it is the British Government which has been enthusiastically and none too successfully touting the plan around Africa.

### BACK BREAKING

Even with two black nationalist leaders sitting down to negotiate with Ian Smith (which is not what Britain wants anyway) imperialism still has the problem of how to break the back of the black resistance, to impose the Owen-Young plan. It is a bit early to say how that will be done, but we can predict another bloody year in Zimbabwe in 1978, with British imperialism, faithfully administered by the Labour Government, bearing most of the blame.

In Britain's oldest colony 1977 has seen the same old story, only more so. The year was one of stepped-up repression in the North of Ireland. But at the same time the exposure of police brutality and the mysterious deaths of two undercover British soldiers began to reveal the truth about the British occupation.

And the Brits ended 1977 in the way they intend to continue in 1978: a trade union leader in jail and an opposition paper suppressed. Three cheers for the defenders of democracy.

## Intercontinental Press inprecor

A single united weekly journal reflecting the views of the Fourth International will be published from January 1978, combining 'Intercontinental Press' and the English language edition of 'Inprecor'. It will feature in-depth reporting and analysis of major world events together with documents of the sections of the Fourth International and its leading committees, and public discussion of the recent Fourth International theses on 'Socialist Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. SPECIAL OFFER! Every new subscriber will receive free the final issue of Inprecor, devoted entirely to the current world economic situation.

Send me the special 10 issues introductory offer. [£2.50 Britain and Ireland, £4.00 Continental Europe]

Send me a 6 month subscription [£5.00 Britain and Ireland, £8.00 Continental Europe — £11.00 airmail]

Send me a one year subscription [£9.00 Britain and Ireland, £13.00 Continental Europe — £19.00 airmail]

Name [please PRINT] .....

Address .....

Amount enclosed .....

Send to Intercontinental Press, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. (For enquiries outside Europe write to: Intercontinental Press, PO Box 116, Varick St Station, New York, NY 10014, USA.)

International Tribunal can answer:

# The Year of the British Jackboot

James Callaghan visited Belfast on the Thursday before Christmas. 'Things', he said 'were on the up and up'. That same evening the Provisional IRA fire-bombed hotels in Belfast, Co Fermanagh, Co Armagh, Co Down and Co Antrim. On the up and up, indeed.

Nevertheless Callaghan was insistent. 'The tiny band of terrorists who are left are losing heart', he told shoppers during a 'walkabout'.

Official statistics were produced to back up Callaghan's view of 1977. Killings were down, explosions were down, convictions were up. What the British Prime Minister did not mention was that the decline in deaths was primarily due to the smashing and imprisonment of the Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Freedom Fighters, resulting in a dramatic drop in sectarian assassinations.

by TOM MARLOWE

a public statement criticising the techniques used at the torture centre at Castlereagh, near Belfast.

The increase in repression dates from the Loyalist strike earlier this year, when Northern Ireland secretary Roy Mason promised a whole series of measures when trying to spike the guns of the strike leaders. For once, promises were delivered.

Since then, the minority in the North of Ireland has had: Castlereagh; the virtual enactment of martial law in areas such as Turf Lodge in Belfast; there have been prisoners such as Danny McCooey who died after being interrogated by British troops; and there has been a huge increase in rape committed by British soldiers.

### DEATHS

But the number of deaths of members of the security forces was higher than in 1976. Similarly, although the number of explosions fell dramatically, the number of fire-bombings rose equally dramatically.

The number of political prisoners did increase. This 'success' for the British military machine flowed from the stepping up of the policy of 'legal interment'. Prisoners were either held on remand for up to a year and half with the charges being eventually withdrawn, or 'confessions' were beaten out of prisoners.

Eighty per cent of the convictions that Callaghan boasted about were based solely on such 'confessions'. Amnesty International is currently investigating how these confessions were obtained, and even the leaders of the major Churches in the North of Ireland recently made

### 'GOODWILL'

As a final 'season of goodwill' gesture, Roy Mason introduced the 1st Battalion of the Parachute Regiment to the streets of the North of Ireland just before Xmas — the first time they have been there since they murdered 14 civilians in Derry on 'Bloody Sunday', 1972.

The other Xmas gesture of the Northern Ireland office was the attempted suppression of *Republican News*, the weekly Belfast paper of Provisional Sinn Fein. In a widespread swoop in the early hours of 15 December, the RUC raided



homes of the editor, business manager, and distributors of the newspaper. They arrested the printer of *Republican News* — a member of the reformist SDLP — and confiscated various equipment from the offic-

es of *Republican News*. Type-writers, a telex machine, photographic files, and small printing presses were among the items confiscated.

A number of leading members of Provisional Sinn Fein

were also arrested. All were eventually released, but similar raids and arrests took place last week.

Particularly sinister for British socialists was the involvement in the raids of Jim Neville, the head of Scotland Yard's 'anti-terrorist squad'. Apparently he was one of the main organisers of the raids — whether he was using the experience he has gained from the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, or whether he was looking for hints for the future, it was an ominous involvement.

### REPRESSION

So 1977 could be summed up as representing the most sustained period of repression the Catholic minority has endured since the introduction of direct British rule in 1972. But fortunately the opportunity to highlight this repression is there to be grasped in 1978.

This will be the year in which the International Tribunal on British Crimes Against the Irish People will be held in London. Already the tribunal has attracted a significant list of sponsors from a number of different countries, and the initiative has the potential of being the most important event on the Irish question in Britain for a long time.

1977 may have been the year of the jackboot in Ireland, but 1978 can be the year that British socialists have the chance to expose that jackboot, and help throw it out.

## Leading Irish trade-unionist held The Terror Act strikes again

Home Secretary Merlyn Rees ended 1977 with one of his more crude attacks on civil liberties in Britain — the arrest in Liverpool on 29 December of Phil Flynn, deputy general secretary of the Irish Local Government and Public Service Union. Flynn was held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. GEOFF BELL reports on the arrest and on the PTA.

On 12 December, the British Government announced that it was setting up an inquiry into the workings of the PTA. The announcement came as something of a surprise and questions were asked as to why Britain had suddenly decided to have a fresh look at the legislation which even Roy Jenkins once described as 'draconian'.

The riddle was answered the following week, with the news that the European Commission of Human Rights had given the British Government until February to reply to charges of breaches of the European Convention of Human Rights in the operation of the 'anti-terrorist' Act. According to the *Irish Times*, the Government-spon-

sored inquiry was 'set up in anticipation of the serious view taken in Strasbourg' of the allegations made about the PTA.

The charges Britain is being asked to reply to principally concern breaches of Article 6 of

were ever accused of committing 'acts of terrorism' in Britain. Where the IRSP has annoyed the British Government is that it has played its full part in the Irish solidarity movement in this country.

Phil Flynn falls into the same category. He has been a regular speaker for the United Troops Out Movement and other Irish campaigns in Britain, and his leadership position in the Irish trade union movement has meant many trade unionists in this country have been willing to seriously consider his anti-imperialist views.

As to Flynn being a 'terrorist', in 1974 he was acquitted by a Dublin court of being a member of the IRA — a court in which acquittals proved notoriously hard to achieve.

Although the arrest of Flynn can only be viewed with anger by British trade unionists, even then it is not so ludicrous as some of the other people who have faced the wrath of the Terror Act. In February 1977 there was the case of the detention under the PTA of Jim Hineson, a writer for *Peace News* — a specifically pacifist magazine.



the Human Rights Convention — detaining people without having the purpose of bringing them to trial. Statistics concerned with the operation of the Act bear out the relevance of this allegation.

Over 3,000 people have been held under the Act, but only 43 have been convicted of offences under it. Such figures are all the more surprising considering what people can be convicted for under the PTA.

For instance, early in December in London the national organiser of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, Peter Grimes, was sentenced to three months imprisonment under the PTA. His 'crime' concerned Section II of the Act, which makes it an offence not to 'pass information to the police that might assist them in preventing an act of terrorism'.

Neither the IRSP nor Grimes

### SILENCE

Cases such as Hineson's and Flynn's display the real purpose of the PTA — to disrupt, harass, and silence outspoken critics in this country of Britain's war effort in Ireland. Now that such a prominent Irish trade unionist has been arrested, militants in Britain should be fighting to ensure that the demand for the immediate repeal of the Act should be on the floor of every trade union conference in 1978.

This fundamental attack on the civil liberties of Irish people in this country has gone on for far too long.

## What's Left

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

**NATIONAL Socialist Feminist conference** 28/9 Jan, Manchester. For details of venue, papers, transport, etc London women please contact Karen Margolis, 85 Regent's Park Rd, NW1 (722-9621).

**'FIRST OF MAY'**, Edinburgh is a left meeting place and bookshop at 45 Niddry St 031-557 1348. Open 12 noon to 7pm Mon-Sat 15pm Sat. We have an excellent range of books and periodicals. We welcome all visitors.

**MALE or female** to share large flat with non-sectarian IMG comrades. Rent £24pm. Phone Dan, Dave or Rex on 801 0173 (Totterham).



**NEW anti-fascist badge**, produced by the Socialist Students' Alliance. Black on white, 15p each, or £1 for 10, plus 10p p&p. Order to SSA, c/o The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XQ.

**IRELAND Socialist Review**, Journal of analysis and discussion on British imperialism in Ireland written by members of Haringey and Hamlet Troops Out Movement, From 80 Loughborough Road, London SW9. 20p plus 15p postage (5 + post free).

**INTERNATIONAL Bulletin** of the SWP — subscription offer. Take out a 1978 subscription to the Bulletin, (£1.50 for six issues) and get Issue no.5 free. Articles include: Interview from Lebanon with the official spokesperson of the PFLP, The Ukraine national movement, Quebec, The Italian view of Punk Rock. Send £1.50 to: SWP International (SC), 8 Cortons Gardens, London E2 8DN. Single issues 30p incl. postage.

**IMAGES of Women** in Recent Books. Evening class, Wednesdays, 7.30, from 11 Jan. Feminist discussion of fiction and non-fiction in 1970s. McEntee Adult Education Centre, Biller Road, Walthamstow, E17. Contact Lucy Whitman, 809-3728; 340-6068.

**MARXISM and Feminism**, a 3 month class examining the relationship between Marxist theory and socialist-feminist strategy in Britain. Discussions will include: women and the current economic crisis, political economy of the family, women and class structure, feminism and the revolutionary left today. Sponsored by Workers' Educational Association. Thursdays at S. London Women's Centre (45 North St., SW4, Clapham Common tube). First class: 12 Jan, 6.30. Tutor: Barbara Taylor. More information from 622-4118.

**GAYS for Socialism** — Yes! the badge you've all been waiting for. 3 colours, with two layers of moles! 20p + 7p p&p, or 75p for 10 or more post free. From Socialist Challenge, PO Box 60, London N1. Cheques/postal orders to 'The Week', SOCIALIST Teachers' Alliance, Public Meeting, 'Salaries', a discussion introduced by Dave Picton, Prince Albert pub, Wharfedale Road, London N1 (close to King's Cross) on 10 Jan, 8pm. All welcome.

**LEAMINGTON Anti-fascist committee** picket 9 January, 9am at Leamington Magistrates Court, Newbold Terrace, when two British Movement members will be facing prosecution under the 'incitement to racial hatred' clause of the Race Relations Act. This will be the first prosecution under that clause of the Act.

**Revolutionary Communist Tendency** new pamphlet *Under a National Flag — Racism, Fascism and the Labour Movement*

Send orders to: BM RCT (SC), London WC1V 6XX. Cheques and postal orders to RCT Association. **SINN Fein Bloody Sunday** march. Assemble 2pm, Sunday, 29 January, Speakers' Corner, March to Whitehall. All banners welcome.



Just published by the Campaign Against British Brutality in Ireland is *Ireland, British Army Brutality*. The pamphlet features the report of eight supporters of CABBI who visited Turf Lodge in Belfast in early September.

They investigated allegations resulting from the British military operation on 12 and 13 August in Turf Lodge that followed Elizabeth Windsor's visit to Belfast.

Armed with tape recorders, cameras and note-books, the delegation interviewed some 300 people who related in detail the brutality and ill-treatment they had personally suffered. This pamphlet deals with the accounts of a few of these people.

It is available from: The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1. Price 10p, plus 10p p&p.

**BOOKMARX CLUB**

Book club for socialists. Subscribers for first quarter 1978:

Use A: Communist City  
Use B: No Man's Land  
Use C: The Landed Gentry  
Use D: Robert Williams

Send £4.50 to receive 1 or 4 plus one other but max preference £2.20 each (additional 50p book).

Bookmarx Club  
256 Seven Sisters Road,  
London N4

Indo-China

## Stop this insane war

*'Because imperialists tell lies, because confused journalists peddle State Department propaganda, we cannot afford to be complacent. To become apologists of Phnom Penh or Hanoi, not to mention Pyongyang or Tirana, cannot be a serious option for any revolutionary marxist. We have to confront a number of truths, however unpleasant they may seem.'* That is what we wrote last September in this paper (*Democracy and Revolution in Indochina*, 15 September 1977) in commenting on the situation in Cambodia and Vietnam.



try and unravel what is going on in countries which not so long ago inspired anti-imperialist sentiments throughout the world. Whose propaganda do we believe? It is impossible to make an immediate choice, because there is no way in which information can be corroborated. The total monopoly of information exercised by the state in both countries makes a choice difficult. There is an urgent need for a body like the Bertrand Russell Foundation to send a team of observers to the area immediately.

Today we confront a situation where Cambodia and Vietnam have broken off diplomatic relations and are in a state of war. Cambodia has charged that the Vietnamese have entered Cambodian territory and have 'destroyed rubber plantations, burned down forests, strafed the people — children and old ones alike — and raped and killed women.' The Vietnamese have stated that Cambodian soldiers 'have perpetrated utterly inhuman crimes, raping, cutting fetuses from mothers' wombs, disembowelling adults and burning children alive.'

As the capitalist press throughout the world gleefully speculates on the outcome of this war it falls on socialists to

military conflict. Its leaders have already called for negotiations and clearly hope to settle the conflict around a table.

The Cambodian regime must also know that the Vietnamese now possess one of the best-equipped armies in Asia. Why then provoke a military conflict? The answer could well lie in the desperation of a regime whose rule appears to be based exclusively on coercion. The purges which shook Cambodia several months ago were probably an attempt to clear the Khmer Rouge of all elements opposed to the line of the present leadership. A regime which moves populations without their consent cannot expect to have a base of popular support at home. Hence the deployment of an ultra-nationalist and chauvinistic rhetoric becomes of key importance. In that sense a conflict with the Vietnamese serves a useful internal purpose. It can be linked to a 'centuries old struggle'.

The Cambodian President Khieu Samphan has accused Vietnam of wanting to 'make Cambodia a member of the Vietnamese-dominated union of Indochina'. This in itself raises a number of important questions. While, on the one hand, revolutionary socialists favour the creation of a federa-

tion of Indochinese republics, this cannot be done without the approval of all the people involved. Here the question of internal democracy becomes vital.

One of the characteristics of Stalinism as a political ideology has been its strident anti-internationalism, aptly summed up in the formula of 'Socialism in One Country'. It is this which dominates the thinking of the USSR, China, Cambodia and, to a lesser extent, Vietnam. The Sino-Soviet conflict, from its origins to the present, the Chinese seizure of the Vietnamese Paracel Islands in the South China sea, and now the Cambodia-Vietnam war are all grave manifestations of this deviation. Naturally we cannot wish it away for it is inextricably tied to the whole way in which these countries are ruled.

In our article of 15 September 1977, we wrote that, 'the future of these revolutions is intimately bound up with the question of democracy... the lack of democracy distorts the internal development of the revolution even with the most benevolent and enlightened leadership. Moreover it provides imperialism with one of its trump cards.' We can now add that it distorts the external development of the revolutionary process even more.

As socialists we are for the peaceful resolution of all

by TARIQ ALI



Khieu Samphan [left] and Prince Sihanouk in happier days.

conflicts involving post-capitalist states. We are in favour of federated socialist republics, but we believe that these are only possible where the consent of the masses has been obtained through free and impartial referendums or elections. Any forced federations will prove to be totally counter-

productive. In all this sordid political mess is intermingled the disputes between the USSR and China. Both states should be aware that its continuation would be counter-productive for all sides and their influence should be utilised to settle and not exacerbate the conflict.

## SPAIN

December in Spain was action-packed. On the second of the month 200,000 Basque workers came out on strike against attacks on workers' living standards, despite the opposition of the Socialist and Communist Parties. A few days later Basque women held four days of discussion on how to fight their oppression, and the Spanish Trotskyists held their first conference to discuss policy in the trade unions. FRED FAIRBAIRN reports.

### Trotskyist trade union conference

MADRID — Some 2,300 militants attended the first trade union conference of the LCR — Spanish sympathisers of the Fourth International. The LCR, another FI group which is in the process of unifying with the LCR, also participated.

In the build-up to the conference, which took place on 11 December, a text outlining the main ideas of the LCR's programme had been discussed by members and sympathisers in hundreds of workplaces. Then they came to Madrid to share their experiences and mark out a clear line of action against the many attacks on working class living standards — one that would open up the way to a real change in society.

#### CONTINGENTS

The attendance showed that the LCR has the beginnings of a serious implantation in the working class. Contingents came from all parts of Spain, despite transport problems. About 30 per cent came from the

Basque country, some 25 per cent from the central region around Madrid, and 15 per cent from Catalonia.

Thirty-six per cent were women. Although this was far from satisfactory the percentage of women has to be set against the low percentage of women with jobs outside the home.



The majority was affiliated to the bigger unions, the Workers Commissions (83 per cent) and the UGT (11 per cent), but nearly two per cent were members of the anarcho-sindicalist CNT and some four per cent belonged to other unions (USO, peasant leagues etc.). Almost a third work in the engineering industry, and about nine per cent each in building and education. Other sectors well represented were textiles, health, chemicals and graphic arts, each with five per cent. Over 500 held union posts and 440 were members of factory committees.

#### AUSTERITY PLAN

The background to the conference was the ruling class austerity plan, crystallised in the infamous Moncloa pact, and the forthcoming workplace elections, which are more or less controlled by the Government. With the former having been signed by the major workers parties, and the latter having already produced a debilitating inter-union rivalry, the conference dealt with the need for class independence, class unity and workers democracy.

Not long ago millions of workers witnessed a television debate between the general secretaries of the Workers Commissions and the Socialist-backed UGT, which degenerated into a

sectarian slanging match. This public display of pettiness and disunity when the working class is faced with extremely serious threats to its living standards had a demoralising effect on many militants, not to mention the majority of workers who have yet to join any union. In response to this the central theme of the conference was: 'Trade union unity, against the social contract' — a need intensely felt by many rank and file militants.

Time and again, basing themselves on their varied practical experiences, militants stressed the importance of working within the main unions to confront their reformist leaderships and challenge them for that leadership, while at the same time promoting grassroots organisations, including all workers, of assemblies and recallable delegates.

At the end of the day those who had attended were left with the feeling that the LCR had laid the basis for a credible inter-union strategy for developing the self-organisation of the whole class around a programme capable of meeting the immediate needs of all workers — especially those worst off such as youth, women, unemployed, and disabled — and at the same time beginning to impinge on the interests and power base of the capitalist class.



### Basque women's days

BILBAO — Between 8 and 11 December something unexpected happened. About 3,000 women from all over the Basque country, both North and South, met to discuss their situation as women.

After an international meeting of women in Paris in May-June, the Women's Assembly of Vizcaya called together all the other feminist groups in the Basque country, and a co-ordinating body was set up to prepare this event. Apart from taking care of the technical preparations, this body set up a number of commissions to draft papers for the 'women's days'.

With the texts presented by other groups there were 24 papers in all, of which eight dealt with sexuality, the theme of the first day. The second day centred on the problems of patriarchy and 'dual membership', and there was a vigorous debate between the radical feminists and a rather ill-defined class struggle current. Only two political organisations — LKI (the Basque Trotskyists) and EMK (Communist Movement of Euskadi) — presented papers and had any real presence in the conference.

The third day was devoted to the question of work, both inside and outside the home. Three women's groups from

Vizcaya factories made written contributions. The final day was supposed to be given over to the presentation of general alternatives and perspectives before the conference closed with festivities. However, only women who had been working in the neighbourhoods had drawn their experiences together into a set of down-to-earth proposals. They decided to campaign for birth control centres in the neighbourhoods — a necessity for working class women.

Otherwise, apart from agreeing to support the state-wide campaigns for sexual freedom and against women's unemployment, things remained very much up in the air. Perhaps this lack of conclusions is the most negative feature of an otherwise very positive venture.

So what was so unexpected? Hadn't there been similar women's days in Madrid and Catalonia? Yes, but although in the vanguard of many economic and national struggles, the Basque country has tended to lag behind on other questions relating to social oppression. Moreover, in the whole Basque country there are hardly a couple of hundred women organised in autonomous groups. The next step must be to capitalise on the interest and potential this conference has revealed.

The growth of the women's liberation movement, the explosion of struggles launched by working women for women's rights, and the abortion campaign have led to increasing involvement of thousands of women in the struggle for their liberation. The political organisations of the left, as their involvement has increased in this movement, have mounted major internal discussions to clarify their positions on the family and women's liberation. Not least, the Communist Party of Great Britain. More than any other question, this one has animated discussion in the Party in the last two years. It has also been an issue which has recently drawn many women recruits to the Party.

There are two constant features of the workings of the capitalist family. It is the primary institution through which the social reproduction of the labour force is carried out and as such, through the prevailing sexual division of labour, it is the principal institution in which women's oppression is rooted. It is one of the most powerful instruments of class domination. Revolutionary socialists, since the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, are for the destruction of the family and for the social provision of tasks shouldered by women in individual family units.

One line of argument in the CPGB has tended to separate the tasks of revolutionary feminists from those of the revolutionary socialist movement as a whole, rather than integrate this into the fight for working class power. These CP women have argued that since the overthrow of capitalism does not guarantee the liberation of women, the struggle for liberation is largely autonomous from the struggle for working class political power. The key activity becomes the exposure of the ideological reproduction of male domination in capitalist society.

In political terms this actually entails the fight for women's rights and the struggle against reactionary male attitudes in the working class. To this some CP women would add the need to democratise and reform the division of labour within the present family.

We readily agree that power for the working class does not usher in the liberation of women. There will be a need for a massive fight against the poisonous ideological baggage of the previous mode of production — not least a fight within the ranks of the workers themselves. And an immense effort to re-direct and plan the productive forces will be vital if the material pre-conditions for women's liberation are to be developed.

We believe this battle will be led by the mass organisation of women themselves. This is why we argue that socialist feminists should be clearly defined in the present women's liberation movement; respecting its democracy, but nevertheless arguing for the movement to aim its mass actions towards a united fight for women's liberation on the part of the labour movement as a whole.

Here we disagree with the attitude of many CP women towards the women's liberation movement. Since they separate the political struggle for socialism from the fight for progressive working class cultural 'hegemony' against bourgeois attitudes and social practices, they are led to see the movement as little more than a broad social movement to be spread and encouraged. They do not see it as a potential political spearhead in the fight for working class power.

Many CP women in the debate on the family have raised pressing issues and questions to which we do not pretend to have confident answers. However, we do believe that the current analysis of the CP, which tends to reduce the struggle to changing attitudes and social practices, even to arguing for a reformed nuclear family under capitalism, is mistaken. In particular we believe this orientation leads away from arguing for the movement to become a major political force in society.

These brief comments do not do justice to the range of positions on women's oppression in the Communist Party. In fact it is the diversity of positions amongst the membership that stands out. We would defend the right of members to hold many differing positions on all questions in the Party. But these discussions must be directed to one end — the clarification and definition of the political activity of the organisation as a whole. What is remarkable about the differences inside the CP is that they seem to have such little impact on the central policy of the leadership.

We believe this is because there is no institutionalised inner party democracy inside the CPGB, but rather a paternalistic and bureaucratic regime. The leadership is prepared to tolerate diversity and political confusion as long as no grouping dares challenge the political positions of the leadership. Indeed, the leadership has been prepared to trade a 'do your own thing' position with many feminist activists who have joined the Party, in return for the

## The Communist Party and women's liberation

Feminist socialists in the women's liberation movement will be meeting for a national conference in Manchester at the end of this month. The last such conference was held three years ago.

The debates at the conference will undoubtedly be influenced by the ideas of feminists in the Communist Party, although individual Party members have frequently opposed the consolidation of a feminist socialist current within the movement. Below, CATH CIRKET and VAL COULTAS examine the positions of the CPGB — including those presented in the draft of the British Road to Socialism, the new CPGB programme adopted with amendments at the Party's recent congress. They argue that the reformist strategy of the CPGB sacrifices the interests of women, and that it is incapable of providing a line of advance for women's liberation.



Photo: G. M. COOK/BOM (Socialist Challenge)

prestige their membership gives to the CPGB in the women's movement and its periphery.

The result — which we believe will continue until the fundamental political positions of the CP leadership are challenged — is the apparent unwillingness of the CP feminists to carry a fight for their positions to the leadership of the CP, in order to strengthen and improve the line and work of the Party as a whole in the working class movement and in the women's movement.

We think the least CP feminists should do is fight for the demands of the movement to be incorporated in the programme of the Party, and for it to unequivocally condemn the

policies of the East European Governments in regard to women. If they made such moves, CP women would come right up against the undemocratic internal regime of their own party, which begs another question. If in the USSR and Eastern Europe were making bold advances in the direction of women's liberation, the impact on winning feminists to revolutionary marxism in the west would be phenomenal.

We believe that if feminists in the CP seriously launched such a struggle against the leadership they would very quickly find their membership in the Party incompatible with their commitment to women's liberation.

It is not the diversity of positions inside the CP we object to. Far from it. What revolutionary socialists criticise is the pathetically inadequate formulae on the oppression of women contained in the new Draft accepted by the last Congress. A further outcome is the ghettoising of debate and activity on this question largely amongst women activists in the Party.

If many feminists in the CP place the emphasis on changing personal attitudes and life styles, and draw back from a political intervention in the women's movement, the leadership of the CP made it clear in its draft programme that women's oppression *does* have a precise position in the overall strategy of the Party.

In the draft (lines 882-895), the specific feature of women's oppression singled out is their lack of equality with men in many areas of social life. Women's role in the family is mentioned. But the implication is clear. As far as the draft is concerned the fundamental problems facing women can be dealt with through a series of democratic reforms giving them formal legal equality with men.

The draft correctly points out the outstanding weaknesses of existing legislation and in no way would we play down the vital importance of the fight for women's rights. Indeed we have been in the forefront in this battle — as much as the CP.

But in treating women's oppression in this way, the CP's programme plays down the fundamental social relations of oppression in which women are trapped under capitalism by the family. It is this material basis of their oppression in a privatised and socially isolated institution for whose working (the efficient social reproduction of the labour forces) women are condemned under capitalism to be primarily responsible that is the fundamental block to their liberation.

By limiting the analysis to the way in which this oppression is structurally reflected in ideology (sexism) and the legal structure (lack of equal rights), the draft separates the struggle for immediate democratic demands for women from the struggles for socialism itself.

Clearly, only a socialist society where working class control over society's resources and real economic and social planning were possible for the first time, could bring about the complete socialisation of child care and domestic labour. But it is this goal that is the precondition for abolishing the nuclear family.

In the CP programme, the issue is dodged. Immediate demands under capitalism are separated from the pre-condition of true liberation. And the draft's conception of liberation is limited to ending "the sexual division of labour between men and women in the family and at work". Only a moment's thought reveals that as long as an institution called the 'family' is the primary vehicle for initial child-rearing and care, then the sexual division of labour remains under socialism and continues to force drudgery and inferiority on women. What has happened since the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848 which now compels the CPGB to draw back from the goal of the abolition of the family?

Precisely what has happened is that the left-reformist politics of the CPGB drive it towards a 'broad democratic alliance'. The goals of this struggle must therefore be submerged and obscured in the fight for 'democratic advance'. This is the price that women's liberation pays for the 'alliance'. It even draws back from including the demands of the women's movement.

Many feminists in the CP are clearly critical of the leadership's positions. But they display a tendency to avoid spelling out what should be the concrete political activity of the Party as a whole on women's oppression. To undertake this task would mean confronting the overall strategy of the CPGB. At present, by different routes, both the leadership and feminists in the CP fail to develop a revolutionary socialist strategy for women's liberation.

The political price the interests of women may pay through the operation of the CPGB's strategy is illustrated by events surrounding the abortion struggle in Italy. There, although the PCI's alliance is with the Christian Democratic Party (the equivalent of the Tories and an inconceivable ally for the CPGB, although CP leaders in the National Union of Students are taking bold steps in that direction), the fact it was prepared to sacrifice the demand for abortion on the altar of 'democratic advance' is a dire warning. It forced PCI women militants to break with the Party on the streets. What concessions would the CPGB be prepared to make with trade union leaders and left labour leaders in Britain?

In the forthcoming weeks, the editorial board of **Socialist Challenge** will be printing another balance sheet of the progress of our newspaper. We will be including plans for a national conference of **Socialist Challenge** supporters — an initiative projected when the paper was first launched.

As preparation for this conference, we urge **Socialist Challenge** groups to organise discussions around an assessment of the paper, and encourage individual readers to join local groups and take part in this discussion. We will be allocating regular space to ensure this debate is reflected in the pages of the paper, and hope that local groups will use the space to share the experience of their activity with other readers.

## Big Flame is right

AS YET another ex-member of the International Socialists [SWP], I wish to disagree with N. Stone's letter to **Socialist Challenge** (15 December) and to support, in general, the criticisms of the paper made by the Big Flame Secretariat.

Almost everyone who writes to **Socialist Challenge** seems to be full of praise for its non-sectarianism, its honesty, its openness, etc. and on the whole I think such praise is justified. But the fact that these characteristics are relatively undisputed means very little in itself.

Such characteristics of the paper were not conceived and developed because they are abstractly 'good things', but with a particular purpose in mind. That purpose, to put it quite bluntly, is to attract around the paper the various disaffected elements of the left, or the 'children of '68' as they have been more euphemistically described, in order to reunify them, at some later stage, into a new cadre organisation.

Now such a project may be a quite worthy and even necessary contribution to the revolutionary socialist movement in Britain, at one level. But to pretend that a paper directed almost solely to this end can also be a popular mass paper, as Stone appears to suggest, is a sheer nonsense in my view.

Is it really to 'underestimate and patronise working class militants' to believe that they aren't likely to be very interested in 'Peter Rabbit and the Grundrisse' or particularly impressed by an exclusive interview with David Hockney, 'one of Britain's most famous living painters'?

No. In its present form

**Socialist Challenge** is directed toward a very narrow range of readership which effectively precludes its development toward becoming a popular mass paper.

What Big Flame seem to be arguing — and I believe they are correct — is that this whole strategy is misconceived. This is not to say that the fragmentation of the existing left is unimportant, but it is a mistaken assumption that the left could be reunified on the basis of an appeal to whatever desire they may have to identify with the left intelligentsia. Rather, it would be far more likely to respond to the appeal of a paper which commanded support from a sizeable number of worker militants, or at least had the potential for doing so.

The format of such a paper would not need to be so dissimilar to **Socialist Worker** as Stone suggests in his eagerness to distance himself from it. **Socialist Worker** has been the most successful paper on the revolutionary left in terms of its sales to, and support from, working class militants. To reject the form which creates this obvious appeal just because some of its content is sectarian and directed solely toward party building is to throw the baby out with the bathwater. It is to deny the reality which drew many of us to revolutionary politics in the first place.

**Socialist Worker** probably still represents the closest approximation to the form that a popular revolutionary paper should take for it to gain a mass readership. Unlike **Socialist Worker**, however, it would need the open, honest, non-sectarian approach which characterises **Socialist Chal-**

lenge — but with the pretentious and esoteric intellectualism replaced by news, analysis and theory geared toward working class militants and available to them.

Unfortunately, the creation and development of such a paper is not merely a process of stylistic emulation and synthesis, it requires the dedicated application of more experienced revolutionaries than exist in the ranks of the IMG alone.

Perhaps Big Flame, Workers League, etc. should now put aside their doubts and suspicions and act upon their criticisms by joining the Editorial Board to try to make **Socialist Challenge** into something more like the sort of paper they would like it to be.

Their reluctance is understandable, but if they don't do it **Socialist Challenge** probably will degenerate into a more newsy, weekly version of *New Left Review*. Comrade Stone appears to favour such a development. I and a great many others would regard it as a matter for deep regret.

TONY HEAL, Hull

## Think again Big Flame

THE LETTER from Big Flame in **Socialist Challenge** (1 December 1977) explained their refusal to work closely with **Socialist Challenge**.

In my opinion their arguments reflect a fundamentally sectarian approach to **Socialist Challenge**: 'We will only become involved when the paper takes up our ideas about what kind of paper it should be'. This kind of ultimatum to **Socialist Challenge** will hardly attract those very same independents involved in **Socialist Challenge** whom Big Flame would seek to encourage — i.e. those who are quite rightly suspicious of any organisation that claims to have all the answers. Are Big Flame now to be included amongst such organisations?

The IMG has never claimed to be the infallible guide as to how a revolutionary organisation or newspaper should operate. It has on countless occasions stated that the practical resolution of such

questions should be the task of the revolutionary left as a whole. The fact that **Socialist Challenge** is, in practice, the line paper of the IMG (a fact, by the way, that has never been disguised by the IMG) is the sole responsibility of those organisations, like Big Flame, which are not prepared to put to the test inside an organisation larger than their own, what are only tactical differences with other tendencies.

The IMG does not hide the fact that it disagrees with Big Flame on whom **Socialist Challenge** should be aimed at, on how revolutionary regroupment is to be achieved, and in what kind of organisation is needed. But it does not hold up these differences as Holy Writ — the IMG is quite prepared to function as a minority within a revolutionary organisation that directs **Socialist Challenge** in a way radically different to today.

It is tragic that Big Flame see the concept of revolutionary



unity as a much narrower affair than this — as little more, basically, than an extension of their own ideas. The comrades of Big Flame must be urged to think again.

PAUL ORTON (Sheffield)



## No watering down

BIG FLAME (**Socialist Challenge**, 1 December 1977) want to build a revolutionary organisation from the base up, but they do not say how they intend to do this. Militancy and activity alone are not enough as, for example, Hounslow Hospital has shown. Without political awareness of their situation, even the most militant workers can become despondent and apathetic.

It is our task as revolutionaries to prevent this, by showing them that they are in no way responsible for the crisis, and that there is no real solution to their problems

under capitalism. In other words, we have to break down reformist ideology by developing a Marxist tradition.

By advocating a popular accessible newspaper, Big Flame also unconsciously perpetrate the division between workers and intellectuals. Of course most of the workers in the canteen read the Sun because they have been made to feel culture and eloquence do not belong to them. But those with more awareness can see through this myth. To quote Lenin: 'Everywhere and at all times the leaders of a certain class have

been its advanced, most cultivated representatives... The desire to descend to the level of understanding of the lower strata (instead of consciously raising the level of the workers' class-consciousness) must, therefore, necessarily have a profoundly harmful effect' (*Approved of the Professor de Fei*, *Collected Works*).

May **Socialist Challenge** continue as a revolutionary Guardian rather than yet another Daily Mirror! And may any broadening which takes place be the extension of editorial control to other sections of the Marxist left besides the IMG, not a watering down of content or ideas.

LIZ CANTELL, Ealing



## Socialist Challenge EVENTS

### NORTH WEST

For details of activities in the NW write or ring the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre, Third Floor, 14 Piccadilly, Manchester 1. 061-236 2392. Open Tuesday 6-8pm, Thursday 6-8pm, Saturday 10-1pm. Room available for meetings. Duplicating facilities available.

**WARRINGTON** Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-236 2392.

**BOLTON** Socialist Challenge supporters group, Thursday 12 January, White Lion, Moor Lane. 'No platform for fascists — what does it mean?'

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

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

### NORTH EAST

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

**MIDDLESBOROUGH** Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Boots in Cleveland Centre, 11-1pm.

**NEWCASTLE** Socialist Challenge on sale on Saturdays outside Fenwicks shop in Northumberland Street, 12-3pm.

### SCOTLAND

For information on **Socialist Challenge** contact Scottish Socialist/ Socialist Challenge bookshop, 64 Queen Street, Glasgow (Tel: 041-221 7481). Open weekdays 10-4. Late closing Thursday 6.00pm. Wide range of FI publications.

**DUNDEE**: Information about **Socialist Challenge** activities from 64 Queen Street, Glasgow. Join in SC sales outside Boots (corner of Reform Street) each Saturday, 11am-2pm.

**EDINBURGH** Socialist Challenge meetings every second Wednesday. Contact George Keravan, 12 Merchiston Grove, Edinburgh. Tel: 031-346 0466.

### SOUTH WEST

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

### LONDON

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

**CAMDEN** Socialist Challenge group meets every second and fourth Thursday of each month in Kentish Town. For details ring Neil on 359 8288 or write Neil c/o PO Box 50, London N1.

**SOUTHALL** Supporters group meets fortnightly. For details phone 01-573 5095.

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

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

**HARINGEY** Socialist challenge readers group meets fortnightly. West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road, 10th West Green Rd. Nearest tube: Turnpike Lane. Next meeting, Monday 9 January, 7.30 pm on 'Socialism and Democracy'. Speaker: Murray Smith.

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

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

# In defence of Arthur

LIKE comrade Diane Grimsditch I too am angry, but against her letter, and your idiotic caricature of Arthur Scargill.

It seems to me a favourite pastime of many comrades on the revolutionary left to attack, in the most negative way, leading comrades in the wide labour movement (who are as scarce as rocking horse shit) for their lack of a complete 100 per cent Marxist thought band.

To clarify my own position as a mere working class socialist (as opposed to a Marxist theoretician) I, like many others, recognise the subordinate role of women in society, in exactly the same way as one recognises the problems of homosexuals, blacks, etc. In total, the problems of all oppressed minorities within the framework of capitalist society. A variety of problems exist which

can only be eradicated when man ends the exploitation of man over man. That task can not be forsaken for some sectionalised struggle.

To achieve the desired results I believe one has to raise working class consciousness, and it is in this vein I defend Arthur Scargill and the *Yorkshire Miner*. As a regular reader of the *Yorkshire Miner*, as well as **Socialist Challenge**, and the SWP dominated *Collier*, I believe it fills a basic need.

For example, the simple question of raising the issue of Grunwicks. Prior to this it was indeed very difficult to convince workmates of the true role of the state: i.e. police repression of trade unionists, the role of the SPG, etc. Now having witnessed it at first hand, a certain breakdown of thought has occurred.

It was once said, 'The first

battle is for men's minds', but how do we do it? Do we bombard them with Althusser, Lukacs, etc. because even if they are 100 per cent Marxist works, what's the point if the miners don't read them, or worse still, can't even understand them?

I see the first part of the task in raising class-consciousness as one of building a trade union consciousness — given the unevenness of class consciousness, which does not follow any pre-determined path. For example just because someone joins *The Party* (SWP) does it immediately follow they are sectarian, rank and fileists, State Caps, Anti Fascists, Anti Sexists, Anti FI, Anti Marxists, etc? Even Nichol and Co require a certain amount of time to instill their mistaken ideology.

I have written or tried to write an honest letter, hopeful that recognising sexism, and being aware of it, it in reality not good enough, but it's the bridge to build on.

To conclude I was angry, very angry, at Joe Gormley and L. Daly last week. I was appalled at Sadat's visit, and I am horrified at British imperialism in N. Ireland. I am disgusted at the Labour Government. If we're going to attack, let's attack the right ones.

DICK HALL, Warsop Main Colliery, N. Derbyshire.

# Basis for a conference

A MEETING of the Sheffield Socialist Challenge supporters' group held on 15 December passed the following resolutions:

1. Sheffield Socialist Challenge supporters group recognises that although Socialist Challenge has been relatively successful in terms of expansion of readership, it has failed to receive the support of any major organisation other than the IMG. We therefore feel that there is an urgent need for the convening of a national conference of Socialist Challenge supporters to make an assessment of the role of the paper since its launching in June and to discuss the next

concrete steps in the campaign for the creation of a unified revolutionary organisation.

We call upon the editorial board to take steps to convene such a conference by the end of April 1978 and to organise a documented discussion amongst Socialist Challenge Supporters Groups. We also call for one page of the paper to be given over to contributions to the discussion.

2. Prior to the conference of Socialist Challenge supporters, we call upon the editorial board:

a) To obtain information about i) the size and compo-

sition of all the local SCGs (i.e. their IMG/non-IMG base) ii) the degree to which they have operated as either "Readers Groups" or interventionist groups, iii) whether the IMG operates as a separate organisation in the locality where the SCGs are interventionist.

b) In the case of discussion documents produced by the SCGs, for the paper to be responsible for the financial and administrative burden of distributing them to other SCGs.

c) To place responsibility on the local IMGs to make available to SC supporters all internal IMG material, past and present, relating to SC.

d) To make every effort to ensure that future 'Battle of Ideas' supplements relate to the central questions involved in regroupment (e.g. the nature of the Party, the Programme).

e) To make space available in the paper for statements by other organisations on the question of regroupment.

Sheffield SCG further proposes that: 1) The conference be open to all SC supporters

but that credentials be applied for through a local SCG. 2) That other tendencies on the left should be invited to send delegates whose credentials should be distinguished from SC supporters for the purpose of voting. 3) That the editorial board acts as, or appoints, a conference arrangements committee, to deal with speakers' credentials, time-table of agenda, etc. 4) That such a committee make arrangements for a pre-conference compositing meeting, open to all SC supporters with the necessary credentials.

Our group also adopted a resolution to be put to the conference of supporters:

Conference declares its aim to fight for the creation of a new revolutionary socialist organisation based on a clear revolutionary programme sharply differentiated from all brands of reformism and centrism and guaranteeing complete internal democracy with the right to form tendencies and factions. We recognise that the formation of such an organisation does not simply reduce itself to 'regroupment'—i.e. the fusion of existing organisations—but on the basis of an agreed programme the project should involve those unaligned militants who are not, at present, or never have been, in a revolutionary organisation. Whilst we would argue that

the specific scope, direction and unsectarian nature of SC has made a substantial contribution to revolutionary politics in Britain and has aided many militants in their break with reformism, until SC becomes a democratic centralist organisation based on a principled revolutionary programme, SC will always be in danger of accommodating to its audience instead of providing it with a lead.

Although there can be no blueprints, we recognise that such a process cannot be simply the arithmetical growth of one or more of the present revolutionary organisations and would in fact involve the dissolution of such organisations. We should fight for the new organisation to embrace all those who are committed to a clear revolutionary socialist programme. This means that forces who do not consider themselves to be Socialist Challenge supporters cannot be excluded from this process and we should be prepared to discuss the formation of a new organisation with any revolutionary currents.

However, in the event of failure to win such forces to the project of the formation of a new revolutionary organisation, we should be prepared, if

necessary, to form such an organisation from the ranks of Socialist Challenge supporters.

To this end, Conference calls upon Socialist Challenge to consciously campaign for the formation of a new revolutionary organisation. We also call for the formation and building of Socialist Challenge in the class struggle.

Conference should elect a national co-ordinating committee based on SC Supporters Groups reflecting both the political composition and geographical spread of such groups. The Committee should continually discuss and attempt to guide the national intervention of Socialist Challenge supporters.

The EB of Socialist Challenge should be elected by conference and be responsible to the national co-ordinating committee in between conferences. Only the national co-ordinating committee and conference can alter the composition of the EB.

The national co-ordinating committee should organise a recall conference before the end of 1978 to assess the overall role of the paper, the supporters groups and the campaign for a new revolutionary organisation.

SHEFFIELD SOCIALIST CHALLENGE SUPPORTERS GROUP

## For a 10,000 sales target

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE has a very short history and it has already attracted quite an important layer of readers. It is now time to think of how best we can stabilise, then increase our sales figures, which are very promising. We have nearly reached 7,500 copies per issue. In my opinion we should set ourselves 10,000 to 12,000 as a target.

As a first step we should more often open the columns of the paper to industrial comrades, as done some time ago in the Ford Bulletin, without falling into the workerist self-proclaimed tone of the SWP. Our ultimate aim is to build a revolutionary proletarian communist organisation, a section of the Fourth International in Britain.

First the IMG, as the only organised group involved in the paper to date, has to launch a propaganda campaign around the project of the '10/12,000 target' to be reached by the end of May '78. That date is a year after the launching of Socialist Challenge and also 10 years after events we all recall.

Some of my ideas have been used on the continent by French comrades of the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire for their Daily paper, Rouge. For a start, each Socialist Challenge supporter must systematically cut all the

mastheads of the unsold Socialist Challenges that constitute an excellent advertising material: they can easily be fry-posted. We also need posters but the present one is not very useful in the current upturn in working class combativity. It should have shown such slogans as those appearing on the front cover of issue 21. The posters could be produced at area/regional level.

A publicity poster is not only a photo-technical exercise, it is also a political weapon. Thousands of stickers printed would also be useful (which could be sold at a minimal price—profits to go to the fund drive). And could we learn anything from the example of the French comrades who had a national spray-painting campaign after their ban in June '73 and also in the launch of their daily in March '75 (in both cases together with posters), or more generally the example of the French (as well as the Italian, the Spanish or the Portuguese) revolutionary left when wanting to popularise any form of struggle?

We also need to systematise (or begin) sales outside the largest London and provincial railway stations. I believe there are two sorts of sales: the political and the agitational, with the latter applying to

stations. Thousands of the people we want to reach by our ideas commute every day via the stations. We should also consider dumping papers in the buses, the trains or the tube (current or past—as far as I am concerned, I dump current issues that I pay for). You often get positive responses from the people that pick up a copy of Socialist Challenge.

Other aspects of a campaign to get the paper known in the country entail: the use of photomontages when doing a sale, be it public or in a college; a campaign of subscriptions drive at individual or library level; the systematisation of factory, workplace and tube station sales.

All this demands an enormous effort on the part of the paper's sellers. Casual sales of the paper is incompatible with building it, inseparable from building a mature revolutionary communist organisation.

I hope these few comments will aid the opening of an ongoing public debate around the kind of paper, and therefore the kind of organisation, we want to build. I will finish by asking the following question: shouldn't we 'continentalise' some of our militant practices?

J. MELLING (S. London)

## Harrow supporters' verdict

A Socialist Challenge Supporters Group has been formed in Harrow with the following aims:

1. To initiate and encourage united left work in the area. We have started by suggesting at the Trades Council that a public meeting is held in support of the firemen.

2. To hold occasional political education meetings, open to all.

3. To help build Socialist Challenge. We all feel that the aims of Socialist Challenge are very commendable and that it is, on the whole, an excellent paper. We intend to get more people to both buy and sell the paper, to contribute to it ourselves when possible, and to take initiatives in getting other militants to send in news items and articles.

The group has formulated several criticisms of Socialist Challenge. Although it is better than Socialist Worker because it addresses itself to a broader audience, and although we appreciate the need for perhaps one long theoretical article per issue, we feel

that the overall effect of the paper is too intellectual. The false impression that the paper is chiefly written by and for an elite of revolutionary intellectuals was reinforced by the obituary on Clive Goodwin. We think Tariq Ali should not have used it to settle accounts with a personal friend.

The many columns of small print are unattractive to anyone who is not already 100 per cent committed. Throughout the paper, too high a theoretical level is assumed. We would like more articles on basic political education. Every day militants come under a barrage of cliché-ridden reactionary propaganda absorbed from the mass media by their work-mates. The paper should arm them with the basic factual information and theoretical arguments to deal with this.

The editorial board should write less themselves, and commission more items from those who are actually involved in the various activities—especially women's struggles, industrial struggles and Ireland. (Also the readers

should not leave it to journalists, but should take the initiative and send articles in without being asked).

We need articles on Ireland which go beyond personalised reports to a political analysis of the situation. Items should not be confined to the Republican struggle. The editorial board should commission Irish socialists to write about the growth of rank and file movements, and the important industrial struggles currently taking place in Ireland.

JILL SIMONS for Harrow Socialist Challenge Supporters Group

To initiate the debate on Socialist Challenge we have been flexible with our 400 word limit on letters. However to ensure all future contributors to the debate have ample opportunity to express their views, we will insist the 400 word limit is maintained.

## Jesus was on our side, OK?

SGF BRANDON in *Jesus and the Zealots* (1967) noted a widespread reluctance among Christians to take seriously the politics of Jesus Christ, and, if Peter Wollen's piece (15-31 December) is anything to go by, it is true of some Marxists too. Wollen seems to rely on out-dated and unreliable sources for his two main theses that, 1. the message of Jesus was essentially other-worldly ('well-known attachment to the other world'), and 2. he was a 'passive collaborator', a 'man in the middle' who never took sides.

There was a time when Marxist writers (e.g. Kautsky, *Foundations of Christianity* 1908) were more thorough in their analysis, while Christian Marxist writers such as Conrad Noel, *The Life of Jesus* (1937) and Stanley Evans *The Social Hope of the Christian Church* (1965) drew very heavily on the social revolutionary tradition in early Christianity. Recently Marxist writers in Latin

America (e.g. Bonino, *Aves, Gutierrez*) and in Europe (e.g. Machevec) have produced valuable studies on the political dimensions of Jesus. It is fair to say that both of Peter Wollen's claims are under serious dispute.

The 'otherworldly' view, which Wollen shares with most right-wing evangelicals in the USA, is totally discredited even by 'establishment' theology and has been for years: Jesus' message was dominated by the theme of the Kingdom of God, a theme with a long history in Judaism and not otherworldly at all. The idea that Jesus did not take sides is contradicted by vast amounts of New Testament evidence.

In fact, the entire Bible is emphatic that God is on the side of the poor, and much recent black theology has stressed this (c.f. James Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 1977). The early Christian Fathers were far more extreme in their condemnation of private

property and wealth than most modern socialists—c.f. St Basil, St Ambrose and St John Chrysostom in particular.

Of course, Christian history, like Marxist history, has much to its discredit, and the IMG claim that Stalinism has 'discredited socialism' has its parallel in the Christian's claim that the Christian establish-

ments have discredited Christianity. But at a time when many Christians for the first time for some 30 years, are taking Marxism seriously again, I suggest that Marxists could do better than re-hash out-dated views of Christianity.

REV. KEN LEECH, St Matthews' Rectory, E. London

## Roads to socialism

I WOULD not dare to suggest that the editors of Socialist Challenge would do anything else but encourage every reader of their paper to critically examine the content of my book which was reviewed in the 8 December issue. Yet two things run contrary to the open and informed debate which Socialist Challenge was set up to foster on the left. First, the publisher and price

of the book are not mentioned (Socialism and Parliamentary Democracy is obtainable from Spokesman Press, Gamble St., Nottingham, price £1.95). Second, the editors head the review with the suggestion that I argue that 'the masses exercise complete self-determination through a bourgeois parliament'. I will personally award any reader of Socialist Challenge with a year's

subscription to that journal if they can point out any statement in my book in support of that proposition.

Regarding the content of Dave Bailey's review, I have not got the space to reply in detail. I think the most important point is that Bailey fails to note that I assert that parliament, on its own, has little effective power, and I reject the reformism of Kautsky, the CP and the traditional Labour left. Bailey proposes the insurrectionary road to socialism, the smashing of 'bourgeois'

parliaments, the smashing of all bureaucracies, and the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. The reformist road to socialism has failed, but has this insurrectionary road shown any sign of success in advanced capitalist democracies?

The Leninist-Trotskyist strategy shows little sign of success, at least in the West. Bailey and others have a duty to critically evaluate such a strategy. Would they advocate a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' which, according to Lenin, must be 'unrestricted by any laws'? Such anarchistic statements go a long way to explain the failure of Leninism in the West.

Would they support the 'smashing' of the British

Parliament, as advocated in the resolutions of the Second Comintern Congress? It is asking the working class to smash a slightly democratic institution before any other replacement has been proven in power. Would they suggest that the complete abolition of bureaucracy is desirable or possible? Bolshevik practice after 1917 and even the position of the Left Opposition in Russia asserts the contrary.

Socialist Challenge is keen to denounce reformism, and often does so on a correct basis and to positive effect. But there is little evidence in its pages to suggest that soviets have any sign of emerging in Britain, or the scenario of Russia 1917 is likely to be repeated. There is no evidence that a revolution on the lines of that one, even if it emerged, would have much chance of success.

It is simply irresponsible to suggest that such an insurrectionary strategy is the only road. It is about time that the Trotskyist left stopped claiming that it has the strategic answers and looked at its own failures, as well as those of others. When it has done this it too might join the search for a new effective 'third road' to socialism which takes account of the modern conditions in which we live.

GEOFF HODGSON, Manchester

# Socialist Challenge

## Lobby Parliament 16 Jan.

# THE FBU STRIKE CAN BE WON

**CAUSE:** 21 December — the TUC General Council refuse to support the FBU strike. In reality it is an endorsement of the 10 per cent wage limit of the Labour Government.

**EFFECT:** 1 January — in a radio interview Callaghan announced he will be aiming to introduce a fourth round of incomes policy, with this time a five per cent limit on wage increase.

Only a political illiterate could imagine these two events are not linked, and Callaghan's brazen announcement illustrates the seriousness of the TUC vote on 21 December. In this respect the vote by the executive of the FBU to demand a recall of the TUC should be taken up throughout the labour movement.

### SOLIDARITY EVENTS

\* Support Conference for trade union officials. Thursday 5 January, called by SE Region TUC and London FBU.

\* Liverpool Trades Council Conference. Sunday, 8 January. Credentials: 70 Victoria Street, Liverpool. Phone: 051-236 2051.

\* Mass Rally, Friends Meeting House, Euston. Thursday, 12 January.

\* March and lobby of Parliament. Monday, 16 January.

### DETERMINATION

But the FBU strike cannot wait for the TUC. The real determination of the strikers has been shown by their solid refusal to return to work over

the Xmas period. That sacrifice need not be in vain. It is now up to the 17 on the General Council who supported the firemen to turn their words into action.

They should organise inside their unions for a day of mass solidarity action by other trade unionists with the firemen. Instead of making gestures of support by giving a few thousand pounds, they should have their unions make massive interest free loans and contributions to the FBU strike fund.

Amongst the 17 on the



General Council was Ken Gill from the white collar section of the engineering union, and a Communist Party member. The Communist Party can take a major step in solidarity action by turning the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions towards winning the strike.

Instead of slowly building its conference on unemployment announced for February, it should be organising for a day of solidarity action with the firemen.

If these steps are not taken, then Terry Parry and the

leadership of the FBU will be as much to blame as the 17 who supported them on the General Council. Each time they have called an action or supported the ones initiated by the London Region of the FBU, they have failed to call on other trade union leaders to mobilise alongside them.

Parry and the other FBU leaders must put this right by calling for a mass turnout by all trade unionists at the march and lobby of Parliament on 16 January, and go on to name the day for national solidarity action with the firemen.

### BLOODY SUNDAY 1978

#### National Demonstration In London on Sunday 29 January

Assemble: Shepherd's Bush Green, 1.30pm  
Called by the Bloody Sunday Commemoration Demonstration Committee

**Britain Out of Ireland!  
Self-Determination for the Irish People**



## Fund drive successful!

LENIN HAD the last laugh at Xmas, as *Socialist Challenge* made its winter fund drive. By the New Year just over the required £1800 had come in. The final total was £1812.38. This is a great success for the paper and will help us survive in 1978.

The final total would have been around £100 higher if it had not been for the tragic

bankruptcy of The Other Cinema. Unfortunately, among the cinema's creditors was *Socialist Challenge*.

In the effort to make the winter target our thanks to the following supporters:

Credit supporters	5.00
H. Wicks	5.00
Anon.	20.00
Book sale	3.00
W. Brown	0.70
F. Kingdon	2.25
Anon.	20.00
Anon.	5.00
Anon.	50.00
L. Gregory	2.00
R. Kryzyk	10.00
D. Okruczynska	10.00
S. Jessup	22.90
M. Collins	0.50
Nottingham disco	27.90
S. Reithartha	4.50
J.T.	15.00
P. Remington	0.50
B. Smith	2.50
Labour Party supporter	10.00
Anon.	0.70
Southampton supporters	8.00
Anon.	5.00
P. Dooney	0.30
Manchester Poly supporters	0.50
Anon.	5.00
J. Alwyn	7.00
M. Mullhall	5.00
E. Donway	1.50
D. & L. Fowler	5.00
Travellers Inn, Birmingham	4.00
Socialist Challenge dinner	20.36
Anon.	3.00
A. Adler	2.50
C. McKenracher	6.50
Anon.	5.00
B. French	1.00
K. Janzon	0.50
D. Hall	1.00
Anon.	2.50
A. Benjamin	1.25
B. Burke	2.50
December bankers orders	138.00
TOTAL	£328.88



## Special Offer

DUE TO the rise in the price of *Socialist Challenge*, we now have to increase the price of our subscriptions, but they are still excellent value. When postal charges are taken into account, you get the paper cheap, and of course you are sure of a copy.

Subscriptions also work

wonders for our otherwise perilous cash flow!

In the spirit of the New Year, we are making new subscribers a special offer. The first 200 subs received in 1978 will be sent a *Socialist Challenge* calendar — free! The offer is a limited one because few of

these superb calendars remain. Featuring 13 posters from May '68 in France, it has been a popular success, with 2,800 copies sold to date. So fill in your subscription order this minute, or — if you already receive your copy — send us £1 and we'll rush off a calendar post free.

## SUBSCRIBE NOW!

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

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

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