

# Socialist Challenge

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**All-out action  
can spread...**



# THE REBELLION

**SITTING** in the cosy comfort of No 10 Downing Street on Monday night, Jim Callaghan offered his thoughts to BBC TV's 'Panorama'.

He attacked any strikers his interviewers cared to mention, but then he stressed: 'On the whole it's not the national leaders. The responsibility is much lower down'.

True enough. For instance:

In the National Union of Public Employees, the national executive overturned the decision of its negotiators — led by general secretary Alan Fisher — to accept the miserly government offer.

In the ambulance service, workers voted against the policy of all the union leaders involved and decided on strike action this Friday.

Union leaders attempt to limit strike action by their members or stop it altogether.

Union leaders sign agreements with employers and concordats with the government.

And the 'lower down' rebel.

The causes of the rebellion are not hard to find: Low pay, crumbling public services, a trade union leadership which disregards conference decisions, a Labour Government which disregards its party's conference decisions.

The 'lower down' have, to borrow another of Callaghan's phrases, 'had a basinful'.

The rebellion they are engaged in has yet to take concrete form or shape.

The obvious conclusion from the NUPE executive's rejection of the deal — all-out strike action — has not yet been called for by the executive.

In the civil service dispute, too, the union leadership is content to offer only 'selective' strike action.

Even the 'left' TUC and Labour Party tops have neglected to call for recall conferences of their respective organisations.

But it is now obvious

that the government is very determined to crush the public sector strike and determined too to reject the claims of civil service workers.

Only an equal show of strength by those involved in these struggles will persuade the government to change its mind. All-out action is the obvious prescription.

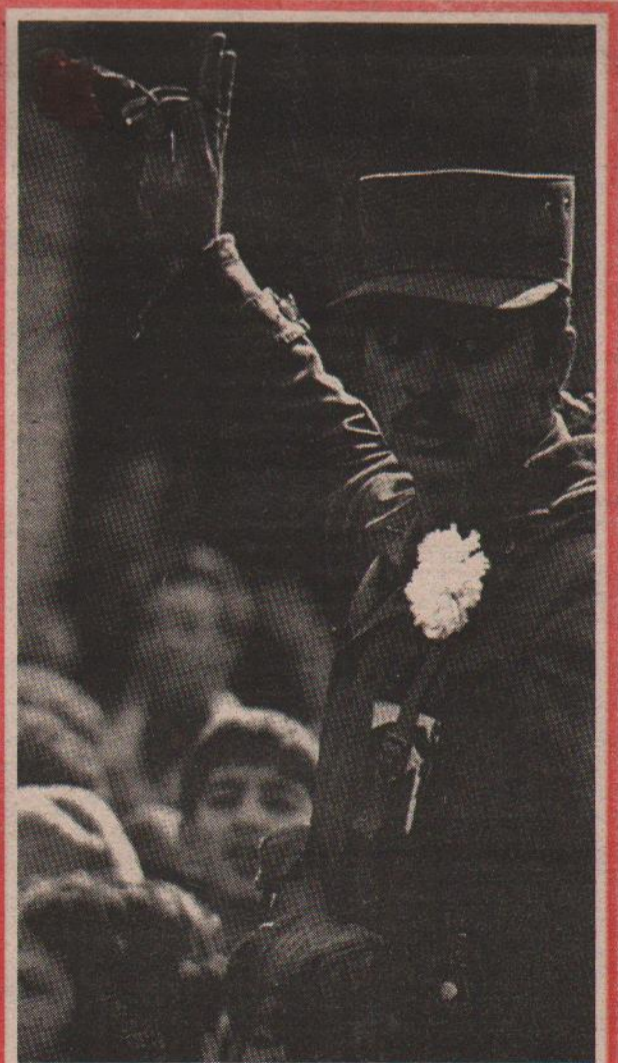
Such action would no doubt bring further lectures from Callaghan. He spoke on Monday of the

need for a change in 'moral attitude'.

For a government which has ordered massive cuts in the NHS to lecture ambulance workers on 'morality' is taking hypocrisy to bizarre proportions.

Callaghan and the rest of the Labour government have 'squeezed' the poor 'until their pips squeak'.

That is the root of the rebellion and why it should be spread and supported.



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# EDITORIAL

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# The CON-cordat

IF ANYONE had any doubts about the meaning of the TUC-government concordat, they should have been well and truly cleared up last week. With the combined voices of Len Murray, Peter Shore, Joel Barnett and just about every other government minister demanding that the public sector workers reject the NUPE executive decision and go back to work, it is clear that the concordat is nothing but a plan for open strike-breaking government's and Murray's actions are in fact an even more blatant act of scabbing than the TUC General Council decision to isolate and defeat the Fire Brigades Union strike last year.

## CORE OF CONCORDAT

Such strike-breaking, and attacks on rank-and-file trade unionists and union democracy, is at the very core of the concordat. Even its details are virtually identical to such previous anti-union measures as Labour's 1969 In Place of Strife, the Tory Industrial Relations Act, and the social contract.

\* The talk of strikes being 'a last resort' and opposing strikes 'during negotiations' is no different to Paragraph 15 of In Place of Strife, which said that 'the typical British strike...is in breach of agreed procedure', or the Tory Industrial Relations Act's attempts to impose cooling off procedures.

## ATTACKS ON PICKETS

\* The attacks on picketing and solidarity, now named 'secondary action' by the press, Tories, and government, are no different in essentials from those in the Industrial Relations Act. This outlawed any attempt 'to interfere with the performance by another person of a contract'. It is one in a long line of attacks on pickets — notably the infamous Shrewsbury frame-up trial of Des Warren and other building worker trade unionists.

\* The move by the concordat to get secret individual ballots has exactly the same aim as In Place of Strife. This ruled that, 'Where an official strike is threatened, the Secretary of State will discuss with the unions concerned the desirability of holding a strike ballot'. The Industrial Relations Act proposed the same with compulsory ballots where a strike 'has begun or is likely to begin'. The aim is to break up the solidarity of workers and make them easy individual targets for anti-union press and television campaigns.

## PURE MOONSHINE

\* The economic part of the concordat, such as its so-called aim to get inflation down to 5 per cent in three years, is pure moonshine. It is just like the social contract, which in fact reduced real wages by 12 per cent between 1975 and 1977. Real wages are only just beginning to recover from this — and then only by the fact that last year wages bust the government incomes policy limit. The concordat's growth target of only 3 per cent means that the TUC is accepting policies of mass unemployment.

In fact, under the concordat the TUC is offering to give the government the greater part of what the employers were unable to force the working class to accept through In Place of Strife, the Industrial Relations Act, and the social contract. Thatcher will thank the TUC kindly for surrendering the last ten years' struggle to defend trade union rights, and will try to turn all their proposals into law the moment she is returned to office as a result of the right-wing policies of this government.

## OPENS WAY FOR TORIES

Anyone who supports the concordat is supporting a massive attack on the rights of rank-and-file trade unionists to fight and organise, starting with the public sector struggle, and is helping to open the door for the Tory wolves. Total and complete rejection of the concordat is the touchstone for any class struggle politics in Britain today.

# THE FIRST WORD

## Socialist Worker on Indochina

# Neither Hanoi



By Tariq Ali  
NO socialist can dispute that the latest events in Indochina are horrific on all counts.

They are the latest in a long line of Stalinist atrocities: the verbal campaign against Tito and Yugoslavia in the Forties and Fifties, the suppression of the East Berlin rising in 1953, and the invasions in Budapest in 1956 and Prague in 1968.

But on none of these occasions did socialists stand on the sidelines and scream: 'A plague on all your houses'. They opposed the invasions and demanded the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the countries in question.

Nigel Harris's article in last week's *Socialist Worker* refuses to take sides. It equates the Kampuchean-Vietnamese conflict with the Chinese invasion.

It concludes with the following paragraphs:

'The ungovernable urge to "teach lessons" — to flash the knife — is a gamble that murder can be perpetrated with impunity. It flows from the logic of an imperialist system that encompasses alike both the so-called "Peoples' Democracies" and so-called "democracies".'

'The smaller powers, each run by its own clique of comparable gangsters, are used in the prize fight by their respective Godfathers...'

'Widows weep again tonight as they did last night and will for many more nights.'

'The slaughter of their men, sons and daughters, is for nothing: just the blood tribute to the gods of the system, to make the world safe for the rich and powerful.'

This makes no attempt to analyse what has happened in Vietnam, Kampuchea or China. The masses are seen as powerless slaves in the grip of demented gangsters and we in Britain can wash our hands with a few phrases of liberal rhetoric.

Let us suppose that Dubcek and his supporters in Czechoslovakia had decided to organise an armed resistance to

the Soviet invasion. I doubt whether *Socialist Worker* would have been neutral. So why abstain on the Chinese invasion of Vietnam?

True, Nigel, there will be widows in Shanghai and Hanoi. We must place the responsibility for that firmly in Peking, for it is rubbish to assert that the invasion is solely concerned with Kampuchea.

China's occupation of the Paracel islands in January 1974 had nothing to do with Kampuchea.

During and after the war the Vietnamese leaders tried to maintain friendly relations with both the Soviet Union and China. The latter rebuffed the Vietnamese on every occasion after the fall of Saigon.

Isolated politically by the Chinese and economically by the capitalist powers the Vietnamese had little option but to move closer to the Soviet Union. It was for them, as for Cuba, not a matter of choice, but necessity.

Even the purest revolutionary government would be confronted with this logic — and not just in the 'third world'.

A revolution in Portugal would have resulted in an imperialist blockade. Would not the revolutionary government have been forced to an economic arrangement with Comecon? The Iranian revolution, if successful, will face similar problems.

We are witnessing the ultimate logic of 'socialism in one country': an unbridled nationalist degeneration of

socialist revolutions. The only victors will be the imperialists, for if the present war continues it will considerably weaken the non-capitalist states on a global scale.

These states are a far cry from socialism but they are nevertheless in transition from capitalism. Whether their progress to socialism will be completed will depend on the working masses in these countries. But it is still obvious that there is a real tension between these states and imperialism.

*Socialist Worker* has tacitly acknowledged these facts. In Angola it supported the Cuban intervention and the MPLA against South Africa and imperialism.

The slogan 'Neither East nor West, but International Socialism' was not raised when the South African armies threatened Luanda — nor when the Soviet Union sent in massive military aid to the Vietnamese two years before the fall of Saigon.

Nigel's views on China are well known. There was no social revolution, merely a nationalist coup. There is no real difference between China and India.

The fact that in one country few, if any, people starve to death is a trivial coincidence.

The political conclusions are equally bizarre; either the revolution is led by revolutionaries whom Nigel agrees with or else it's not worth the trouble and the masses might as well wait for 'us' to do the necessary in Europe.

The result of this blinkered view of the world is to dismiss the Sino-Vietnamese conflict as a war between big and small 'gangsters'.

Not good enough, Nigel.

# nor Peking?

## China: another tragedy for Vietnam

THE suffering of the people of Vietnam seems endless. For nearly 40 years, they have had war inflicted upon them. Now China has added a further episode of slaughter.

Why has China invaded Vietnam? It serves no military function — the border is only lightly fortified. It cannot influence the war in Cambodia which is, in large-scale terms, complete. There is no time for Vietnam to move troops to the north from Cambodia. Is it an attempt to induce the Russians to attack Xinjiang province in the north-west? The Chinese have obligingly evacuated the border zones to make that possible. A limited Russian invasion would be helpful in cementing loyalties at home, and confirm American hostilities towards Russia and links with China.

And if the Russians don't invade, Peking can proclaim it a paper tiger and Vietnam defenceless. Whatever the reasons, the actions are clear cut. Vietnam taught a lesson to Cambodia: in reply, China has taught a lesson to Vietnam. To complete this sequence of complementary gangsterism, the Soviet Union must teach a lesson to China, and dent the prestige of the new leadership after Deng's Visit to the United States. In Vietnam, from the perspective of Peking and Moscow, it is primarily Russia's prestige which is at stake. Both the Russian and American Pacific fleets are rumoured to be steaming towards the South China Sea.

The ungovernable urge to teach lessons — to flash the knife — is a gamble that murder can be perpetrated with impunity. It flows from the logic of an imperialist system that encompasses alike both the so-called 'Peoples' Democracies' and so-called 'democracies'. The smaller powers, each run by its own clique of comparable gangsters, are used in the prize fight by their respective Godfathers. And the mass of people are dragged to slaughter, to defend the 'sacred' motherland, to gloat at the pain and slaughter of men and women identical to themselves on the other side.

The one thing none of the contenders cares about is people, whether their 'own' or others. In Canton and Hanoi and Shanghai and Phnom-Penh in villages across the land mass, the pain of death is same, regardless of which flag flew above. Widows weep again tonight as they did last night and will for many more nights. The slaughter of their men, sons and daughters, is for nothing: just the blood tribute to the gods of the system, to make the world safe for the rich and powerful.

NIGEL HARRIS

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.

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Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper St, London N1.

## 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:
  - 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.
  - 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 the millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.
  - The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia. In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.
  - 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.

# China bids for power in Asia

By Richard Carver

PEKING's offer of peace talks is no offer at all. Vietnam has replied that no talks are possible with Chinese troops still on its soil.

Instead the Hanoi government has warned the Vietnamese people that they may face a long war. In an unusual move the New China News Agency has repeated the Vietnamese statement as evidence of the impact its armies are having.

It links this to a comment from vice-premier Deng Xiaoping, hoping for a quick end to the 'punitive action'. But it is unlikely that China will be able to disentangle itself so quickly. If the war goes on it will not be because of Vietnamese weakness but because the invading armies find it impossible to withdraw.

There is a simple geographical

problem. The troops have been pushed through the border passes like air through a valve — it is not possible simply to reverse the process.

The other problem is Vietnamese military strength. Western intelligence sources now confirm Hanoi's claims. In the first week of the war the Chinese had sustained 9,000 casualties and lost some 100 tanks, about a fifth of those involved. And at this point no regular Vietnamese units were engaged.

The Chinese military and political leaders must be pondering what will happen when these battle-hardened divisions are engaged.

Ever since Dien Bien Phu in 1954, when the forces of General Giap shattered an apparently superior French army, the Vietnamese have put the best soldiers in the world to

flight.

Speculation is idle, but it looks increasingly likely that the low level of Vietnamese troop involvement so far may be part of a plan to lure the invaders into a Dien Bien Phu style ambush.

Another worry in Peking will be the possible emergence of internal opposition to the war. One wall poster criticising the invasion has been reported, prompting the Communist Party Central Committee to issue 'Directive Number 11' banning all 'big character posters' and demonstrations on the war.

The ferment of discussion on Peking's 'Democracy Wall' has deliberately not been allowed to spread to foreign policy issues. The Chinese bureaucracy must be aware, at least subconsciously, that that is where it departs most obviously from the norms of revolutionary communism.

The statements of the foreign policy makers in the Heavenly City read like the Kissinger Doctrine — not surprisingly since the present leadership learnt international relations at

the school of Richard M. Nixon.

There could hardly be a more graphic demonstration of what is meant by 'socialism in one country'. As far back as the 1954 Geneva conference — long before the Sino-Soviet split — the Chinese leaders favoured the partition of Vietnam and the transformation of the South into an American sphere of influence.

In the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution the desire to establish a separate Chinese sphere of influence in the Far East led the bureaucracy to closer co-operation with imperialism and its local clients. Nixon's visit to Peking is well known. Close Chinese relations with the reactionary ASEAN bloc — Thailand, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia — have got less publicity.

In contrast to its measly aid to Vietnam during the war, in the early 1970s China began to supply oil to the ASEAN states. Then in 1974 it seized the

Vietnamese-held Paracel islands in the South China Sea, depriving Vietnam of a major source of oil.

For a long time Peking has also had its eyes on the Spratlys, to the south of the Paracels. Both claims are utterly bizarre, their only legal justification being that the islands are linked to China by a string of reefs running down through the South China Sea.

All these facts are forgotten by those who equate the entry of Chinese troops into Vietnam with that of the Vietnamese into Kampuchea. The same people like to see the Vietnam-Kampuchea dispute as a simple reflection of the Sino-Soviet rift.

Washington immediately responded to the Chinese invasion by linking the two: 'It was possible that Chinese troops might remain in Vietnam to be used in exchange for a withdrawal of Vietnamese forces now in Cambodia.' What the spokesperson did not add was that just before the

invasion Chinese leader Deng had been having top level talks in the United States!

Kampuchea was undoubtedly the immediate cause of the invasion. Probably China is trying to draw Vietnamese troops out of Kampuchea, which it maintained as a counterbalance to Vietnam in Indochina.

But China's political aspirations in South East Asia as a whole are the real cause of the war. The Chinese leadership's desire for a weak Vietnam can be traced back to 1954. Now, egged on by imperialism, it is trying to realise that desire — and if that brings it up against the Soviet Union, the 'more dangerous' super-power, then so be it.

Proletarian internationalism is long since dead in China. The Vietnamese revolution is threatened from all sides. But the continuation of this suicidal alliance with imperialism threatens death for the Chinese revolution too.

## China-Vietnam - a chronology

1974

**January:** China occupies the oil-rich Paracel islands in the South China Sea, which were previously controlled by South Vietnamese forces.

1975

**30 April:** Fall of Saigon. China ends its military aid to Vietnam, citing the conclusion of hostilities.

**September:** The visit to Peking of Le Duan, the secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, ends without a common communiqué, revealing a chilliness in Chinese-Vietnamese relations. But China grants Hanoi an interest-free loan.

1976

**December:** Fourth congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party. Pro-Chinese figures are removed from the central committee. The press in Hong Kong reveals the existence of disputes on the China-Vietnam border.

1977

**June:** Official visit to China by general Giap, who also goes to Moscow.

1978

**March:** Nationalisation of small businesses in Vietnam, a measure which affects numerous Chinese residents. Start of exodus by the Hoas (Chinese community in Vietnam). Almost 200,000 flee to China. Numerous others leave the country by sea.

**April:** Nhan Dhan, the VCP daily, reports sporadic inci-

dents on the border.

**May:** Peking accuses Hanoi of 'persecution and expulsion of Chinese residents in Vietnam'. Start of a polemic between the two countries on the problem of the Hoas.

**June:** China masses troops on the Vietnamese border. Nearly a thousand Chinese technicians working in Vietnam are sent home. The Chinese ambassador in Hanoi leaves his post for 'reasons of health'.

**29 June:** Vietnam joins Comecon.

**1 July:** China demands the closure of the three Vietnamese consulates in South China.

**3 July:** China stops its aid to Vietnam and recalls all its experts.

**3 August:** Opening of negotiations in Hanoi on the problem of the Hoas, but without result.

**25 August:** The border disputes worsen. At least ten Chinese deaths are announced. The two sides exchange verbal attacks and increasingly violent protests.

**26 September:** The negotiations in Hanoi are adjourned indefinitely.

**1 November:** Further serious incidents on the border involving deaths on both sides. Each government accuses the other of violating its territory.

**3 November:** Signing of Soviet-Vietnamese treaty of friendship and co-operation in Moscow. Delivery of Soviet Mig-23s to Vietnam, to be followed in December by two frigates.

**15 December:** Peking announces that there have been 1,100 incidents on the China-Vietnam border since the start of 1978.

**22 December:** Suspension of railway links between China and Vietnam.

1979

**6 January:** Prince Sihanouk arrives in Peking.

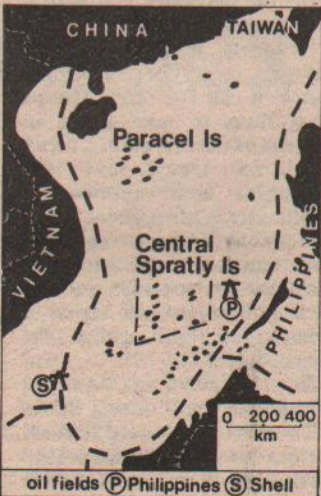
**7 January:** The FUNSK, supported by the Vietnamese army, enters Phnom Penh. The Chinese denounce the invasion of Kampuchea by Vietnam.

**20 January:** The Vietnamese ministry of foreign affairs sends a note to the Chinese embassy in Hanoi protesting against 'the continual violations of Vietnamese territory by Chinese troops'.

**31 January:** During his visit to the United States, Deng Xiaoping raises with American journalists the need to give 'a good lesson' to the Vietnamese.

**16 February:** Pham Van Dong, Vietnamese prime minister, goes to Phnom Penh. Peking describes the situation on the China-Vietnam border as 'explosive'.

**17 February:** China unleashes its 'counter-attack' into Vietnamese territory.



The area inside the shaded line of dashes is claimed by China as its 'sacred territory'. China occupies the Paracel Islands and Vietnam occupies most of the Central Spratly Islands.



A RECENT opposition demonstration by students and peasants in Peking. After a wall poster has criticised the invasion of Vietnam, the Chinese leaders are worried this too may become a political issue.

## Hackney

By Jon Duveen  
Hackney Central CLP

THE Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party will be holding its 12th annual conference on 3/4 March. Standing outside on the opening day will be a lobby called by Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council support committee to back the public sector workers' full claim.

But inside the conference hall the prospects for a full discussion on the strike are not promising. Only a handful of CLPs have submitted emergency resolutions on the public sector claim.

Hackney South & Shoreditch has an emergency resolution backing the full claim, while Hackney North & Stoke Newington calls for all London councils to grant the £60 minimum and 35-hour week.

Even if such emergency resolutions are taken they fail to take into account how the full claim would be financed. Last year's conference agreed to mount a campaign against interest payments and for central government to make money available for local government's capital programmes. Unfortunately not much has been heard of this campaign since.

## Teesside

By Alan Theasby

SCHOOL caretakers throughout Cleveland in the North-East went on indefinite strike action on 26 February.

The NUPE members decided on the action five days earlier — the same day a mass meeting of refuse collectors in Middlesbrough linked up with flying pickets from Sunderland to march to the town's main sewage pumping station. There NUPE area officer John Davies called his members out on strike.

The sewage strike, together with bad weather and high tides, presented the prospect of raw sewage seeping onto the streets. 'This', said Davies, 'is a risk the council is obviously prepared to take.'

The escalation of the action has been largely a result of the council's policy of confrontation and its decision to send home refuse workers who had refused to cross a picket line.

## Somerset

By Mike Eaude  
TGWU

NORTH Somerset ambulance workers in NUPE, TGWU and COHSE were among those who defied a last-minute union request to postpone the national one-day strike on Wednesday of last week. When they returned to emergency-only cover on Thursday, however, they found they were locked out unless they agreed to work normally.

Avon ambulance workers then met and decided to strike indefinitely until the lock-out was lifted and the Somerset drivers paid for the time lost as a result of it. Three hours later management caved in as ambulance stations around the country were meeting and, without exception, phoning in

messages of strike action in support of North Somerset.

The determination of North Somerset and other areas not to be split by allowing emergency and clinic ambulance drivers to take different actions, as happens when 'on emergencies only', was an important factor in forcing the NUPE executive to reject the pay offer that same evening.

## Swansea

By J Barker  
TGWU

SWANSEA's local authority branch of the TGWU unanimously rejected the national offer at a 700-strong meeting on Wednesday of last week.

Missing at the meeting was the union's regional secretary, George Wright. He was too busy hobnobbing with Jim Callaghan and Len Murray, who were speaking in Swansea the same evening at a pro-devolution rally.

The rally itself was picketed by 50 public sector workers organised by the Campaign for Action in NUPE.

An especially lively response was offered when the platform talked about the usefulness of the devolution measures for extending democracy. More than a few members of the audience pointed out that the new concordat is totally against Labour Party and TUC conference decisions.

## Bristol

From Bristol Voice

NATIONAL Front thugs set on four hospital workers last Thursday night as they were leaving a union branch meeting at Transport House, Bristol.

The hospital workers were attacked just a few minutes after an argument between a number of branch members and people flyposting 'Repatriation not immigration' posters on the walls of Transport House had ended with both sides being sent on their way by a policeman.

However the four who were attacked stood their ground, and the brawl quickly came to an end as about 20 branch members from Brentry laundry poured out of their coach to help.

# Rejection only first step to victory

EVERY year NUPE general secretary Alan Fisher mounts his white charger at the union's conference and delivers militant speeches against low pay.

But when the actual claim is lodged, Fisher limits the action in pursuit of the claim and eventually recommends a deal which bears no resemblance to his conference rhetoric.

In the past NUPE's leader has managed to ride these two horses at once quite satisfactorily. But this year he has come a cropper.

By Patrick Sikorski

The NUPE executive's unanimous rejection of the offer reflects the disgust of the rank and file at the offer Fisher is still trying to sell.

In that selling he has been joined by Len Murray, the TUC, Minister of Health David Ennals, and the entire Labour government.

But the rush to Fisher's side is not a reflection of his strength. In fact it shows how frightened he is.

As Socialist Challenge went to press the South Wales, London, North East, Merseyside and Scottish regions of NUPE had all voted to reject the offer.

The two London regions of the General and Municipal Workers Union had moved rejection, and the London regions had also called for the reconvening of the GMWU national industrial council — a demand quickly turned down by general secretary David Basnett.

Alan Fisher will still fight to deflate the militancy of his rank

and file. He has sent out circulars to branches involved in all-out action instructing them either to go back to work or return to selective action.

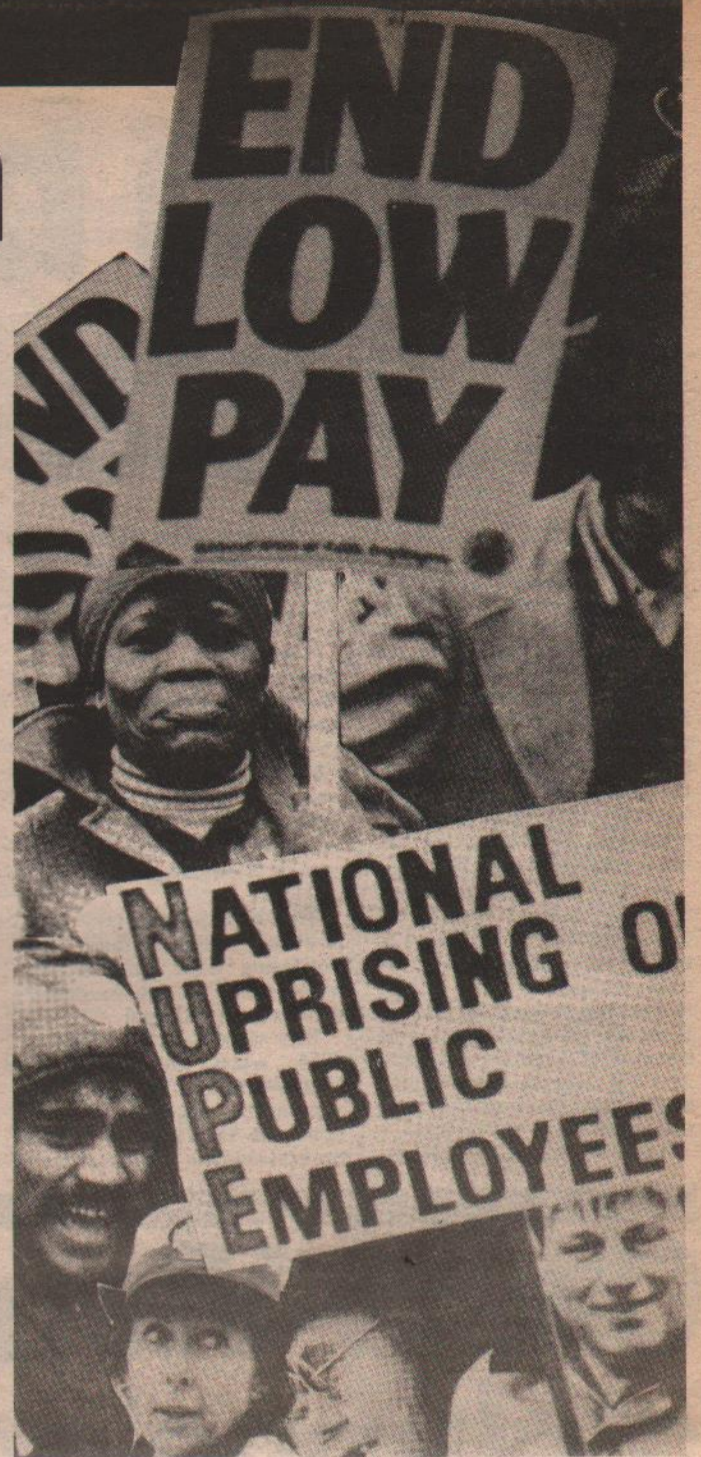
His aim is to stop the strike escalating; his hope is that without an alternative to selectivity the membership will eventually drift back.

Consequently the rejection of the offer is in itself not a guarantee of future success for the low paid; there is now a pressing need for an alternative to selectivity.

The obvious alternative is all-out, national strike action, involving the membership of every union in dispute.

District, area and regional strike committees could co-ordinate the fight on a joint union basis. These committees could co-operate with striking civil servants and point out to them the uselessness of the type of selectivity the CPSA leadership is promoting.

For its part the government will continue to insist that there is no more money in the kitty to pay the public sector workers.



It may even argue that any settlement above the present offer will mean massive cuts in the public services.

That too will need an answer. Comparisons — like the rumoured 25 per cent award about to be given to soldiers — can be made.

If the government can afford such rises to strikebreakers and soldiers, why not to nurses?

And the problem of finance at local government level can be referred to the massive interest payments local councils make to insurance and banking companies.

For instance, the projected Camden deal, while it doesn't

meet the full claim, will cost just £2 million. Compare that to the £18 million Wandsworth council in London paid out in interest charges last year.

Undoubtedly the government will try to make additional cuts once the claim is settled.

But for a government which has already closed 130 hospitals to blame people like canteen workers or school caretakers for yet more cuts would be carrying the joke too far.

With the government and TUC's continued rejection of Labour Party and TUC conference decisions, the joke has gone on too long already.

## Liaison Committee: attack is best form of defence

By John Ross

AFTER some hesitation the Communist Party came out against the TUC/government concordat on 17 February. In the Morning Star editor Tony Chater wrote:

'The so-called concordat... should be thrown in the dustbin alongside the social contract, of which it is no more than a half-resurrected ghost...'

'For the fact is that the right-wing Labour and trade union leaders will try in every possible way to lead the movement back into the straitjacket of wage restraint.'

The sentiments expressed in Chater's article were unequivocal enough. The same cannot be said for what prominent Communist Party leaders have done in practice.

Thus CP member Ken Gill, who sits on the TUC general

council on behalf of AUEW/TASS, was quoted in the Morning Star the day after the concordat was signed as follows:

'...because the general council has expressed its determination not to allow this [concordat] to be used as an excuse to introduce an incomes policy, it was not necessary to oppose the document.'

An opportunity to clarify the contradiction between Chater's and Gill's statements is available when the CP-dominated Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions holds its conference on 10 March.

As usual the conference organisers are not circulating their proposed resolution in advance. Any resolution will, at best, be given to the delegates only when they walk in the door.

But if the politics of the Morning Star are what the conference organisers come up with, the delegates can expect little practical guidance.

Support for an all-out national strike in the public sector; a call for other groups of workers to take action in support of the low paid; a recall TUC to throw out the concordat and support the public sector struggle; a recall Labour conference to repudiate government policies and start the fight for socialist ones — such policies would signal a meaningful fight against the concordat.

But they have not been put forward in the Morning Star.

The reason isn't hard to find. A fight for such policies would mean a head on conflict with the Morning Star's 'left' friends.

One such friend is Alan

Fisher, built up as a 'left' by the CP for years. Which is why readers of the Morning Star will be hard pushed to find any denunciation of NUPE's general secretary in its editorial columns.

There has been a similar silence in relation to the CP's other favourites, the Tribune Group. Yet Tribune has rushed to support the concordat, saying that within it 'could lie the seeds for a real and lasting cooperation between the Labour government and the unions'.

So unless there is a real change of heart by CP leaders, the LCDTU conference promises to be heavy in speech-making but light in practical, fighting policies.

Fortunately for many trade union militants, the organisations of the revolutionary left will be attempting to put over

fighting policies at the conference.

Whatever their differences on other questions, not only Socialist Challenge but also Socialist Worker, Socialist Press, Workers Action, Big Flame, and other far left papers and organisations are totally opposed to the concordat.

All are fighting side by side for policies that can bring victory in the public sector and other struggles — fighting in trade union branches, shop stewards committees, low pay action committees, and inside oppositions in the unions such as the Campaign for Action in NUPE.

It would thus make sense if they also co-ordinated the policies they will be putting forward at the LCDTU conference, and fought together for the right to a democratic hearing.

# Mr Fisher's tastless bait

NUPE general secretary Alan Fisher was quick to dash off a circular to the union's local authority manual branches last week after agreeing to the government's offer.

The circular stressed that the miserly 9 per cent had been 'unanimously agreed' by the union negotiators. And it went on to try to put the best possible gloss on the latter's attitude.

But Fisher's memo was more interesting for what it didn't say.

By Tom Marlowe

The circular talked of 'an increase of £3.50 per week on the basic rates of each grade', and underlined that it was 'with effect from the pay week in which 4 November fell'. This was obviously intended as an argument in favour of the offer.

But the circular omitted to mention that in some instances this increase in the basic rate represented only a quarter of the original claim.

The circular also stressed 'proportionate increases to part-time workers'. But it did not mention how much this represented in hard cash. For some it could be as little as 50p a week.

Then again, it boasted about

'full consolidation of the existing £5 non-enhanceable supplement, thereby making it enhanceable for overtime'.

But this stress on overtime goes against one of the main points of the original claim. As the 'Day of Action Special' edition of NUPE's journal *Public Employees* put it, 'no more excessive overtime to get a living wage'.

From holding out the carrot of overtime rates Fisher's circular proceeded to stress the importance of 'the standing commission on comparability', 50 per cent of whose recommendations are promised for 1 August, with the other half due seven months later.

The circular did not go into detail about this comparability

study. Specifically, it did not mention that the 'comparability' would be made with similar jobs in private industry.

A clue as to why Fisher neglected this fact is found in the following observation on this concept of comparability — that it meant:

'...comparing say, school meals staff with waitresses and kitchen staff in cafes and restaurants; comparing hospital porters and domestics with hotel workers; comparing school cleaners with office cleaners — in other words, comparing public service workers with some of the worst paid workers in private industry.'

'Any comparison, argued NUPE, must be with national

average earnings.'

This striking argument against the 'comparability' Fisher eventually agreed to again comes from the January issue of NUPE's own *Public Employees*.

The last main point of substance in the employers' offer was also warmly promoted by Fisher. He wrote:

'In addition to the foregoing, a supplement of £1 per week to all employees with a normal working of 35 hours or more to

be paid from the pay week in which 22 February 1979 falls; the cost of this to be merged into the sum due from the instalment of the comparability study due from 1 August.'

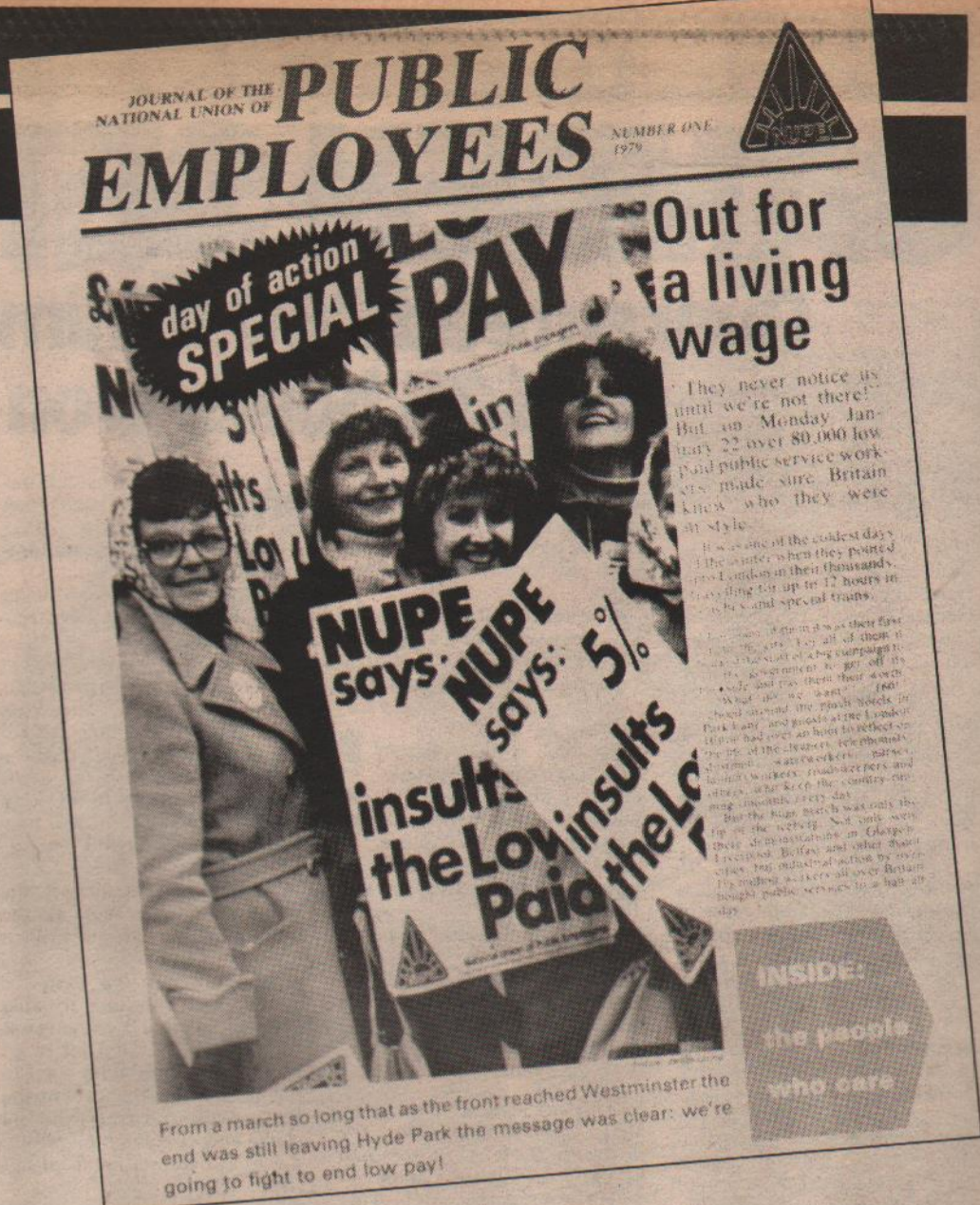
The second part of that sentence is not immediately clear. What it means is that the extra pound is simply an advance on the comparability payment due on 1 August.

But what if this comparability payment is less than £1 a week? This may not seem very

likely, but with the type of comparability study Fisher accepted — and argued against in *Public Employees* — anything is possible.

And if by some chance the award does turn out to be less than £1, that £1 extra might even have to be paid back.

Accordingly it is now an interesting argument which is the most discredited in the eyes of the NUPE membership — Alan Fisher, or the deal he tried to sell?



From a march so long that as the front reached Westminster the end was still leaving Hyde Park the message was clear: we're going to fight to end low pay!

INSIDE:  
The people who care

# Building opposition in Nottingham

NURSING sisters have invited them into their offices to mobilise support. Council workers have gone off to 'wash their hands' and distributed their leaflets. They have been interviewed by radio. The Campaign for Action in NUPE is getting a real foothold in the city of Nottingham.

The Campaign, launched nationally during last year's public sector wage claim, was set up in Nottingham in November. CAN aims to fight for an alternative leadership and policies for the union.

'In Nottingham we're fighting as hard as we can to have the nine per cent offer thrown out', says Graham Attwell, a NUPE shop steward and leading activist in the campaign.

'We've printed 1500 bulletins with the 'No Sell Out' message. We'll be taking them all over the city and talking to as many branches and groups of workers as possible. And we'll be back on the local radio pushing our policy. After the NEC vote we'll be saying reject the offer and for all-out strike action. It's all or nothing now.'

The local government strike committee, of which Graham is a member, has called for a meeting of all NUPE shop stewards in Greater Nottingham. But Tony Morris, the assistant divisional officer, has

tried to block it by saying that the meeting would be unofficial and shop stewards should not attend it.

Democracy is the key to organisation in the strike. 'People are just desperate for information', says Graham. 'No one nationally has been telling them what was going on — apart from the mass media. We're the only people doing it.'

This lack of information has also brought small problems for CAN. Graham pointed out that, due to the lack of

information coming from the union leadership, members tend to assume that CAN leaflets are official. This tendency is strengthened because there has never been any previous organised opposition in NUPE as such.

As Graham says: 'CAN is getting a reputation. The main reason for this is that right from the start we've called for an all-out strike.'

'We've won increasing support for that policy as the strike has gone on. Back in November

I put a motion to my local government branch calling for all-out action nationally. It was narrowly defeated. A lot of people had illusions in selective strikes. Now all the local government branches in Nottingham are behind the all-out call.'

When the dispute started Graham maintains that the local officials were 'scared stiff' of the membership taking any part in running the dispute. 'They tried to stamp on any initiative.'

So CAN won the idea of a rank and file strike committee elected from the local government branches' district committee — a shop stewards body.

One sign of this was the 40-strong meeting organised by CAN in early February. A NUPE official had to go on the radio to say that CAN was unofficial and that although these people wanted all-out action 'some people think there is too much action'. Himself

## CAN policies

\*For action to win the pay claim, no retreat on conference policy. For a £60 minimum wage and opposition to all forms of wage control. For automatic increases in wages to compensate for the effects of inflation. For a 35 hour week with no loss of pay. Against productivity dealing.

\*No cuts in staffing at any level, no cover of unfilled vacancies. Defend jobs and services by national strike action against the cuts. No to the cash limits system.

\*For full union democracy. For 100% union membership, for monthly branch meetings in work time. For the regular election of shop stewards for each section/department at sectional/departmental meetings. For the building of strong joint union committees at work place, district and area level, no participation in joint consultative committees. For the annual conference to be the supreme policy making body of the union. Full time officials to be elected annually by the members, on the same average

pay as the members and recallable by them. For branch authority to make strikes official.

\*Unity of the union against all attacks on black people. Stop all deportations of hospital workers, through the work permit system. Opposition to all racist immigration controls. Campaign against fascists holding positions in the union.

\*For the full development of women in the union. For the

implementation of the demands of the Working Women's Charter, notably on maternity leave and nurseries. For creche facilities at Branch, District, Area and National meetings.

This platform was adopted by the last CAN Conference.

For more information about CAN write c/o Ray Varnes, 47, Leyland House, Poplar High Street, London E14.

# CAMDEN SETTLE

## Guaranteed £60 minimum and 35 hours won

By Patrick Sikorski and Ray Varnes

THE ALL-OUT strike by Camden's 2,500 manual workers, all members of the Camden General Branch of the National Union of Public Employees, has resulted in a significant pay victory.

All workers are guaranteed a £60 gross minimum earnings payment for a 35-hour week compared to the present average of £42 for a 37½-hour week paid to workers not on bonuses.

This means that up to two-thirds of the branches members will get an increase of £17.60 per week made up of the present national offer of £4.50 plus a 'Special Camden Supplement' of £13.10.

The remaining third of the branch who already get £60 gross, due to variable or fixed bonuses plus London weighting, will get a straight 10 per cent increase made up so that there is no loss of bonus earnings due to the reduction of the working week.

The decision to accept was taken by a mass meeting of over a thousand workers at Camden Town Hall last Friday.

There were no speakers against the strike committee's recommendations to accept the offer and there were six votes against.

A blow has been dealt to low pay in Camden and the winning of the 35-hour week is an important breakthrough in the fight for jobs.

If the eventual settlement for 1.5 million workers in the

public sector was to match that won in Camden, then the attempts of the government to restrict further wage increases this year would be stopped dead.

The concordat would just be a useless scrap of paper. The cost of the crisis would start to be laid at the door of the ruling class and its Labour government.

Camden won its victory by rejecting Fisher's tactic of selective action. It was all-out action which forced Camden to negotiate in the first place.

The message is clear — national all-out action can win the full claim.

The first meeting of the majority Labour group of councillors which called for negotiations stated that the council would meet the full £60 basic minimum wage and 35-hour claim.

This made front page news and put Camden in the forefront of the national struggle for the full claim.

However, the right-wing Labour councillors undermined this position, changing the offer to a £60 gross minimum earning guarantee.

With the full-time officers of all the public sector unions recommending acceptance of the national 11 per cent deal, the right-wing councillors thought that they could get away with this.

They calculated that the Camden NUPE branch would rush to settle, rather than risk being left out on a limb as the rest of the strike crumbled.

If the branch had stuck out for the full claim (by itself) then the council could have withdrawn its offer without too much fear of retaliation.

Unfortunately the right-wing councillors calculated correctly.

The strike committee in Camden met to discuss their recommendation to the mass meeting before the NUPE National Executive rejected the national offer.

Prematurely assuming that the strike would crumble, they voted to recommend acceptance to the mass meeting.

In addition, neither at the strike committee nor at the mass meeting did the branch leadership (including an IMG member) argue the case for Camden to continue to play their leading role by staying out for the full national claim of £60 national minimum wage in the public sector, forcing the Labour council to meet the full claim and campaigning within the union for national all-out strike action.

With Fisher now trying to overturn the democratic decision of his National Executive Committee by every trick in the book to force a return to work, the fight for national strike action becomes more important than ever.

Any setback in the national fight will be a defeat not only for all public sector workers, but also a crucial setback for Camden. Without victory in the national struggle Camden's local deal will be increasingly under attack and they will find it very difficult to rally

solidarity from other public sector workers.

Only a victory in the national struggle can really guarantee even the settlement in Camden and secure the solidarity of all public sector workers on which every borough will have to finally rely.

Camden's return to work now weakens that fight for all-out national action.

Even if the branch had accepted the offer anyway, as it probably would have, it was in the best long-term interests not only of the national struggle but also of the Camden workers to continue the fight as part of the national action.

A purely local struggle to defend Camden's gains outside national action has no way forward. This position of the branch leadership, even if rejected now, would have been shown to be right in the coming month, and it needed to be put.

But the Camden settlement also shows what can be achieved by all-out strike action. If even the present Camden settlement were achieved nationally it would be a major victory. With national all-out strike action the full claim could be won.

The Camden leadership made an error in recommending a return to work when they did. But the struggle in Camden as a whole, which has been probably the most advanced in the whole country, shows that all out action can win nationally and locally.

\* The line of this article was endorsed by the IMG Political Bureau.

# Are ambulance drivers terrorists?

By Geoffrey Sheridan

BOB CARVER, according to electricians' union leader Frank Chapple, is a terrorist. The commentators of the mass media share the same view, in so many scarcely-veiled words.

Bob Carver is an ambulance driver. He is secretary of NUPE's ambulance branch in Solihull. And he has one word for the pay offer that has been made to public sector workers: 'Pathetic'.

Bob Carver has no time for percentage pay rises. 'To my mind,' he says, 'percentages are the most evil bloody weapon that's ever been devised against the working class.'

An ambulance driver's basic pay is £44.80. Their officers earn more than twice that, and this is an abiding grievance. With an across-the-board percentage rise, the differentials would widen even further.

Bob explains: 'The people on high rates sit back, take no part in the low pay campaign, or in the industrial action which loses us pay. And now they're due to collect double our paltry increase.'

A battery of grievances have accumulated since the ambulance service was transferred from local government to the health service in 1974, and it is these as much as the pay claim which have spurred the present militancy.

It has led to one of the most important developments during the dispute — the formation a month ago of a national shop stewards ambulance commit-



Photo: VAL JONES

BOB CARVER

tee, an unofficial body open to every ambulance steward.

Bob is one of its founder members, and he says that it has enabled them for the first time to find out what managements and ambulance staff are up to in different parts of the country, and take appropriate action.

The union leaders panicked a fortnight ago when the ambulance committee called for a 24-hour all-out strike. A meeting was quickly arranged with the Ambulancemen's (sic) Council — the first time that stewards had ever met collectively with this official union negotiating body.

'We're not a splinter group,' Bob says. 'We want to take up our issues through the official channels. But getting our concerns recognised may well mean initiating our own action.'

the union wants these committees to be transformed into strike committees.

If these organise support by way of picketing, sympathetic action and boycotts, the government and the Civil Service Department will find it harder to use scabs or transfer work outside the computer sections.

Our executive has decided to remove the right to strike from the two most militant sections — workers in the DHSS and Department of Employment; a milk and water approach which will not win the claim.

Members in these departments are seeking ways to take further action. The lessons of the health and local government disputes are clear enough: all-out action is the only way to confront the concordat.

Alan Theasby in Teesside adds: Over 5,000 civil servants were on strike in County Cleveland, Teesside, last Friday, closing all job centres, unemployment, and social security offices in the area.

Also affected were the law courts, a Ministry of Defence

spares depot, and tax offices.

Cleveland CPSA spokesman Phil Eglington said: 'We expected about a 90 per cent turnout, but the response has been almost total. We have even had non-union staff coming out.'

A CPSA picket outside the development land tax office in Middlesbrough, where the stoppage was total, had no doubt about the need for the claim.

'Lots of civil servants receive family incomes supplement,' he said. 'Low pay is so bad that many of us need spare-time jobs, for which permission is often refused.'

Other pickets pointed to NUPE's experience to show the inadequacy of selective action.

Andrew Thom, a member of the SCPS executive, is by no means enamoured with the whole business of comparability. 'In the latest talks with us the government has said it wants to stage the Pay Research Units recommendations,' he told me.

'This exposes their hypocrisy in offering comparability to the public sector.'

# CPSA demand more pay

CONCORDAT ENTHUSIASTS needed a very stiff upper lip last Friday to hide their displeasure as yet another section of the labour movement moved into action on pay.

Upwards of 150,000 civil servants went on 24-hour strike in support of their pay claim, which is likely to be for a 25 per cent rise. It is being followed by a programme of selective and indefinite strikes.

By Pam Shepherd  
Organiser, CPSA Haringey and Islington DHSS branch

The two largest civil service unions — the Civil and Public Services Association and the Society of Civil and Public Servants — held a 24-hour strike last Friday as a warning to Callaghan that they want the full implementation of the Pay Research Unit's recommendations.

These are expected to propose rises of between 15 and 22 per cent.

In November 1977 the government agreed with the civil service unions to reintroduce the pay research machinery as a basis for pay increases this year.

The promise helped the union leaders to persuade their members to accept a 9.5 per cent pay increase in 1978.

The function of the Pay Research Unit is to compare civil servants' wages with those

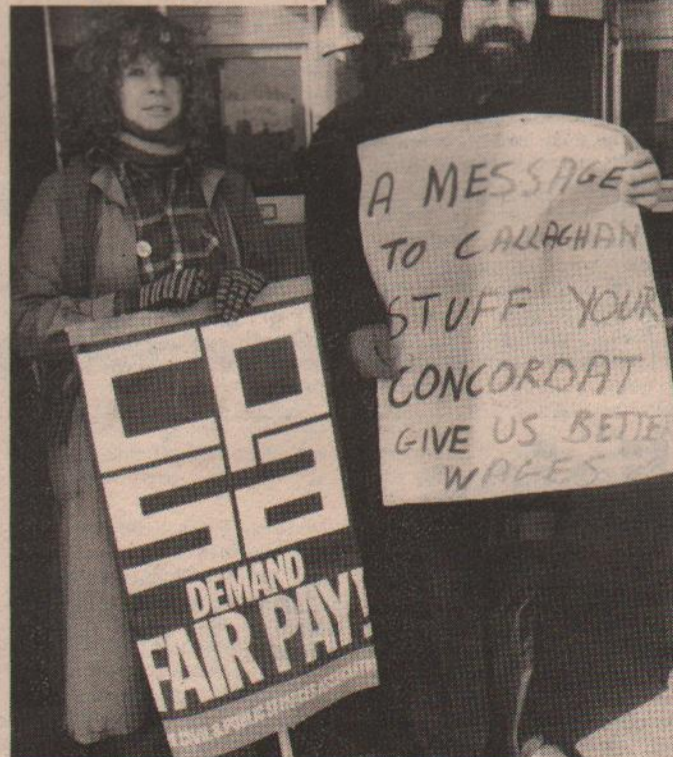
who do similar work and carry similar responsibilities in private industry.

Friday's day of action hit all civil service departments, with over three-quarters of the CPSA's membership taking part. The turnout from the SCPS was not quite so high.

Joint strike committees were set up across London to co-ordinate action, which resulted in mass picketing in Whitehall. Tony Benn and Michael Foot drove through in their official Rovers, while David Owen stopped to announce he had great pleasure in crossing the picket line.

The day's strike is now to be followed by a programme of selective and indefinite strikes by civil servants in key areas.

This will include the Customs and Excise computer at Southend, which will halt the collection of £500m VAT revenue a week. Payments of grants and subsidies to industry



worth £150m a week will also be stopped.

Statistics on such items as the balance of payments will go by the board, and Ernie won't be paying out on premium bonds until after the strike. But the selective action is confined to a

handful of members.

Although the right-wing dominated executive of the CPSA supported the 24-hour stoppage, the co-ordination of action was left to the area committees. The Broad Left in

Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

# Iran. a left wing emerges

IRAN last week saw the first major political challenge to Ayatollah Khomeini's 'Islamic Revolutionary Council'. The Marxist Fedayeen-e-Khalk called a mass protest rally in Tehran University, which was attended by nearly 100,000 people.

The Islamic guerilla organisation, the Mujahedeen, have now also declared their support for the main demands of the Fedayeen.

By Brian Grogan

KHOMEINI is worried at what lies behind the Fedayeen's protests.

The return to work over the past week has not been a defeat for the workers. Rather it gives the chance to press a series of radical demands — particularly for nationalisation and workers' control.

The soldiers, for their part, have been reluctant to return to barracks. Demands are now being raised — initiated by the airforce technicians — for rank and file committees and the election of officers.

The national minorities have begun to raise their own demands. The Kurds especially are causing Khomeini serious alarm by demanding self-determination, with the beginnings of mass support.

The orientation of the Fedayeen themselves is quite confused. They have come out in opposition to the Bazargan government: 'We do not believe that this government can meet the needs of the people'.

'But', they added in one statement, 'we will never fight against the followers of Imam Khomeini even if they try to disarm us.'

They couple opposition to Bazargan with the demand to have a place in Khomeini's shadowy 'Islamic Revolutionary Council'.

But their calls for 'People's

Councils' to run factories, businesses and communities, their opposition to the reconstitution of the old officer corps and their calls for a 'People's Army' put them in clear opposition to Khomeini and Bazargan's plan to put the capitalist state back together.

This is why they have become a focus for those who distrust Khomeini.

The Fedayeen do not yet pose a serious threat to Khomeini's authority. His hold over the masses remains unchallenged.

But given the depth of the mobilisations against the Shah and the uprising from below which brought down Bakhtiar, the masses have a profound feeling of their own strength.

They are not going to hold back their demands and be satisfied with their present gains.

Two days after the return to work, the Tehran daily *Kayhan* was already reporting that 'there were signs that the workers were not responding effectively to Ayatollah Khomeini's call for an end to their four months of strike.'

What was bothering them was not the few workers that had failed to report but that 'workers are demanding the right to elect their own bosses'.

Thus, in the major oil city of Ahwaz, the returning workers immediately organised a mass meeting and demanded the dismissal of the 11 top officials that had run the oil field.



In the other major oil centre at Abadan, workers refused to work until Bazargan had assured them that their demands would all be met. These included the creation of a 'People's Army' comprising 'patriotic officers and soldiers and members of the Mujahedeen and Fedayeen'.

They also wanted corrupt elements expelled from industry and the participation of workers on Khomeini's 'Revolutionary Council'. Other demands included the 'setting up of an independent union, an end to discrimination between white collar and production workers, equal rights for women and the rehiring of anyone sacked in the past 10 years!'

In Shahriar, in the South of

Tehran, it has been reported that the neighbourhood committee has taken over the local power plant and several local factories.

Workers in the town of Ardo have sent a letter to the daily paper *Kayhan* explaining their demands, which include management and control of their factory and the rehiring of any laid off workers.

'We wish to be part of the struggle of the Iranian people,' they say, 'and demanding control is our way of participating'.

In a recent TV broadcast, Bazargan was reduced to appealing to the workers 'to be patient' and attempting unsuccessfully to refute the idea of soviets by saying how this would mean the election of the

Ayatollah — clearly, he thought, an absurdity.

Political persuasion is the only tool he can use at present. In the present circumstances, it would be unthinkable to attempt to use the forces of repression.

While the police have now started cleaning up and rebuilding their police stations and the army has been called back to barracks, they are in no position to be used.

This is not to say that the army has been destroyed. The hated Imperial Guard and its Immortals brigade may have been disbanded. But other elite units are being maintained — the 60,000-strong paratroop and green beret regiment and the 70,000-strong counter-insurgency gendarmerie.

The more than 250,000-strong conscript army was simply dispersed to the villages before any engagement during the insurrection and has now been called back.

The main problem with using these forces is the political one. For the masses are extremely sensitive against any whiff of repression or tampering with democratic rights. Not only has there been a big protest at the appointment of officers, but also against attempted censorship of the television and radio.

The regime has found it expedient to promise full democratic liberties to all political parties.

So Khomeini will be unable to resist the demands of the workers and other sections of the oppressed for very long. All that he can do is buy time.

This is why the much-heralded constituent assembly is being pushed more and more into the background. Rather than create a forum for thrashing out the demands of the masses and deciding the character of the government needed to implement them, Khomeini seems intent on reducing their participation to a 'Yes' or 'No' vote in a referendum whose only question is: 'Do you prefer an Islamic Republic to that of a Monarchy?'

But the more Khomeini resists, the more it will be understood that only the struggle committees of the masses can guarantee the convocation of a sovereign assembly.

## Who are the Fedayeen?

THE Fedayeen was formed in the early 1970s as a tight knit guerilla organisation. All their early leaders were killed by the regime and have now been raised up as martyrs of the struggle.

They see the Iranian revolution in three stages. First, the struggle to bring down the Shah which the isolated guerilla actions were meant to spark off.

The second stage is the present period of struggle for democracy. They see this as of short duration.

They will be forced to go underground once more and prepare for the third stage which will be the taking of power by the workers. Hence most of their organisation remains underground at the present time.

They have issued what they call a 'minimum programme' for the provisional government. Their demands include:

- ★ The immediate abolition of capitalism and imperialism and the establishment of the sovereignty of the people.

- ★ For the creation of a People's Army.

- ★ For the creation of a Revolutionary Council elected through strike committees and

Anjamins (a form of Soviets).

- ★ For the nationalisation of all large companies and banks under workers control.

- ★ Land to the tillers, abolition of all debts.

- ★ Freedom of language and full minority people's rights.

- ★ For full and equal rights for women.

- ★ For the convocation of a 'People's Assembly'.

- ★ Solidarity with the Palestinian struggle.

- ★ Abolition of treaties and all imperialist contracts.

The Fedayeen were no more than 500 or so strong before the exit of the Shah. In the recent past, especially in the aftermath of the insurrection, their effective strength has increased very rapidly. Their numbers probably exceed 10,000 but the bulk of these are not organised in the inner clandestine core, which remains fairly small.

They have, as yet, indicated no intentions of forming a political organisation, though they have, for instance, no principled objection to standing in elections, seeing it as 'a tactic for organising the working class'.

They see a good prospect for what they call 'Left Unity'.

## Grogan on speaking tour



BRIAN GROGAN, a member of the Socialist Challenge editorial board, is just back from Tehran and will be speaking at a number of meetings in the coming weeks. If the details are not here, then phone 01-359 8371 for details.

Thursday 1 March, Nottingham (2 meetings). Monday 5 March, Lambeth. Tuesday 6 March, 12.30pm Manchester University Students Union, 6.00pm Manchester Poly Students Union, 8.00pm Oldham, 'Sergeant at Arms' pub, King Street. Wednesday 7 March, 12.30pm to be confirmed, 7.30pm Manchester, 'Ancoats' pub, Ancoats Street. Thursday 8 March, 1.30pm Salford University Students Union, 7.30pm Bolton, 'White Lion' pub, Moor Lane, Deansgate. Friday 9 March, Leeds (2 meetings). Monday 12 March, Southampton. Thursday 15 March, Liverpool. There will be a series of meetings in Scotland in the week beginning 19 March. More details next week.

SABER NICKBIN

**IRAN**  
THE UNFOLDING  
REVOLUTION

FOREWORD BY EMROU ALI



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# 'Every during

IN ANY revolution the relationship between the ranks of the army is crucial.

The insurrection which overthrew the Shah was begun by the revolt of the homofars — on this page we have an interview with a homofar who, rising given to the US Trotskyist Party, issued a statement by a group of homofars. The Shah's revolution has gone far enough.

Brian Grogan, who has just returned from Iran, gives his recollections of the insurrection.

By Cindy Jaquith, Tehran

WHEN a group of air force ground crew members at the Doshan Tappeh base decided on 9 February to stand up to the Shah's tanks and bullets, their cries for help were immediately heeded by the surrounding population.

But few of the thousands of people who marched to the base in solidarity realised that they were witnessing the beginning of the Tehran insurrection. Nor did the courageous young ground crew staff themselves know that the battle at Doshan Tappeh would culminate in the overthrow of the hated Pahlavi monarchy.

Three days after the insurrection one of these personnel told us the story of that battle. Asking that we not use his name he explained:

'I want the facts of what happened here to get to the United States. I want the American people to understand we are not against them — we are against the American government.'

He began by telling us about the radicalisation in the air force over the past year. The deepening hatred of the Shah and his US military advisers began to find open expression among the homofars of the airforce. These young technicians and engineers were roughly equivalent to a sergeant.

Created by the Shah 13 years ago, the homofar branch of the air force has always borne the brunt of the officer's scorn and brutal discipline. The radicalisation of the homofars that developed in part as a struggle for democratic rights.

About a year ago the homofars began carrying out strikes in protest against military discipline and the Shah. An example is what happened at the airbase in Boushehr, in southern Iran.

'It was from this base that planes flew over surrounding countries to display the Shah's support for other regimes', the homofar told us. 'One day a general slapped one of the homofars. The rest of the men went on strike for a week in response. They refused to repair the planes, grounded all flights for a week.'

Then the protests changed to hunger strikes: 'Homofars, like everyone else, could no longer live under the Shah's repression. We had to take action.'

THE masses reserved their harsh revenge for SAVAK, the hated secret police. Some agents they came across were even torn limb from limb. The files in SAVAK headquarters were destroyed and the building now houses the Fedayeen.

Beneath the headquarters we discovered a labyrinth of tunnels, many of them probably used as dungeons linking SAVAK to other buildings in Tehran.

When I left they were still investigating the miles of underground communications and discovering new



## Rank and file demands democracy in army

(THE following resolution, entitled 'In Protest at the appointment of Air Force commanders', is being distributed at meetings and demonstrations of homofars and other soldiers. Signed by 'A Group of Homofars in support of democracy in the Army', the resolution was passed by acclamation at a meeting of homofars at Technical University in Tehran on 16 February.)

Fellow homofars,

The struggle to achieve democracy and social justice, which began in our society one year ago, has found its reflection in the army as well.

Soldiers, homofars, and others who were insulted daily by their commanders; individuals who were denied the slightest human rights such as freedom of speech, press and assembly, and the right to vote; joined with the great mass of the Iranian people to overthrow this corrupt order.

We the homofars saw that our interests lay in extending our hands to unite with the people to overthrow the corrupt regime and replace it with an order in the interests of all the oppressed, an order that would

overcome the misery and excesses of the past.

We and other military personnel joined the huge demonstration of Arba'in (the 8 February march to support Bazargan against Bakhtiar). Then we took part in the days of insurrection, uniting with the ranks of the people to fight the Shah's guards and generals.

But unfortunately the events of the past few days have gone in a direction exactly opposite to these aims. This gives us reason to continue our struggle.

The same pawns of the old regime — those who not only pledged allegiance to the Shah but also never joined us behind the barricades — have now been appointed as our commanders. And this without the slightest consultation with us.

We must ask ourselves why have there been so many martyrs among the homofars and soldiers? Our fellow soldiers didn't risk their lives to see the same faces back in charge.

No, we voluntarily stood side by side with the people in the face of enemy bullets — to struggle for social justice

and democracy. But now we're returning to the same old conditions.

Where is the democracy in the army that we fought for? Where is our right to free speech and free press? Where is our right to assemble, to belong to a political party?

Where is our right to vote and participate in elections? Where is our right to elect our commanders? And finally, where is our right to organise in the army, to establish our own committees where we can discuss and make our own decisions?

The Shah's generals always told us not to interfere in politics. But this was a trick. It was used to prevent us from protesting against their crimes against the people and their plundering of the nation's riches.

We must have the right to participate in politics so we and the soldiers are not used to massacre and repress freedom fighters. We must have the right to elect commanders we trust, not the appointment of individuals over us.

It is now clear that these rights won't be granted to us unless we stubbornly fight for them and organise ourselves. This is why a group of us have

organised around the following demands:

1. Full democratic rights in the armed forces: freedom of speech, press and assembly; the right to organise, to belong to political parties, to vote in elections; an end to the ban on homofars attending the universities.

2. Homofars themselves must elect their own commanders. The elections should be decided by majority vote, with everyone having the right to run for office.

3. The right to form committees of homofars in every garrison to struggle for these demands.

4. Extension of all the above rights to all branches of the armed forces.

The soldiers of the army constitute the immense armed mass of the revolutionary movement. Achieving freedom for them will achieve freedom for all the armed forces.

We invite all homofars and other military personnel to join us to realise these demands. We also invite civilian militants and freedom fighters to join us. This will be another step in strengthening the bonds between us.



# one in Tehran was a guerilla g the insurrection'

between the mass movement and Iran has proved no exception. The monarchy was sparked off by the defection of senior airforce technicians. On this point the homofar who took part in the first paper *The Militant*, and a group of people who are not satisfied that the

returned from Tehran, adds some of the reasons for the

buildings linked to SAVAK. The joke now popular in Iran is that Tehran always needed an underground system!

we would go on hunger strikes. The word would be spread through leaflets and everyone would refuse to eat.'

The generals tried to hide these strikes from the public. Sometimes they scheduled the workday to exclude meals so there could be no strike. They were deathly afraid other soldiers — and the population as a whole — would be inspired further by the homofars' protests.

As the marches against the Shah grew to millions last autumn, the homofars felt that they too must publicly show their opposition to the Shah. So they began to organise their own demonstrations against the monarchy:

'Homofars held marches off the base all over the country. We condemned the Shah — and later Bakhtiar — and supported Ayatollah Khomeini. Then everybody got to know that the homofars were on the side of the people.'

These marches had to be built in an underground fashion on the bases. The homofars also needed support from the civilian population:

'A leaflet would appear on the base giving the time and place of the march. The homofars would gather in uniform at one spot and civilian backers would meet at another. Then we would join forces for the demonstration.'

The pressure of civilians protected many of the airforce personnel from

**THIS** was the first insurrection in which television played a major part. As we have reported in past weeks, it was used to direct the masses from one part of the city to another.

Realising the potency of the medium, the new government immediately tried to censor the television, which provoked a massive outcry, including from journalists.

The following day there was a complete relaxation of censorship, with a broad-based committee, including media workers, now in control of the network.

For example, the demands of the homofars were read out on the air and 'children's hour' featured a programme on the Palestinian struggle.

victimisation. Nevertheless, some of the homofars lost their lives:

'Military intelligence caught some people giving out leaflets. Others who had marched were identified by the generals. There were arrests. Shortly before the Shah was forced to leave the country, he had 157 homofars executed at Tehran's Jamshidieh Airbase. Another 40 were shot later.'

The Jamshidieh massacre was only reported in the bourgeois press after the



Young soldiers taking in the sweet smell of the insurrection

Shah was gone. Bakhtiar denied the shootings had ever taken place.

The event that led up to the battle of Doshan Tappeh was the 8 February demonstration of more than a million in Tehran. A uniformed contingent of 1,000 airforce and other military personnel joined the march, called by Khomeini to support his newly appointed prime minister, Mehdi Bazargan. The homofars went to the demonstration as a group:

'In the morning we put our uniforms in paper bags and went down to the majlis (parliament building). Behind the majlis was a house near Khomeini's headquarters. There we changed into our uniforms and went out on the march. Afterwards, we returned to the house, changed into civilian clothes again, and went home.'

'We knew that there must be agents in our midst, who would try to disrupt our contingent or report people's names. So after the march, Khomeini supporters provided us with a defence guard.'

The next day, 9 February, the atmosphere on the airbases was extremely tense. The homofars' demonstration was intolerable to the military brass — it threatened to crack the armed forces wide open. The airforce personnel, however, had been inspired by the march to speak out with even greater confidence.

On the evening of 9 February at the Doshan Tappeh airbase, homofar trainees, called homarjoos, were watching a televised account of Khomeini's victorious arrival in Iran the week before. The homofars themselves do not live on the base, so they were not there.

A spontaneous pro-Khomeini demonstration broke out in the TV room. Members of the elite Imperial Guards,

who had been policing the airbases for several weeks, rushed into the room. They clubbed the homarjoos with rifle butts and shot several. When that didn't work they drove a tank right through the door.

The homarjoos moved outside. They began demonstrating, shouting: 'Down with the Bakhtiar government — guards go home!'. They also yelled 'Allah-ho-Akbar' — 'God is great' — the signal for help.

People began gathering at the gates of the base, especially the relatives of the homarjoos. As the crowd grew outside, the Imperial Guard commanders decided to withdraw their forces from the base for the night.

Early next morning the homofars reported for work:

'We had heard about what happened the night before. When we arrived at the gates there were still thousands of people outside. They gave us food.'

'We went inside and saw the wreckage the guards had left. We went to the hospitals and saw all the heads they had busted open. We were furious.'

'So we refused to work and instead started demonstrating in the yard. After a while a few officers and non-commissioned officers joined us.'

'It was then that the Imperial Guard attacked the base.'

'Tanks poured towards both the north and south gates of the base.'

'At the north gate they were stopped. The civilians outside blocked them and the guards at the gate shot at them.'

'But the Imperial Guard got in by the south gate. They began machine-gunning indiscriminately.'

'Homofars rushed to the armoury to get guns. A captain was there and he tried to keep them out. He was shot.'

'We armed ourselves and we gave guns to the civilians outside.'

'At this point, everyone on the base realised that the Imperial Guard was going to massacre everyone inside. Low-ranking officers and even the Green Berets (an elite unit) joined the homofars in repelling the attack. Women and children living on the base went after the tanks, setting one on fire.'

'Between those of us inside the base and civilians shooting from rooftops outside, we drove the Imperial Guards off the base. We kept pushing them further away, block by block. At every corner, as they retreated, we built a new barricade.'

Once the base was secured the homofars elected new officers. The top officers had disappeared during the battle — except for General Rabii, the national commander of the air force. Rabii was there the whole time, observing the killing of his soldiers from a helicopter.

But it was the Imperial Guards who took the worst losses — more than half the 63 killed in the fighting.

The insurrection spread from Doshan Tappeh. Homofars took over a police station to get more arms for the people. They joined in the battles around the city, although not in an organised way.

It was the collapse of the army in the face of the insurrection that sealed the people's victory. An equally important

**THIS** may have been the first revolution to exploit the opportunities of the mass media but the old ways were still decisive.

Communication between different parts of the city was carried out by chanting slogans. These were in a religious idiom, but had far from religious meanings — for example, 'God is Great' meant 'Help!'

It is difficult to convey the impact of the mass character of the insurrection. In the area where I was, the roofs were packed with local inhabitants, who were constantly relaying messages by chants.

In another neighbourhood, residents spotted attempts to move troops towards Isfahan, the main industrial city. They set off a warning by chanting. Since the slogans moved faster than the troops, people along the way were able to block roads and blow up bridges, stopping the soldiers getting through.

factor was the unprecedented solidarity of the civilian population with the homofars when the fighting began.

Some press reports have given the mistaken impression that the main forces fighting on the side of the airforce personnel were the two guerilla groups — the Islamic Mujahedeen and the Marxist-oriented Fedayeen.

These guerillas were active participants but they were not decisive. As the homofar we interviewed put it 'Everyone in Tehran was a Mujahedeen during the insurrection.'

Since the overthrow of the monarchy the airforce personnel have continued their struggle. When Prime Minister Bazargan appointed General Mehdioun as the new airforce commander protests broke out on airbases across the country. Mehdioun, who served under the Shah for 40 years, is regarded as a traitor to the revolution. Bazargan was finally forced to appoint a different commander to the post.

In the demonstrations against Mehdioun, airforce personnel raised the demand that they be allowed to elect

**THE** world press reported Khomeini's decision to hand the former Israeli embassy over to the Palestine Liberation Organisation. What they did not mention, however, is that this gesture was purely symbolic.

I was among the few journalists to be shown round the embassy [because I was known to be 'anti-Carter']. The building was utterly unusable. The masses had vented their anger at Israeli support for the Shah by smashing everything from papers, which were shredded, through to the toilet bowls.

Everyone, though, from Khomeini to the Fedayeen, is very careful to distinguish anti-Zionism from any expression of racist anti-Jewish sentiments.

their own officers. Other democratic demands are also coming to the fore on the airbases.

The homofar explained: 'We deserve the same rights as any other citizen in Iran. That means the right to speak and write what we please, to read whatever books we like.'

'We ought to be able to join political parties and to vote.'

'Under the present laws established by the Shah, homofars need permission to get married. We can't attend the universities, although officers can. These laws should be abolished.'

'Another restriction bars us from talking to foreigners. The idea is that we would give away military secrets. This is really ridiculous. What secrets could a homofar reveal to the CIA? The CIA set up the Iranian armed forces in the first place!'

# Life in the Spanish H Block

PRESS coverage of this Tuesday's general elections in Spain has tended to concentrate on the situation in the Basque country — supposedly under siege from 'terrorist' forces. But, as this graphic account from the Basque country shows, the reverse is true — it is a society under siege from the state.

The parallels with another 'troubled province' nearer home are striking. After we received this article we heard news of the arrest of a couple of dozen revolutionaries and radical nationalists under a law exactly like the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The author of this article describes Soria jail, where Basque political prisoners are held, as the Spanish Alcatraz. Maybe Spanish H Block would be nearer the mark.

By Mikel Etxarren

BUYING a newspaper in Euskadi (the Basque country) means having to prepare

yourself every morning for an avalanche of detentions and shootings.

Euskadi lives with checkpoints and vans packed with

anti-riot equipment with rifles and machine-guns pointing out the back window. The pretext is the 'war against the ETA'. The whole Basque people suffers the consequences.

Unable to offer what our people have been demanding for many years — national sovereignty and an end to the activity of the armed police — the government of the Union of the Democratic Centre is trying to 'pacify Euskadi' by filling the streets with police and the barracks and police stations with Basque citizens.

The decision was taken just at the moment when Peixoto, an ETA leader living in the French Basque country, was gravely wounded; when three

civil guard died in an attack in Guipuzcoa; when the police left Jaimi Chivite — mentally backward and, moreover, son of a lieutenant colonel — in a coma and Maria Luisa Garcia Cabeza lost an eye through a shot from a rubber bullet, both of them on a banned anti-nuclear demonstration.

The net is cast very wide. Dozens of people are detained daily. Just one example: 20 young people were arrested in Durango on 17 January for running support groups for the ETA.

People remain incommunicado from their relatives and lawyers for as long as police consider it necessary to interrogate them.

Recently all Basque prisoners accused of belonging to the ETA were removed to Soria in Castile. Every day more alarming news reaches Euskadi about the situation of the 97 Basque prisoners.

'115 of us prisoners found ourselves here because of what we might do, which is a completely illegal situation, since it means already convicting us for things which are still awaiting trial.

'They've got us submitted to a continual tension created by the presence of the Armed Police near our cells day and night. Searches, as much of cells as of individuals, are done day and night. The ones of the cells are done while we're not there.

'These armed police carry their guns, pistols, rifles with rubber bullets, tear gas and smoke bombs, the normal truncheons and the ones with the electric charge, and a spray containing a paralysing liquid that they're constantly flashing at us arrogantly.'

On top of all this the prisoners in Soria denounce the deplorable hygiene, the restrictions on their right to communicate with relatives and lawyers, and the absolute ban on their doing this in the Basque language, the censorship of their correspondence — all the letters they send or receive are read — and so on.

They're beginning to call Soria the Spanish Alcatraz.

## Basque question looms large

By Richard Carver

EVEN without the state of virtual war between ETA and the Spanish state, the Basque question would loom large over Thursday's general election.

There is a political apathy in Spain that would have been unthinkable in the days of the great struggles against the Franco regime. Only 59.4 per cent of voters approved the new constitution in last December's referendum, even though all the major parties called for a yes vote.

In the Basque country there was outright rejection of the constitution, partly because it cushioned the unity of the Spanish state, but also because the radical Basque workers' movement could not stomach its defence of the monarchy, of private property, and of the old, hated state machine.

### DIVIDED

Only 27.34 per cent voted yes in the province of Guipuzcoa, 31.14 per cent in Vizcaya. The rest were divided between abstention and outright rejection — these were the only provinces where there was a substantial no vote.

This result begins to explain why the Basque situation is so grave now. On one side the ETA guerrillas are increasingly frustrated at what they see as indifference on the part of the population as a whole. The refusal of the major working class parties to campaign for self-determination for the Basque country is seen as a betrayal by the whole Spanish working class.

ETA's military tactics do not improve the situation, being consciously designed to bring down repression on the Basque people, thus stirring them into action.

But the responsibility for this lies with the Spanish state. The referendum result signalled the beginning of a new phase in the war against the Basque population.

### POLICE

Police are shipped in by the thousands, people detained without charge, demonstrations banned without notice, and nationalist militants shot down by 'fascists', in a regime whose most obvious European parallel is in the North of Ireland.



Socialist Party poster proclaims the need for firm government to beat unemployment. SP leader Gonzalez has had his hair retouched with grey by the artist to drive home the message.

Both the Socialist (PSOE) and Communist (PCE) Parties signed the Moncloa Pacts of autumn 1977, which still form the backdrop to the present political situation.

### ACCORDS

These accords provided for wage limits, removed old fascist laws against unemployment (!), and generally established a framework for austerity. On the political level they ruled out the possibility of national self-determination.

The readiness of the PSOE and PCE to implement capitalist economic policies, combined with the lukewarm response of the trade union leaderships, has prevented serious working class opposition and stabilised the conservative government of Adolfo Suarez.

Although there has been a

quite dramatic rise in days lost through strikes in recent months, there is no unified opposition to the government.

Working class political activity is on the decline. For example, estimates of the drop in PSOE membership over the past year range from 75,000 to 250,000.

The PCE leadership has resolved its problems by expelling an important opposition current, which opposed the party's rightward drift.

### DYNAMIC

Fortunately for the Spanish ruling class, its political leadership is rather more dynamic.

After using the PSOE and PCE to implement the austerity for a year, Prime Minister Suarez made a rapid turn towards political confrontation, and is now taking the

calculated gamble of early elections.

### ISOLATE

Principally he wants to isolate the opposition emerging on his right and, he hopes, win an increased majority to help him push through major political measures such as his 'solution' to the national question.

An election also pre-empts the results of the municipal elections in April, which the left is likely to win. They would have expected that result to be reflected in a subsequent general election.

Suarez's audacity is not matched by the lacklustre left. PSOE leader Felipe Gonzalez, who was once fond of trumpeting the 'socialist alternative in power', now prefers the theme of a strong government with an over-

whelming majority — which conveniently postpones the responsibilities of power to the distant future.

But Suarez can be beaten. The recent strike wave and the continued militancy of the Basques shows this — and it is the central theme of the electoral campaign of the Spanish Trotskyists of the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR).

### POLICIES

They are presenting candidates in 34 provinces around the themes of rejection of the Moncloa Pacts and the constitution, the centralisation of workers' struggles, and self-determination for the nationalities.

Suarez must be beaten, they argue, and these are the policies that can do it.

## Spanish women bring abortion into the open

UNDER the impetus of the International Campaign for Abortion Rights (ICAR), Spanish women are making abortion a public political issue.

Last weekend they took advantage of the presence of women from several European countries — including five from Britain at an ICAR planning meeting in Barcelona to hold a press conference and their first public meeting on the subject.

Despite the fact that abortion is illegal, over 500 people came to debate the issues in a cinema on a Sunday morning.

One Spanish woman demanded to know what British feminists were doing to provide resting houses and clinics for Spanish women who came to London for abortions.

A British speaker explained what was being done, but other Spanish women came back vigorously to argue that the job of British women was to defend the laws which made abortion available.

They said that for feminists to use their time to obtain abortions was inadequate and futile. The need would always be so much greater than could be supplied through extra-legal methods.

They pointed to the 3,000 women who die in Spain from illegal abortions every year, who would never get near a feminist network. They said that Spanish and British feminists should be waging a political struggle so that all women could have abortions legally and under proper medical supervision. This position was applauded by the meeting.

A state-wide co-ordinating group has been set up to plan for the international day of action on abortion rights on 31 March. Representatives from most major cities attended the ICAR planning meeting.

\*In London on 31 March there will be a demonstration, starting at 1.30 at Hyde Park and ending with a rally in Trafalgar Square. Further details from ICAR, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

# An Open Letter to the SWP

THIS WEEK members of the International Marxist Group will be asking comrades of the Socialist Workers Party to discuss the ideas contained in the leaflet we reprint below.

The IMG wants discussions with the SWP on fundamental issues so that the nature of the differences can be determined with a view to overcoming them. It also calls for practical steps to increase joint activity where it exists, and to initiate collaboration where no prior joint work has been undertaken.

## DEAR COMRADES:

Revolutionaries have real opportunities in the class struggle today to build a revolutionary party. The current strike wave shows that even under a Labour government, workers no longer accept responsibility for a crisis not of their making.

The Anti Nazi League has shown the tremendous potential for revolutionaries to take the lead in organising genuine mass movements.

These openings also exist outside Britain. The unfolding revolution in Iran, in particular, provides the conditions for building a revolutionary workers' party in that country with deep roots in the mass movement.

Yet in Britain we have so far failed to provide a credible alternative to the Labour left and Communist Party for working class militants. There are many reasons for this, but one we would highlight are the divisions between the existing revolutionary organisations.

Many serious militants ask: 'How do you expect to unite our class when you revolutionaries cannot unite yourselves?'

We believe there is a basis for such a unification as a step towards building a strong and credible revolutionary party in Britain. It is shown in the growing tendency towards systematic joint work between our organisations.

In the Ford strike, for example, we

were able to work jointly with other militants in the Ford Workers Group. In the current public sector strike our militants are campaigning shoulder to shoulder for all-out national strike action through the Low Pay Action Committees and the Campaign for Action in NUPE.

In the National Union of Teachers, in which socialists have a powerful influence, there is a united slate and platform between Rank and File and the Socialist Teachers Alliance for the Inner London Teachers Association election.

Likewise in the Civil and Public Services Association, despite tactical differences over how best to defeat the opportunist wing of the Broad Left, we are collaborating in a joint campaign over union democracy.

This joint work is repeated in other areas of the class struggle, especially in the Anti Nazi League.

We have also been engaged in joint propaganda activity. During the Ford strike, joint meetings were held in Birmingham, North London, and Leamington. On the 3 February Iran demonstration, a joint statement was made by the SWP, IMG, and other far left organisations.

Political discussion between our organisations at a local and national level has begun. The national leadership of the SWP is engaged in discussions on how the SWP can best participate in the debate for our 11th World Congress to be held at the end of this year.



Ford Workers Group showed the possibility of systematic joint work.

Local branches of the SWP and IMG in some areas have already begun this discussion.

There have been some reverses, too. We believe that the SWP leadership's decision not to stand in the General Election is a serious mistake. It misses an important opportunity to explain to large numbers of working class militants that there is a socialist alternative to Callaghan.

We think a second mistake was made at your conference, when a resolution proposing a joint slate between the SWP and Socialist Unity was rejected.

However, we consider that the possibilities of seriously discussing steps towards a unified revolutionary party have never been more favourable.

It is for this reason that we have

proposed to your leadership that we open discussions on the three points decided at your conference, with a view to fusion.

These included: the need to build the revolutionary party now; acceptance of the central importance of the building of rank and file movements and an orientation to the workplace; and acceptance of the conception of the party as a combat organisation that discusses in order to decide and acts in a disciplined and cohesive fashion.

Revolutionary unity will not be easy to achieve, not least because of the distrust and sectarian attitudes which long years of division have created.

We will be treating these discussions as between revolutionary organisations. We will not attempt to hide the differences that we think still

exist, but will try to discover which are tactical differences, which can be debated out inside a common organisation, and those differences which require further discussion in order to try to overcome them.

We intend to publish our correspondence from the Stechford by-election in 1976 to the latest exchanges as a pamphlet so that both our organisations can make use of them.

We have produced a document called *Our Common Ground*. It sums up what we think are the big questions on which there should be agreement to make a fusion a lasting and genuine one.

Particularly highlighted in this document, published shortly after the launch of Socialist Challenge, is the question of internal democracy. We believe that this is indispensable for any revolutionary party which is to correct and learn from its mistakes.

We are also proposing to your leadership that in order to deepen the joint work between our organisations, it reconsiders its decision not to stand in the General Election, and that it wages a campaign to support the efforts of the Fourth International in Iran to build a revolutionary party.

Our belief is that the SWP shares much more in common with these comrades than with any other section of the Iranian far left.

We hope that a discussion with a view to fusion can be taken up in all areas. We also hope that we can strengthen our joint work in the unions, the anti-racist movement, and in aiding the Iranian revolution.

We hope, too, that comrades of the SWP will take the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in the World Congress discussion of the Fourth International.

International Marxist Group.

Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

## Zimbabwe — land or death

LAST WEEK we looked at how Britain and the United States are trying to oversee a transition to neo-colonialism in Zimbabwe.

In the second of two articles leading up to the important Zimbabwe Action Conference on 3 March, we look at the condition of the black masses and why they are likely to resist the neo-colonial solution.

By Jim Atkinson

'NO issue is of greater dimension, and of deeper emotional appeal, to Africans in Southern Africa, than land shortage,' as Nathan Shamuyarira, now one of the leaders of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), put it in a book, *Crisis in Rhodesia*, published at the time of UDI in 1965.

'So much envy has been created that expropriation or seizure of European land will be resorted to by the future African rulers of the country.'

When the British conquered Zimbabwe in 1890-93, the settlers stole tens of thousand of acres of African land. They took much of their cattle too. The Africans were either forced to work for European landlords or driven onto less fertile land not needed by the whites.

### SEGREGATED

In 1931, the government formally segregated the land; under the Land Apportionment Act, 49 million acres were granted exclusively to the tiny white minority and 29 million acres left for the Africans.

In 1969, the Rhodesian Front

government introduced a new law, the Land Tenure Act, 'to finalise the division of the land in Rhodesia into African and European areas.' This laid down that the Europeans could not hold less than 48 per cent of the total farming land in the country.

### HALVED

Thus, under this Act, the land was roughly halved between the 273,000 whites and the 6.3 million blacks. The whites got 18.1 million hectares and the blacks 18.2 million hectares. (259 hectares to the square mile.)

The European farming area is divided between about 6,000 large capitalist farms. By contrast, over 4 million Africans are crowded into the 'Tribal Trust Lands', the African 'reserves' where the average land allotment is only 4.4 hectares a head, soil erosion is widespread and poverty is endemic.

### EXPLOITED

The 356,000 agricultural labourers who work on the white capitalist farms are the most exploited workers in the



Tribal Trust Lands — reservoirs of cheap labour.

country. Their average wage in 1976 was less than £20 a month, and under the draconian 'masters and servants' legislation, they are prohibited from joining trade unions or going on strike.

Meanwhile, the overcrowded, impoverished Tribal Trust Lands have served capitalist industry as reservoirs of cheap labour.

In an attempt to improve its international image, the Smith

regime amended the Land Tenure Act in February 1977 to allow blacks to buy land in the white areas for the first time. But this changed nothing in practice.

Almost no Africans have the capital needed to buy large white farms; and even if a minority of black capitalist farmers did arise, there would be no change in the appalling conditions of the mass of peasants in the Tribal Trust

Lands or the agricultural proletariat on the capitalist farms.

The only solution to the land hunger of the rural masses would be the nationalisation and redistribution of the white-owned plantations, ranches and estates. And this is precisely what they are likely to fight for as soon as they see their chance.

The urban working class is potentially one of the strongest in Africa, with over one million of Zimbabwe's 6.3 million Africans living in the cities. So far, industrial action has been limited, but this will change as the settlers' grip begins to slip and the workers sense their power to improve their conditions.

### DEMANDS

One of their top demands will be to wipe out wage inequalities between blacks and whites. The Salisbury regime's own *Economic Survey Rhodesia 1977* revealed that the average annual wage for an African in 1976 was £595, less than one tenth of the average white wage of £6,420.

The black workers also want to get rid of the present anti-union legislation. The Industrial Relations Act effectively makes all strikes by black workers illegal.

The repressive police state and the existence of a large pool of unemployed Africans in the cities and the rural slums of the Tribal Trust Lands have

allowed the large multinational corporations which dominate Zimbabwe's economy to go on paying starvation wages and rake in their super profits.

### LIBERATION

The liberation struggle will not be complete unless and until the stranglehold of these western-owned monopolies over Zimbabwe's economy is broken. The imperialist powers, intent on a neo-colonial solution, will do everything possible to prevent the Zimbabwean masses from taking control of the wealth of their country by expropriating these multinationals.

David Owen, the British Foreign Secretary, has warned that Britain may send troops, under the guise of a UN 'peace-keeping force', to police a transition to neo-colonialism.

So a key task facing socialists in Britain is to defend the Zimbabweans' right to determine their own future and oppose any attempt by the imperialist powers to intervene to defend their interests.

Saturday, 3 March

### ZIMBABWE ACTION CONFERENCE

11am-4pm London School of Economics, Houghton Street, London WC1.

Further information from AAM, 89 Charlotte Street, London WC1. Tel: 01-580 5311.

# IRELAND

## In the pay of the British Army

# 'Shankill butcher' was member of the UDR



Gerald McIlwaine

ONE OF the men jailed in the 'Shankill butchers' case which ended last week in Belfast was a member of the British Army-controlled Ulster Defence Regiment while involved in the 19 sectarian assassinations.

But his membership of the UDR went unreported in the British media, as did a number of other aspects of the grisly story of the Loyalist murder gang.

By Geoff Bell

The UDR member in question was 25-year-old Gerald McIlwaine. At last week's trial he was given a sentence of eight years on kidnapping, assault, and gun charges.

McIlwaine was a member of the UDR from 1974 to 1977. The British Army has neither confirmed nor denied that McIlwaine was on its payroll at the time of his arrest.

But as the crimes for which the 'Shankill butchers' were convicted took place from 1975 to 1977, he was certainly a UDR member during this period.

McIlwaine, the gang leader Billy Moore, and all the others convicted were members of the paramilitary, Loyalist extremist, Ulster Volunteer Force.

Their Catholic victims were usually picked up at random at night in the black taxi owned by Moore.

They were taken to Protestant areas where they were tortured and finally butchered to death with an axe or by having their throats cut.

Other victims included a ten-year-old boy blown up in an explosion at the start of an Official Republican demonstration, and UVF member Noel Shaw, killed in an internal

feud.

This is by no means the first time that a member of the UDR has been involved in sectarian crimes. The most infamous instance was the massacre of the Miami Showband in 1975, when all seven of those convicted of the triple murder were or had been in the UDR.

As an article last year in the *Irish Times* put it: 'Scores of UDR members and ex-members have appeared in court on serious charges and have been found guilty of sectarian killings.'

The same article went on to note: 'In the early days Catholics made up 18 per cent of the UDR. For years now, however, their involvement has been minimal.'

The UDR was first formed in 1970 as a replacement for the discredited B Specials. Like the Specials, it has gained a reputation for violent anti-Catholic bigotry because of the participation of many of its

members in sectarian attacks.

But unlike the Specials, the UDR is part of, and under the command of, the British Army.

While its 2,000 full-time and 8,000 part-time members are mostly recruited locally, its commander is a brigadier in the regular Army. Other members of the regular Army are the regiment's assistant commander and the chiefs of each battalion.

In contrast to the UDR, the Royal Ulster Constabulary might appear to have emerged with some credit from the rounding up and conviction of the Shankill butchers.

But this would be a superficial judgement. It was by good luck rather than any marked enthusiasm for the case that the butchers were eventually caught.

It so happened that one of the victims of the gang, who was left for dead, lived to tell the tale and identified his attackers while being driven in

a police car in the Shankill Road.

Without that identification it is unlikely that any of those finally convicted would have been caught.

Yet there were numerous clues to the assassinations which the police either ignored or didn't bother to investigate.

For example, one of the murders was claimed by someone calling himself 'Captain Long'.

Loyalist gangs are fond of dropping hints when they 'claim' killings — the actual name of another Loyalist commander, 'Captain Black', turned out to be White.

The Long bar in the Shankill Road is a favourite hunting ground for Protestant extremists, and the leader of the gang, Billy Moore, was actually a barman there. But this clue wasn't followed up.

Again, from November 1975 a number of witnesses testified to spotting a black taxi at the

time of the crimes.

Billy Moore was an owner of a black taxi but again this was never checked until Moore was identified by the gang's victim.

The failure to follow up such obvious evidence may in part have been due to the slender resources allotted by the RUC to investigating the multiple murders.

Only 10 detectives were assigned to investigating the crimes — just over half a detective for each of the 19 victims.

When passing sentence on the Shankill butchers, Justice O'Donnell commented: 'The facts speak for themselves and will remain forever a lasting monument to blind sectarian bigotry.'

The facts of McIlwaine's involvement in the crimes and the minimal resources given to investigating them by the RUC can also be allowed to 'speak for themselves'.

# When an official secret is best kept secret

THE unwillingness of the British media to report that one of the 'Shankill butchers' was being paid by the British Army at the time of the killings contrasts with one other aspect of the reporting of the case.

All the British press, including the *Guardian*, named the victim of the gang who lived to identify his attackers.

The *Irish Times*, however, preferred not to — reasoning that the victim and his family are in enough danger of reprisal from other Loyalists without identifying him in public.

The British media showed no

such concern; they blazoned his name across the front pages.

But rather different standards were applied when it came to three former leading lights in the Long Kesh prison service who, claimed the Provisionals, had resigned out of fear of being assassinated by them.

The only substantial response by the government's Northern Ireland Office to these allegations was a plea to the media not to name these gentlemen. The authorities insisted that they would be targets for Loyalist assassina-

tion.

The only British newspaper which gave any publicity to this story was the *Guardian* — which, of course, didn't name the names.

It is one thing to publicise an ordinary working class Catholic as a target of Loyalist terror, quite another to name three former prominent members of the Long Kesh prison staff.

One other occurrence in Belfast last week shows that at least some journalists are willing to resist state interference. Consequently Peter Martin of the *Cork Examiner*

and Peter Fearon of the Press Association now face prosecution under the Official Secrets Act.

They refused to assist the RUC in their investigation into a leak on the John Boyle murder case.

Sixteen-year-old Boyle was shot last September by two members of the SAS. The post-mortem report in the police file stated that Boyle had been shot in the back, and that his fingerprints were not found on any guns hidden nearby.

It was only when this story was leaked that two SAS members were charged with his murder.

The two journalists have now been cautioned by the police that they may face charges under the Official Secrets Act.

Their 'crime': that they are suspected of being in possession of police files, and when questioned they refused to name their sources.

Ron Knowles, press officer of the National Union of Journalists, told Socialist Challenge that the NUJ will take 'a very serious view' if any charges against Martin and Fearon are eventually lodged.

# IRA charges dropped

TWELVE members of Provisional Sinn Fein walked free from a Belfast court last Wednesday after charges of conspiracy, and IRA membership were suddenly dropped by the prosecution.

The Sinn Fein members had been under threat of prosecution since December 1977, when security forces in Belfast

conducted a series of raids on private homes and the offices of Sinn Fein and *Republican News*.

In April last year the twelve, as well as leading Belfast Republican Gerry Adams, were eventually charged. The majority were immediately dispatched to Long Kesh, where they were remanded.

Adams served seven months in prison before the charge against him was dismissed by the North of Ireland's Lord Chief Justice, Robert Lowry.

This acquittal gained the release of the others who were charged with Adams, but it wasn't until last week that the prosecution admitted there was 'insufficient evidence' to send the five women and seven men to trial.

But the case should not be regarded as a humiliation for the state forces. At the time of the arrests Sinn Fein maintained that the motivation behind them was to disrupt the work of its organisation by operating the now familiar system of

'internment by remand'.

This practice is best shown by the case of Antony McDonagh, who was arrested in August 1977 in connection with a shooting.

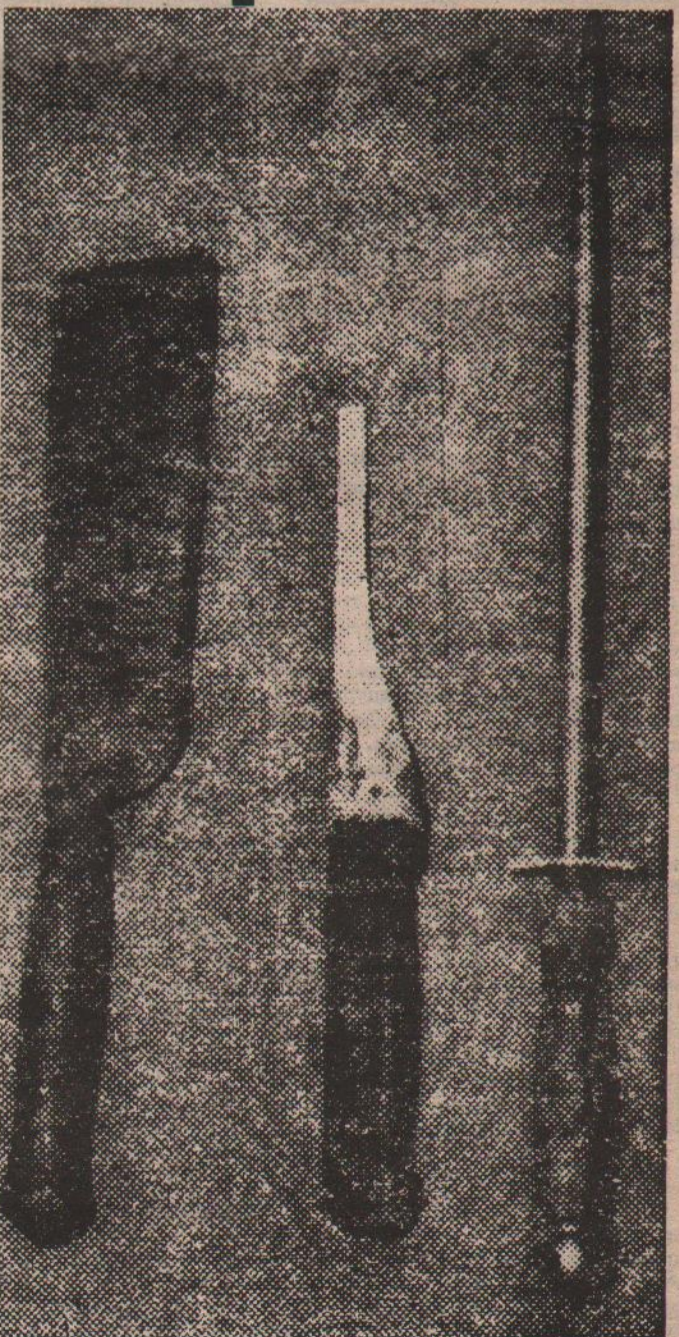
For nine months McDonagh was remanded in custody each week until the case finally came up for a preliminary hearing.

It took a further nine months for the case to be finally heard and then, last week, the judge ruled that the prosecution had failed to make a case against McDonagh, and he was freed.

But the point about the case is that for the past 18 months McDonagh has been in prison, although the police, in the words of the judge, 'had not prepared a case against him'.

But as with the Sinn Fein 12, the whole charade had, for the police, served a useful purpose — it had put one suspected 'troublemaker' behind bars.

That there was no evidence against this individual in the first place was, for the system of law in the North of Ireland, entirely incidental.



Third anniversary of abolition of political status

TORCHLIGHT DEMONSTRATION

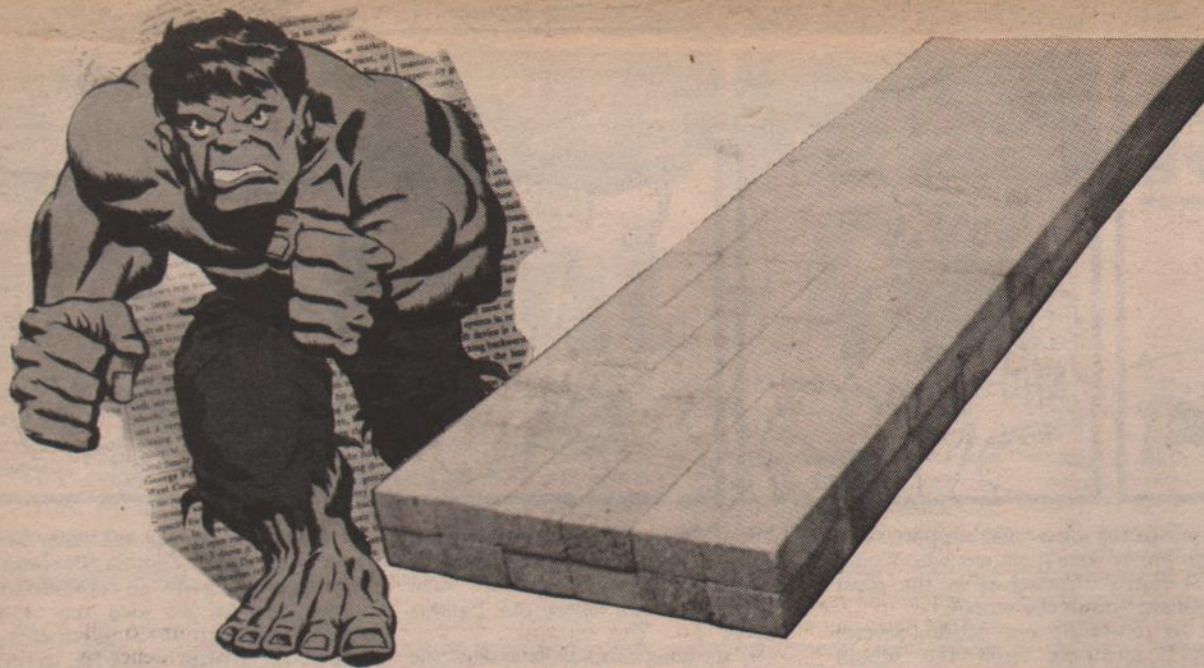
Oxford Circus, London

Thursday 1 March, 6pm

Called by United Troops Out Movement



Danny Morrison — one of the twelve.



'Like many of those who live on reservations, artists resort to incest, producing more and more paintings about paintings about paintings.'

'Others have gone insane, and sit about in tubs of bull's blood, gather twigs, or insist that their nail clippings or excrement should be acknowledged as "art".'

PETER FULLER explores

# The Crisis in the Fine Art Tradition



CONTEMPORARY IMAGES: 'Mightier than man beast' — illustration from Coventry Climax advert (top left); Carl Andre's bricks exhibited at the Tate (top right); and Terence Cuneo's Banquet in Guildhall, oil paint on canvas, for which he was paid over £20,000.

**O**VER THE PAST three years there has been renewed popular uproar in the press about 'modern art'. This gained momentum in the notorious Tate bricks affair, swept on through nappies and sanitary towels at the Institute of Contemporary Arts and blank canvases at the Hayward, and last manifested itself over a prize-winning blue monochrome in Liverpool.

There have been outbursts of this kind before, of course; but the difference is that they can no longer be dismissed as 'philistine'. What, after all, is a 'philistine' response to a blank, grey canvas or a pile of bricks? Late modernism has become indefensible.

How has this situation arisen? What is to be done? To answer these questions, we must go back into history.

The word 'art' only began to acquire its present meaning at the end of the 18th century when, as Raymond Williams has explained, it came to stand not just for any human skill, as previously, but only for certain 'imaginative' or 'creative' skills.

It simultaneously came to signify a

special kind of truth, imaginative truth, and the word 'artist' came to indicate a special kind of person, a purveyor of that truth.

At this time Britain was being transformed by the efflorescence of industrial capitalism and one of the many effects of this was the creation of a new professional category; that of institutionally-trained artists who had acquired the skilful use of certain definite representational conventions, and who made their livings by producing pictures which were sold predominantly on an open market.

This was something entirely new in Britain.

It was only with the development of the professional fine art tradition that one found the establishment of art schools, art magazines, commercial galleries, exhibitions open to the public, art critics, and artists' organisations — the entire apparatus of the new profession. It was also only at this time that art historians and museums began to emerge.

It is well known that the bourgeoisie tends to represent everything which is peculiar to itself as if it was somehow 'natural', universal and timeless. John Berger has shown how this applied to the

technical pictorial conventions of the fine art tradition — conventions of pose, chiaroscuro, perspective, anatomy, and so on. These came to be taught not as the conventions which they were, but as the way of depicting the 'Truth'.

In fact, they were a highly specific way of depicting the syncretic worldview of the Victorian ruling classes.

The flat, 'planar' quality of the space in much 19th century British 'realist' painting, and the relative popularity of religious subject matter bear witness to the historical persistence of feudal components in those classes, despite the titanic achievement of the industrial revolution.

Something similar applied to the ideology of art, too. Art historians studied a wide range of objects from civilisations other than their own. They treated Greek mirrors and medieval altar pieces as 'art', for example, even though such objects had served quite disparate functions within disparate cultures.

From existing bourgeois societies, however, they designated only a very narrow range of images — those produced by the fine art professionals

— as 'art'.

This distortion of history should not blind us to the fact that there was no unbroken continuum of 'art' stretching back into the earliest social formations. All that remained constant was that in every civilisation men and women produced images of one sort and another, which took different forms and were put to different uses in different cultures.

Indeed, during the 19th century, many new forms of producing and reproducing images began to emerge, including lithography, photography, and new printing techniques.

Between 1870 and 1914 in Britain and America, the old competitive, entrepreneurial capitalism which had given rise to the professional fine art tradition was itself displaced by the monopoly capitalist system.

Visual images under monopoly capitalism became more diverse and more ubiquitous than ever before: new mechanical, electrical, cinematic and most recently holographic means of reproducing images proliferated.

This unprecedented explosion of visual images of all kinds allows us to say that monopoly capitalism gave rise to the first mega-visual tradition in history.

Advertising became the dominant form of static, visual imagery under monopoly capitalism, just as free standing oil painting had been under entrepreneurial capitalism, and manuscript illumination had been in certain feudal societies.

Under this situation the old fine art tradition underwent a process of kenosis, or self-emptying. This begins as a crisis of subject matter; it ends with the vacuities of late modernism, and the attempts by painters first to take the conventions of painting as the sole content of their work, and then to abandon even those while still calling themselves artists.

The question is really not so much, 'Why is the fine art tradition in crisis?' as 'How has it managed to survive at all?'

The old fine art tradition had acquired a relative autonomy through the entrenchment of its schools, institutions and academies. The majority of intellectuals continued to adhere to its ideology of 'art' — as if it was something universal and transhistorical. Art historians barely recognised the existence of the new art forms of the mega-visual tradition.

But this, in itself, probably would not have prevented the fine art tradition from becoming a mere residual organ within national culture, like contemporary manuscript illumination, or the livery companies of the City of London.

What saved it was politics, pure and simple. At precisely the moment when it seemed about to metamorphose into an appendix, the state began a massive transfusion of money into it.

Keynes, a ballerina's husband, thought that rampant philistinism was one of the unacceptable faces of capitalism which could be decently masked by suitable government expenditure.

In fact, what emerged — especially in the visual arts — was a squalid decadence, characterised by a growing dissociation between the artist and any public, except an art world public.

What went wrong? It is easiest to see this through looking at Keynes' own thought. He was understandably determined that state patronage of the arts in Britain should be radically unlike the oppressive socialist realist system in the Soviet Union.

In his view, the artist in the West was to be 'absolutely free'. He said that everyone knew that the artist was 'individual and free, undisciplined, unregimented and uncontrolled...he (sic) walks where his spirit leads him. He cannot be told his direction. He does not know it himself.'

Keynes, in other words, took the 19th century, bourgeois view of the artist to its most extreme formulation — conveniently forgetting that the cultural achievements of what he called 'the great ages of a communal civilised life' had been realised by artists whose particular freedoms had been severely constrained.

Keynes also totally ignored the dominant, static visual art form under monopoly capitalism: advertising. The truth was that the artists who worked for the great corporations,

designing posters, bill-boards, and so on were every bit as controlled as their counterparts in the USSR.

One can see immediately that the Keynesian experiment was doomed to failure. It helped to create an enclave of socially redundant, over-subsidised fine artists who had every freedom except the only one without which the others count as nothing: the freedom to act socially. Artists have become like a protected species, displaced into a government reservation; there is nothing for them to do. The government subsidies even prevent them from dying out: they just have to be artists.

Like many of those who live on reservations, they resort to incest, producing more and more paintings about paintings about paintings. Others have gone insane, and sit about in tubs of bull's blood, gather twigs, or insist that their nail clippings or excrement should be acknowledged as 'Art'.

The Keynesian 'hands-off' system of state patronage has thus proved an unmitigated failure. Politically, it is threatened because the squalor within the art world corral no longer demonstrates to those nasty Russians, nor to anyone else, the magnificent achievements of Western 'artistic freedom'.

This is now even acknowledged within the patronising institutions themselves. In recent months there has been a tendency to place less and less emphasis on the farcical absurdities within the late modernist enclave, and to stress the residual fine art practices still maintained by specific audiences, through specific markets.

Andrew Brighton has done interesting work mapping out this territory. The pictures concerned range through regimental portraits by Cuneo, Shepherd's charging elephants, landscapes produced in East Anglia, the images of worker artists, bird paintings and the continuing tradition of Stalinist socialist realism.

Effectively, this sort of work shows what the fine art tradition would have been but for state intervention.

There are those, on both left and right, who argue that the visual arts should simply be handed back to this free market. They point out that the volume of sales in such fine art residuals is very high, and that the work produced is no worse than the decadence of late modernism.

However, I believe Gramsci that the struggle over culture must be for the 'high ground'. It is only within the subsidised sector of the existing fine art tradition that there is even a possibility for the emergence of a truthful, imaginative visual praxis which struggles to take its standards from a possible historical future, that of genuine socialism.

To argue against the continuance of state support is, in my view, to argue in favour of handing the visual representation of the world back to the distortions of the mega-visual professionals, and the inept, anachronistic alternatives of the residual 'free market' artists.

But can this possibility of a truthful, imaginative visual praxis in fact be realised? The problems are not just social, political and economic. They are also aesthetic.

The confusion at the core of fine art practice over the nature of 'realism' parallels that in say physics about the nature of the external world.

As a materialist, one asserts the primacy of the material world, and its existence outside of consciousness. Nonetheless, one is then confronted by the inability of contemporary physics to provide a convincing, consensus theoretical representation of that world of a kind which existed in the 19th century.

In *A Painter of Our Time*, John Berger makes his hero, an artist, write: 'There will be no consistent method of drawing this side of socialism. A method of drawing is the result of an identity of interest in reality. Bourgeois culture now only has a diversity of interest in fantasy.'

It is the unenviable task of the fine artist who seeks a truthful visual praxis to begin within the welter of that 'diversity of interest in fantasy' and to attempt to transcend it by realising, as a moment within his or her work, a glimpse of a possible historical future.

# LETTERS

## Communicating theory

JAMES Francis's article on the Chartists (8 February) oversimplifies some important issues. There was a wonderfully revolutionary impulse to Chartism. But it existed side by side with backwardness and chauvinism. A feature of the monster demonstration in 1848, for example, was a fist fight occasioned by some of the English marchers taking exception to a speaker being French. And in Scotland large sections of the Chartist movement were organised on religious lines, with Sunday prayer meetings, Bible quotes, and specially appointed preachers.

In any case, many backward ideas were inherited by the British working class from its pre-history. The colonies, the Navy, the merchant marine all contributed. Indeed, there were large-scale anti-Welsh riots in London in the 1480s, and there's a good case for pushing the origins of English/British chauvinism in the masses back to the Scottish and Welsh wars of the 13th and 14th centuries — hundreds of years before imperialism.

I don't think we will make much progress in tackling the political backwardness amongst British workers unless we realise just how all-embracing and deep-seated it is.

As a subsidiary point, there is a case for saying that the left theoreticians in Britain must take some blame for the persistence and growth of political backwardness, because there have rarely been attempts to communicate theory. The private language of, say, *New Left Review* or *Radical Philosophy* guarantees the continuation of backwardness just as much as concentration on 'bread and butter' issues.

As well as a less one-sided approach to labour history, could I urge your series to look at some of the attempts to communicate political theory and internationalism, particularly in recent times.

MARTIN O'LEARY (Glasgow)

## Smear on Rising Free?

YOUR attack on the Rising Free bookshop (8 February) is unfair and somewhat hypocritical. OK, so you disagree with their decision not to stock pro-Republican newspapers. But when have you ever balked at refusing to handle material not to your liking? Your reluctance to publish an article by me on Ireland because it didn't quite fit in with your analysis is just one example from my own experience.

Libertarian independent bookshops such as ours and Rising Free have been a great service to the whole



of the left. Unfortunately, however, political experience has taught us that should we be attacked by the state or right-wing forces, we could not expect much support or solidarity from the straight left.

Although we have not taken the same decision as Rising Free, we can sympathise with their reluctance to stock material which they disagree with and which could make them vulnerable to attack. But to describe this, as you do, as 'collaboration with the British government's repression' and 'indistinguishable from the methods of Stalinism' is completely unfair. Who's using Stalinist smear tactics now?

BOB DENT (News from Nowhere, Liverpool)

## Teachers and the NUPE strike

WE were concerned to read your report (15 February) on unofficial action taken by teachers refusing to cross NUPE picket lines at Quintin Kynaston school on 7 February. Your report implied, inaccurately, that only a small minority of staff refused to cross.

In fact, after a majority vote at a school National Union of Teachers meeting the previous day, 30 teachers agreed not to cross a picket line. This was also the majority of NUT members in the school. Your report implied it was isolated action by militants within the school. In fact,

**THE LENGTH of letters printed will usually be kept down to 400 words in order to encourage as wide a range of contributions as possible. All letters may be cut at the Editor's discretion. Unsigned letters will not normally be published, although we will withhold real names from publication on request.**

some of the most solid supporters of this policy were members who would not regard themselves as the most militant within the school.

To follow up our action, several NUT members from the school attended an all-London meeting on 13 February to discuss coordinating further action in support of NUPE and to support the picket of NUT headquarters on 24 February against the divisive NUT pay claim. JANE HARDY (NUT rep., Quintin Kynaston), HILDA KEAN (President, Westminster NUT) (both in personal capacity)

## Confusion on Labour?

JOHN Ross writes (8 February) about a move within the National Union of Public Employees to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. He criticises this idea, arguing that it 'would aid Tory influence and infiltration in the union'. But he does not explain how this would happen.

He also claims that it 'would cut NUPE militants off from many of the people whose solidarity is now needed for the public sector strike'. Has comrade Ross not heard of trades councils? If it is necessary to be a member of the Labour Party in order to have contact with other 'militants', then perhaps we should join the Labour Party and dissolve the organisations of the left.

Ross proposes an emergency conference of the Labour Party to repudiate Callaghan's policies and support the public sector workers, which could also 'help initiate the fight in the labour movement for socialist policies and a new leadership'. Rich Palser writes in a similar vein (15 February). He argues for recalling the Labour Party conference to draw up a manifesto 'which offers a socialist alternative to the capitalist crisis'.

Is this not reformist? The Labour Party cannot reform away capitalism. It is futile to attempt to change the

Labour Party. If the articles quoted above represent the line of the International Marxist Group, then why does it not enter the Labour Party?

By standing candidates against the Labour Party, the IMG disqualifies its members from joining. Why stand candidates when the idea is to change the Labour Party? The IMG needs to resolve these contradictions in its policies.

PAUL KEGAN (London N5)

## Books for South Africa

SOME months ago you published an appeal from Carl Brecker and myself for 'Books for South Africa'. The response was quite good, and I think it only right that we should let those who contributed know what we have so far done with the money collected and the books donated.

Books and pamphlets have been sent to groups in Zambia, Botswana, Ghana and Nigeria. In response to a special appeal we also sent some books, surplus to the requirements of the South African comrades, to revolutionary groups in Turkey.

The contacts we have established in this way have proved very productive; groups receiving material through the 'Books for South Africa' scheme have put us in touch with other groups. There is therefore a need for a continuous fund to keep this project going. Donations should be sent to: Books for South Africa, PO Box 50, London N1.

CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN (London)

## WORKERS' INSTITUTE OF MARXISM-LENINISM-MAO ZEDONG THOUGHT

P.O. Box 226, Brixton, London SW2 1DW

### Conference to mark

60th birthday of the Communist International:

### "WORLD REVOLUTION AND WORLD PARTY BUILDING"

First session at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 2nd, at University of London Students' Union (Room 3E), Malet Street, London WC1.

Second and Third Sessions from 3 p.m. - 10 p.m. on Saturday, March 3, in the same union building but in Room 3A.

Fourth and Fifth Sessions from 3 p.m. - 9 p.m. on Sunday, March 4, at the Lecture Hall, Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green, EC1.

ALL WELCOME

# SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

THE DEADLINE for this column is midday on the Saturday before publication.

## NORTH WEST

WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-236 2352.

GREATER MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge. School students who support the paper and would like to get involved in anti-fascist activity, please contact Chris (273 5947, day) or Steve (225 4287), evening, or write to Manchester SC Centre, 14 Piccadilly.

BOLTON Socialist Challenge public meeting: 'Iran — an eyewitness report of the revolution', with speaker Brian Grogan. Thur 8 March, 8pm, in the White Lion, Moor Lane/Deansgate.

MOSS SIDE Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper at Moss Side Centre, Saturday, 11-1.

OLDHAM Socialist Challenge group now meets fortnightly on Wednesdays. For details phone 061-136 2352 or write to Manchester SC Centre, c/o 14 Piccadilly.

PRESTON Socialist Challenge group meeting: 'Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts — what happened to equality?' Speaker Cath Cirket (Liverpool Women's Group). Thur 8 March, 7.45pm, in Windsor Castle pub, Egan St.

## NORTH EAST

NEWCASTLE Socialist Challenge local supporters are active! If you want

to join them, phone Pete on (0632) 29057.

DURHAM Socialist Challenge Supporters Group. For details contact: Dave Brown, 2 Pioneer Cottages, Low Pittington, Durham.

MIDDLESBROUGH Socialist Challenge sales, Saturday lunchtime near the lottery stand at Cleveland Centre. Also available from Newsfare in Linthorpe Road.

MIDDLESBROUGH Socialist Challenge supporters meeting: 'Social workers and the state', with speaker from local social workers. Thur 8 March, 8pm, AUEW Hall.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES readers can buy Socialist Challenge from Green Books, upstairs in the Spencer Hall shopping centre.

## SCOTLAND

For information about the paper or its supporters' activities throughout Scotland please contact Socialist Challenge Books, 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Open Wed, Thurs, Fri and Sat afternoons. Phone for alternative arrangement (221 7481). Wide range of Fourth International publications.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly. Phone George at 031-346 0466 for details.

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

HAMILTON supporters sell Socialist Challenge every Saturday in the Hamilton shopping centre, 1-5pm. For details of local activities contact John Ford, 553 Elliot Crescent, Hamilton.

## YORKSHIRE

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge sales regularly Saturdays 11am-1pm in the Piazza.

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Thursdays at the Friendly & Trades Club, Northumberland St. 1 March: speaker on Eastern Europe.

DEWSBURY Socialist Challenge sales regularly on Saturday mornings in Westgate at the Nat. Westminster Bank, 12.30-2.00pm.

YORK Socialist Challenge is on sale at the York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate or from sellers on Thursdays (12.30-1.45) at York University, Vanbrugh College; Saturdays (11.30-3.30) at Coney Street.

LEEDS Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday at City Centre Precinct, 11am-1.30pm. And at Eliand Road — when Leeds Utd are playing at home!

## MIDLANDS

COVENTRY Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Tuesdays at 8pm in the Wedge cafe/bookshop, High St. Next meeting 13 March: 'Socialists and the new technology'.

LEICESTER Socialist Challenge group meeting with Piers Corbyn on 'Civil liberties' plus video film — Wed 7 March, 8pm, Highfields Community Centre.

NOTTINGHAM readers can buy Socialist Challenge regularly at Mushroom Books, Heathcote St.

For details of activities of local supporters throughout the Midlands contact the Socialist Challenge Centre, 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham (021) 643 9209.

## SOUTH WEST

ISLE OF WIGHT readers can buy Socialist Challenge from the Oz Shop, 44 Union St, Ryde.

BATH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 2-3.30pm, outside Macfisheries. Ring Bath 20298 for further details.

SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday from 10am-1pm above bar, Post Office, Bargate.

PORTSMOUTH Socialist Challenge sales, Saturdays, 11.30pm-1pm, Commercial Road Precinct.

SWINDON supporters sell Socialist Challenge 11am-1pm Saturdays, Regent St (Brunel Centre).

FOR INFORMATION on activities in the South-West, write to Box 002, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Bristol 6.

BRISTOL Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm in the 'Hole in the Ground', Haymarket.

## SOUTH EAST

NORWICH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday in Davey Place (opp.

market) and bookstall Thursdays at University of East Anglia.

BRIGHTON SC forums fortnightly on Tuesdays. Contact Micky on 605052 for details.

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. For details phone Steve on Wivenhoe 2949.

## LONDON

SW LONDON sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm, at Clapham Junction (Northcote Rd), Brixton tube, Clapham Common tube, Balham tube. Also on bookstalls outside Oval tube, Herne Hill BR.

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge supporters sell every weekend: Saturdays meet 10.30am, Whitechapel tube; Sundays meet 10am, Brick Lane (corner of Buxton St).

WALTHAM FOREST paper sales every Saturday, 11am-noon outside the post office, Hoe St, Walthamstow, London E17.

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge Group meets every fortnight (phone 247 2717 for details).

BRENT supporters sell every Saturday, 2.30pm, at Kilburn Sq., Kilburn High Rd, London NW6.

HACKNEY supporters meet fortnightly on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the Britannia pub, Mare St., E8. Next meeting 1 March: 'The Huntley Street case and the growth of the strong state'. Speaker Piers Corbyn plus video film.

BRENT Socialist Challenge open forums: first Thursday of every month at Anson Hall (Kent Room), Chichele

Road, NW2, 7.30pm. Everyone welcome. Next meeting Thur 1 March on Iran.

HACKNEY Socialist Challenge group public meeting: 'Where is the revolutionary left going?' With Dodie Weppeler (IMG) and Richard Kirkwood (ISA) on the 'joint appeal for revolutionary unity', plus speaker invited from SWP. Thur 15 March, 7.30pm, at the Britannia pub, Mare St., E8.

HACKNEY supporters sell every Saturday, 12-2pm, in Kingsland High St, Dalston — meet outside Sainsbury's.

HARINGEY Paper sales at Finsbury Park and Seven Sisters tubes, Thurs evening; Muswell Hill and Crouch End Broadways, Saturday morning. Also available at Muswell Hill Bookshop, Muswell Hill Broadway; Vares newsagent, Middle Lane, N8; and Bookmarks, Finsbury Park.

HARINGEY Socialist Challenge supporters public meeting: 'Labour's record over the last six months'. Thur 8 March, 7.30pm, at West Green Community Centre, Stanley Rd., N15 (Turnpike Lane tube).

LEYTON readers can buy Socialist Challenge from Patel's Newsagents, 326 Lea Bridge Road, E10.

WALTHAMSTOW readers can buy Socialist Challenge regularly from Sheridan's Newsagents, 86 Hoe St, E17.

HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly, details from Box 50 London N1 2XP.

# Dave Stevens is innocent - OK



It ain't half racist mum

TONIGHT (Thursday) sees the showing on BBC of an 'Open Door' put together by the Campaign Against Racism in the Media — made up largely, though not exclusively, of media workers.

WOLVERHAMPTON anti-racist Dave Stevens was unanimously acquitted of all charges against him after a five-day trial at Stafford Crown Court last week.

That evening 8 million people in the Midlands saw the film which had proved his innocence as the main item on the TV news.

By Chris Roseblade

When the case began, the police slapped a further assault charge on Dave, so that he faced four charges of police assault, one charge of breach of the peace, and one charge of inflicting actual bodily harm on a police inspector.

The police accused Dave of grabbing one constable from above, hitting two other officers, kicking Inspector Bedford and spraining his ankle, whilst simultaneously fracturing the inspector's wrist

with his left shoulder.

They further all remembered Dave shouting: 'Pull me, stop the pigs from arresting me, kick the bastards.'

But then the defence produced a videotape (which the police witnesses hadn't seen prior to its use in cross-examination) which clearly showed that the demonstration was attacked by a supporter of the National Front, that Dave pulled him out, that as he did so a lens from his glasses fell down, and that after he had retrieved the lens he turned to

the demo and shouted through his megaphone: 'Keep calm, hold it, cool it'.

At this point he was attacked by a crowd of police and emerged after a scumage with his arm twisted behind his back by a policeman.

The videotape evidence threw the police witnesses into confusion. Nine of them had made statements which tallied perfectly with each other but had nothing at all to do with what the film showed.

Indeed, only two could even identify themselves on the film!

The prosecution's final ploy was a vicious cross-examination

of Dave. One would have thought that Dave was on trial for his political beliefs, and that is was illegal to demonstrate or to think that the police were not above criticism.

Their argument was based on the belief that the jury would simply not be able to conceive that nine respectable British bobbies could lie so competently and systematically.

But as the defence pointed out, only in Hollywood do policemen break down in the witness box and repent of their sins.

After only two hours the jury returned a unanimous verdict

of innocence on all charges.

Without the vital evidence of the videotape, however, Dave would almost certainly have gone down.

The central question raised by this case is: how many black, Asian and working class people have not had a videotape to prove that they were innocent and the police were lying? One can only guess at the answer.

## WHAT'S LEFT

5p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3pm Saturday before publication. Payment in advance.

**PICKET GARNERS:** Main pickets every day, noon to 3pm and 5.30 to 11 pm at 399 Oxford St., London W1 (opp. Selfridges); 243 Oxford St. (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 56 Whitcombe St. (Leicester Sq.). Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donations urgently needed as strike pay is only £6. All donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm 84, 12-13 Henrietta St., London WC2. 01-240 1056.

**SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN** for a Labour Victory meeting at London Labour Party conference on 3 March. 'The Fight against the Cuts and the Rent Increases' 1pm, committee room, Camden Town Hall. Speakers: Ken Livingstone (Camden cllr), Ted Knight (Lambeth cllr), John Sweeney (Hackney cllr), Bernie Grant (Wood Green cllr).

**WOMEN AGAINST Violence Against Women.** Week of local actions leading up to a National Women's Demonstration/Carnival in Leeds on Saturday 10 March (assemble 1pm, Woodhouse Moor, Leeds 6). Women only demonstration, followed by social (creeche). All women welcome. We will be having one main (WAWAW) banner so no other banners, please.

**SOCIALIST ORGANISER,** paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, March issue out on 3 March. 12 pages for 15p. 10 copies for £1, from SCLV, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

**LONDON:** Britain Out of Ireland. PAC-RG Forum no 5. Coercive Legislation and the Irish Struggle. Speaker — Jackie Kaye (PAC). Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. 7.30pm Tuesday 6 March. Adm 20p.

**REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST** Tendency. Public Meeting. 'Defend the working class: break with the Labour Party'. Speaker Keith Tompson. Sunday 4 March, 2.30pm, Toynebe Hall, Commercial St, Aldgate East tube.

**SOUTH HAMPSTEAD** Labour Party. Film and discussion evening. Thursday 1 March, 8pm. Showing of World in Action film 'Inside the National Front' and Steve Kennedy of W Hampstead ANL on 'Should we ignore the NF and hope they will go away?'. Labour Party Rooms, 37a Broadhurst Gardens, London NW6.

**SUNDAY 4 March,** 8pm. Quex Rd Methodist Church, Quex Rd, London NW6. Showing of World in Action film 'Inside the National Front' by West Hampstead Camden Against Racism/ANL. Followed by discussion.

**STRATEGY** for Socialism in Mozambique: Discussion meeting, Friday, 2 March. 7.30pm at Mozambique Information Centre, 34 Percy Street, London W1. Admission 40p inc. light refreshments. Essential reading: Frelimo's Third Congress Report, (£1.50 from above address).

**MAY DAY GREETINGS:** trades council or shop stewards committees, would your trade union branch put its May Day Greetings in Socialist Challenge? If so, just send us the name and address of the branch secretary and on 26 February the branch will be mailed allowing the item to be raised at the branches' March or April meeting. Copies of the circular, including rates, from D. Weppier, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

**REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST** Tendency. Second in series of four public forums. No.2 'Imperialist oppression and the working class'. Speaker Mary Masters. Friday 2 March. 7.30pm, The Roebuck, 108a Tottenham Court Road. Goodge St and Warren St tubes.

**ISABEL LETELIER** will speak at the premiere of the film *The Dead are not Silent* describing the assassination of her husband Orlando Letelier. 27 March, 6.45pm, Sudbury House, St Pauls, London. Adm £1.50. Also in Sheffield on 28 March, Glasgow on 29 March, and Edinburgh on 30 March. Additional showing of the film in Leeds on 15 March. Further details and advance tickets from: Chile Solidarity Campaign, 129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7 7QG. 01-272 4298.

**THE NATIONAL** interest vs your interests', Saturday 17 March, 8pm. Socialist Party of Gt Britain meeting at 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 (nr Clapham North tube). Questions and discussion. All welcome.

**CHARTIST** (incorporating Chartist International) new bi-monthly magazine. First issue contains articles on the Labour Left, Socialist/feminism, Immigration Controls, Bolshevism, Rosa Luxemburg, the Economy, Local Government. Price 35p + 10p p&p. Four issues for £1.50. Also: *Roots of the Middle East Conflict* a collection of articles exploring the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict. 30p + 10p p&p. Available from Chartist Publications (SC), 60 Loughborough Road, London SW9.

**SOCIALIST** organisation with office/workshop space to let, Lambeth area. Contact Nick, 01-733 4561.

**SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN** for a Labour Victory meeting at London Labour Party conference on 3 March. 'The Fight against the Cuts and the Rent Increases' 1pm, committee room, Camden Town Hall. Speakers: Ken



ALMOST 200 people marched through Bradford on 10 February calling for the dropping of police charges of 'buggery and indecent assault of a minor' against local gay anti-fascist Frank Kelly.

## Women against violence against women

**WOMEN** against Violence against Women is the theme of a week of action organised by the Women's Aid Federation which ends on Saturday 10 March with a national demonstration in Leeds.

In Leeds preparations are well under way for the demonstration. Like all the other activities during the week of action it will be for women only.

This is because one of the main objectives of the campaign is to assert the right of women to walk the streets alone without harassment.

The demonstration also aims to show that the majority of cases of violence against women occur not in the 'red light' districts but in the family.

So the demonstration will be visiting housing estates, talking to women in the shopping centres, and drawing attention to all the aspects of violence against women.

Women in London will be claiming back the Tube. Camden women are meeting at the Sols Arms pub in Hampstead Road at 9pm on Friday 2 March to claim back the Northern line with songs and street theatre [more details from Hilary, 794 2359].

For details of the theatre, films, displays, meetings and

local reclaim the nights in the rest of London phone 837 9317 or 340 3913.

In Scotland activities have already started with a demonstration in Aberdeen when over 200 women reclaimed the night, starting from a spot where a woman was raped last year.

In Dundee, Inverness, Edinburgh and Glasgow women are organising mass leafletting and stalls in shopping centres.

In Wales, Cardiff women will be picketing the court of Justice Wallace Jones, who is notorious for his refusal to issue injunctions to women seeking protection against harassment by men.

Cardiff women will also reclaim the night on Saturday, starting at the Park Lane Bar at 6.30pm. Coaches for the Leeds demonstration leave the Student Union building at 8am a week later [details from Carol Jenkins, 0222 499084].

Birmingham will see a huge range of activities starting on Friday 2 March with another reclaim the night demonstration starting off at 8pm from Chamberlain Square.

Leafletting in the Bull Ring follows the next day at 10am. Coaches for Leeds leave on Saturday 10 March at 10am from the Halls of Memory [all

details of events can be got from Anne or Pauline on 021-356 8164].

In Sheffield, International Women's Day will be marked on 3 March by a 'Celebration', which includes a Women's Fair at Victoria Halls starting at 10.30am with women's music, food and creche [information about coaches to Leeds from Maureen Storey 0742 8186].

Three reclaim the night demonstrations will be starting in Manchester at 6.30pm, Saturday 3 March. Gathering at the Phoenix pub, Granada TV and Oxford Road, marchers will converge on the Tatler Cinema Club and the Daily Star offices.

\* Women against Violence against Women demonstration. Saturday 10 March. Meet 1pm, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 6. No placards or banners — more details from Jo Kirk, 0532 689882.

## Militant Entertainment

**ROCK** Against Racism now has 96 groups around the country, organising gigs, breaking down race-hate, bringing militant youth together whatever their colour.

At the next election the National Front plans to stand over 300 candidates. RAR's Militant Entertainment Tour, starting in a fortnight's time, is a part of the campaign to stop the NF's election bid. Every town visited by the tour has an NF candidate.

The purpose of the tour is also to let people know they can get their own militant entertainment. RAR's message is: 'Form your own RAR club — make the record count!'

Bands on the tour are: *Angels, Opus, Aswad, Belt and Braces, Carol Grimes, Crisis, Exodus, Fans, Flying Saucers, Gang of Four, Iganda, Leyton Buzzards, Mekons, Misty, 90 Degrees Inclusive, Pyrahnnas, Ruts, Stiff Little Fingers.*

Tour dates and venues will be published in next week's Socialist Challenge.

## Nottingham picket

THE fight to reinstate 28 journalists sacked from the Nottingham Evening Post for supporting their national pay strike looks set to take on Grunwick proportions.

The NUJ, which is making up the wages of its sacked members, is anxious to stop all supplies to the Post, and build the biggest possible pickets outside its gates.

The next mass picket is on Saturday 3 March, beginning at noon in Forman Street, Nottingham. Free coaches from London leave at 8.45am, in York Way by the side of King's Cross Station. Confirm booking with Paul Todd on 01-340 2424.

## ELEMENTS OF MARXISM

3 Saturdays: 3 March, 21 April, 9 June  
Fundamental tenets of marxist economics, current trends and debates  
Tutors: Betty Matthews, Martin Jacques, Ron Bellamy, Irene Brennan  
Fees: £1.50 per session, £4 the series  
Further information from: Julia Kessell, Short Course Unit, PCL, 309 Regent Street, W1. Tel: 01-580 2020 ext 220.

Rock Against Racism, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1

01-802 8773

COMBAT FOR THE NATIONAL FRONT 79

# Socialist Challenge

# VOTE YES! IN SCOTLAND

OVER the past ten years everyone in Scottish politics has been forced to relate to the demands for an elected Assembly in Edinburgh.

The professional politicians have been split on the issue; it forced a huge crisis in the Labour Party; the reactionary SNP grew from obscurity to challenge Labour's hold over the industrial working class.

The unions, the women's movement, the socialist organisations — all have been forced to discuss their policies for the Assembly. The most immediate issue: which way to vote in the 1 March referendum?

By Pat Kane

The demand for an elected Assembly in Edinburgh grew out of years of discontent with the performance of both major political parties.

The economic boom of the 1950s made no impact on the traditional sectors of the Scottish economy, which continued to decline and stagnate. Scottish workers still had to emigrate to get secure employment.

Alongside this grew up a new policy, championed by the Labour Party, of devolved regional aid to provide the opportunities that the capitalist boom could not.

boom could not.

But by the end of the 1960s Scottish people could see that their lives hadn't changed. The bad housing was still there, along with unemployment and poor social services.

They started to look for change, and the only kind they found was in the SNP's policy of more control for Scotland — an idea that the workers and lower middle classes already understood through their experience of the regional policies.

For the first time tens of thousands of workers deserted their traditional loyalties to the Labour Party. Safe Labour seats became a thing of the

past.

The SNP grew from irrelevant obscurity to become the second largest party in Scotland, with 11 MPs, hundreds of local councillors, and thousands of members. It was the fastest growing party in Europe.

What this reflected was an attempt to get out of the crisis of capitalism.

Ordinary people who support an Assembly have no other experience than the present political system. So it was natural for them to express this desire for change through the ballot box, and at first the SNP was the only party which appeared to support them.

It is for this reason that socialists must vote Yes in the referendum. Hundreds of thousands of working people will cast their votes in favour; and no matter how confused they are about what role the Assembly will play, they will be voting against the present mess of capitalist Scotland and for some form of change.

To sit on the fence and say that the Assembly is irrelevant is to cut oneself off from the desires of Scottish working people rather than fighting alongside them to affect the course of their future.

On Thursday lots of people will vote Yes. Some will be carworkers; others striking public sector workers; women who see the Assembly as a chance for a change.

To these workers it is neither abstract nor irrelevant whether or not there is an Assembly. And it shouldn't be irrelevant to us.

The requirement that the Yes vote should attain 40 per cent of all those entitled to vote places an added responsibility on the trade union and labour movement.

The existence of an Assembly will make it easier, not harder, for us to tackle the illusions of ordinary people by firmly placing before them the socialist alternatives to the bankrupt policies of Labour and the SNP.

By Steve Bell

THE votes of Welsh people have sent James Callaghan, Michael Foot, and Speaker George Thomas to Parliament at election after election.

Yet the most visible contribution these Labour leaders have brought back in return has been a steep rise in the number of jobless. Nor have housing, social services, etc. exactly got better.

Welsh people are looking for an alternative — and the Assembly is what is currently on offer.

The Labour leaders are simply gambling that the Wales Act which incorporates the Assembly will help to cut down support for Plaid Cymru — support which has been fuelled,

among other things, by the involvement of Labour councillors in several local government corruption scandals.

But the capitalist forces in the CBI and Tory Party know that it could mean much more than this — which is why they oppose it.

The powers laid down for the Assembly are very limited. But they know that, dominated as it would be by Labour and the left populists of Plaid, increasing pressure could focus on it to act independently on the problems of unemployment, housing, the language, and so on.

It would highlight the question: 'Do Welsh people have the right to decide their own future?'

And to that question we reply emphatically: Yes.

## OUR FUND DRIVE

THINKING we would make a bit of money for the paper, we phoned up the William Hill organisation last week and asked what odds they would give us for the Shah dying within three months.

'We aren't offering odds', was the reply. 'We don't take bets on certainties.'

So the fund drive's attempts remain restricted to more conventional ventures. Camden Socialist Challenge group threw us a hefty lifebelt by organising a jumble sale which raised an impressive £85.

But for that donation and another regular benefit from our stamp sales organiser in Leicester, we would all be facing the prospect of the dole queue.

A big nationwide effort is now required if we are to meet our quarter's target. If our readers don't rush us substantial donations in the next couple of weeks this column will get increasingly hysterical.

That is an even bigger certainty than the Shah's demise.

Send your money to SC Fund Drive, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Our thanks this week to:

LP supporters	£1.75
P Seligman	1.00
Martin Avery	5.00
Anon	1.50
A Acheson (stamps)	15.00
Camden SC group jumble sale	85.00
G Irwin	1.00
Preston IMG	1.00
A Freeman	1.00
<b>This week's total:</b>	<b>£112.25</b>
<b>Quarter's total:</b>	<b>£1,539.33</b>

Get your Socialist Challenge through

**WHSMITH**

\*By placing a special

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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.

