

# Socialist Challenge

Lobby TUC 5 Sept

## A DECADE OF DEATH IN IRELAND BRITISH TROOPS OUT NOW

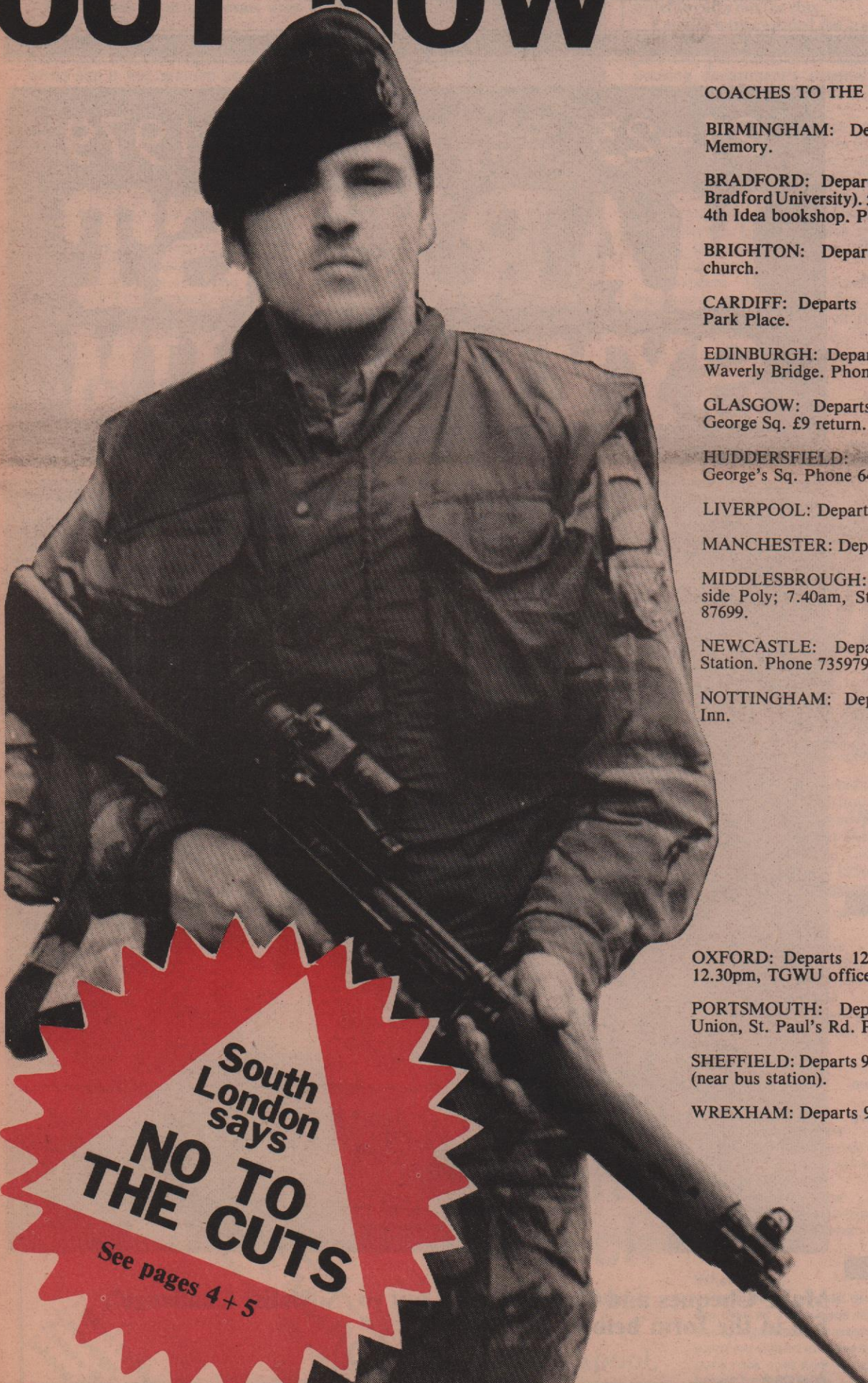


Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

### COACHES TO THE DEMO

**BIRMINGHAM:** Departs 10am, Hall of Memory.

**BRADFORD:** Departs 9am, Richrood (by Bradford University). 50p deposit, tickets from 4th Idea bookshop. Phone 305927.

**BRIGHTON:** Departs 11am, St. Peter's church.

**CARDIFF:** Departs 10am, Student Union, Park Place.

**EDINBURGH:** Departs 10pm, Sat 11 Aug, Waverly Bridge. Phone 2291861.

**GLASGOW:** Departs 10am, Sat 11 Aug, George Sq. £9 return.

**HUDDERSFIELD:** Departs 9.30am, St. George's Sq. Phone 642245.

**LIVERPOOL:** Departs 8.30am, Pier Head.

**MANCHESTER:** Departs 8.20am, Albert Sq.

**MIDDLESBROUGH:** Departs 7.30am, Tees-side Poly; 7.40am, Stockton Odeon. Phone 87699.

**NEWCASTLE:** Departs 6.30am, Central Station. Phone 735979.

**NOTTINGHAM:** Departs 9am, Salutation Inn.

**OXFORD:** Departs 12 noon, Magdalen St; 12.30pm, TGWU office, Cowley Rd.

**PORTSMOUTH:** Departs 11am, Student Union, St. Paul's Rd. Phone 819141.

**SHEFFIELD:** Departs 9.30am, Hammer Lane (near bus station).

**WREXHAM:** Departs 9am, King St.

**THIS WEEKEND** is the tenth anniversary of British troops being sent once more onto the streets of Ireland. This year is the eight hundred and tenth anniversary of the first British invasion of Ireland.

The last decade, like many before, has been a decade of death and of torture. In the last ten years over 2,000 have died, countless more injured, thousands have been interned without trial, thousands more sent to prison by kangaroo courts.

The burden has fallen heaviest on the Catholic minority in the north-east six counties of Ireland. It is they who have suffered most, and today the guns and torture weapons of the British 'security forces' are pointed in the direction of the working class ghettos of Belfast, Derry, Armagh and elsewhere.

For its part the British working class has said little and done less about its government's occupation of the North of Ireland. Not so the British ruling class. Only last week a magistrate in a London court described January's 'Bloody Sunday' march in London as 'highly provocative'. He fined a demonstrator who defended herself from a fascist attack, commenting that 'some patriotic people might be offended by such a march'.

Last week, too, the Tory government banned the use of Trafalgar Square for Sunday's demonstration marking the tenth anniversary of British troops' new involvement in Ireland.

The latest information Socialist Challenge has been given is that the National Front is planning to attack the London march. NF transport has been arranged from as far away as Manchester.

The 12 August demonstration was called on the basis that Britain should declare its intention to leave Ireland. Socialist Challenge believes that this demand does not go far enough, and we urge our readers to march in the 'troops out now' contingent.

But wherever you march, be on the streets of London on 12 August. Whether its the last ten years or the last eight hundred and ten, the conclusion is the same — Britain out of Ireland now.

All out 12 August!

Assemble Marble Arch, 2.30pm.

South London says  
**NO TO THE CUTS**

See pages 4+5

Inside: Communist Party and International Marxist Group debate 'troops out now'. Pages 6/7



## OUR POLICIES

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

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

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

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

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Name.....

Address.....

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

## EDITORIAL

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1 2XQ. Editorial: 01-359 8180/9. Distribution/Advertising: 01-359 8371.

# Hands off Zimbabwe!

IN THE WAKE of the apparent agreement reached at the Commonwealth conference on a common approach to Zimbabwe, the Rhodesian Herald asked its readers whether Margaret Thatcher might be a 'Labour Prime Minister in drag'.

There is no doubt that the position adopted at the conference represents a major shift in Tory policy. A government which up until a few weeks ago was loudly hinting at its intentions to lift sanctions and recognise the 'internal settlement' is now committed to major alterations in the constitution of 'Zimbabwe-Rhodesia', an all-party conference involving the Patriotic Front guerrillas, and a new round of elections.

The outburst of indignation from Tory right-wingers like Julian Amery is a good index of how much the Thatcher position has altered. Indeed, the new package is virtually indistinguishable from the Owen-Young scheme on which the Tories poured so much scorn when in opposition — hence the Rhodesian Herald's bitter query.

The determined opposition of all the black

African states to the recognition of Muzorewa, and the increasingly unstable complexion of his regime as internal opposition to it mounts, undoubtedly forced the Tories to think again. Nor should one underestimate the significance of Nigeria's 'shot across the bows' in the form of the BP nationalisation, which deeply worried the Tories' big business backers. A major international fiasco at a time of serious domestic political difficulties is more than the Tories could afford.

But we should not hail the present outcome as a victory. The Owen-Young plan was full of contradictions, unsettled questions and dangers. The present scheme reproduces all these and more. As soon as its practicality is discussed the most important problem immediately arises — who will make up the armed forces and be responsible for 'public security' during the elections?

Moreover, on what conceivable basis can any British government claim to act as the guardian of Zimbabwe's right to self-determination? And is it conceivable that a Tory government, so busily attacking living standards in the interests of capital

at home, will permit a Zimbabwean government committed to bettering the lot of the Zimbabwean people?

There is little reason to believe that the present proposals will be acceptable either to the white minority or the Muzorewa gang in Salisbury. Each has too much to lose from any serious tampering with the status quo. But it once again creates the dangerous spectacle of a common front between British imperialism and the neo-colonial states of Africa dedicated to containing and frustrating the liberation struggle of the people of Zimbabwe.

The only way for the labour and solidarity movement in this country to pick its way through the minefield of manoeuvres and ploys put up by the imperialists and their allies is to refuse to accept any proposal which places limits on the right of the people of Zimbabwe to decide their own future. The current scheme falls clearly under this heading. The need for mass action to keep British hands off Zimbabwe and to aid the liberation struggle is as great as ever.

### DAY ONE

10.30-1.30pm  
CURRENT ISSUES OF MARXISM  
Perry Anderson

2.30-5.00pm  
Workshops  
The Debate on English History, Alternative Economic Strategy, Bahro's Marxism  
Speakers include: Perry Anderson, John Ross, Alan Freeman, Gunther Minnerup

7.30-10.00pm  
RALLY  
100th ANNIVERSARY OF TROTSKY'S BIRTH  
Speakers include: Pierre Frank, Tariq Ali, the Voice of Leon Trotsky

### DAY TWO

10.00-1.00pm  
IS LENINISM OBSOLETE?  
Dodie Wepler and two of the authors of Beyond the Fragments

Workshops  
Class Analysis and Political Strategy, Kautsky and Eurocommunism, The Communist International  
Speakers include: Robin Blackburn, Pierre Frank

2.00-5.00pm  
CULTURE AND POLITICS  
Francis Mulhern  
THE TRADE UNIONS TODAY  
Richard Hyman, Steve Jefferys SWP, IMG speaker  
Workshops include youth and revolution

### DAY THREE

10.00-1.00pm  
TWO TRADITIONS OF MARXISM IN BRITAIN  
John Ross

Workshops  
Workers Plans and Workers Control, Women in Eastern Europe.  
Speakers include: Hilary Wainwright, Dave Bailey

2.00-5.00pm  
THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT IN EUROPE  
Chris Harman [SWP], Tariq Ali [IMG]

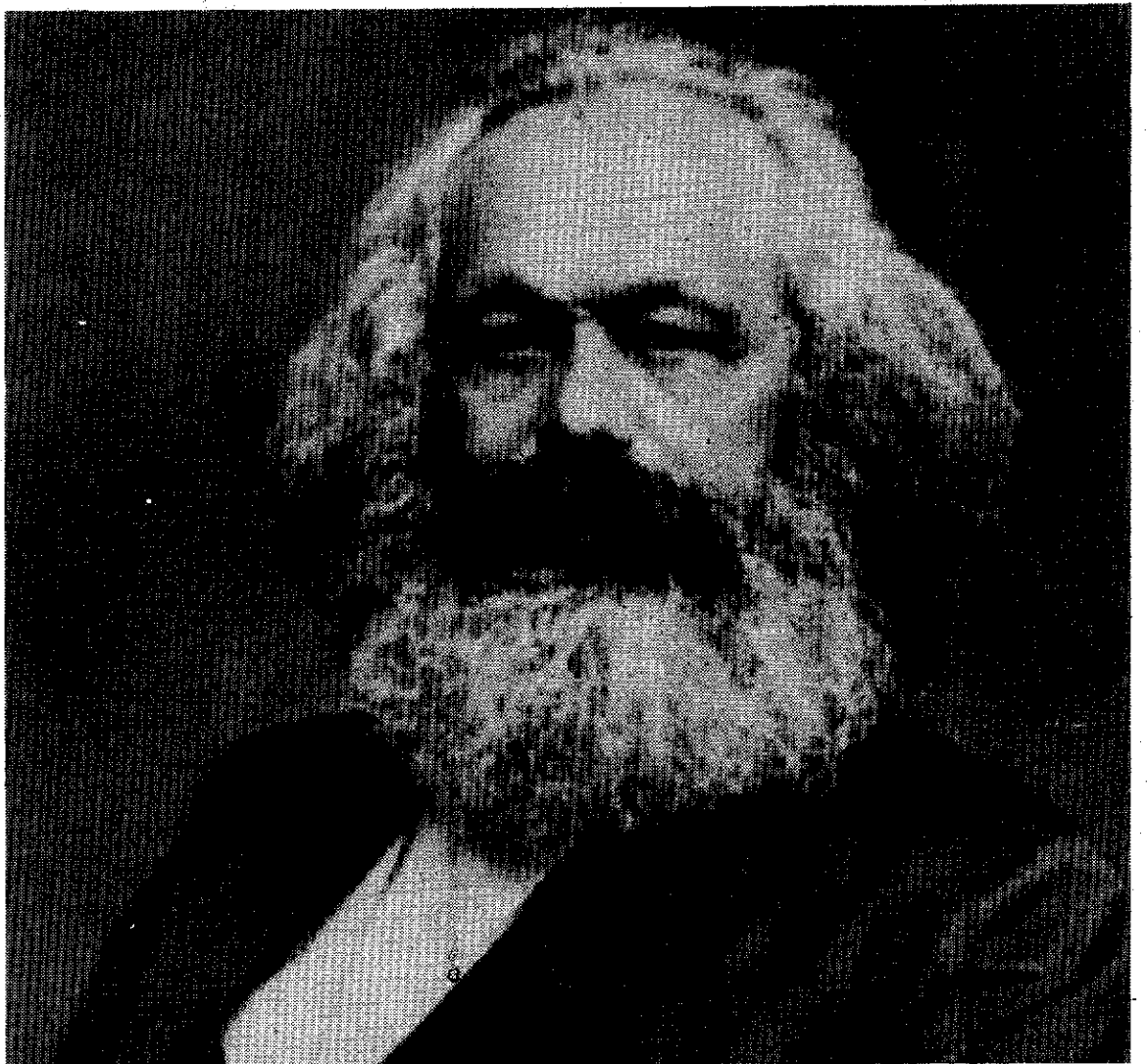
Creche facilities  
Refreshments available

£1 a session.  
£5.50 six sessions excluding the rally  
£1 for rally.  
£5 for all the sessions except the rally [£6 including the rally] if paid before 1 September.

VENUE: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London

21-23 September 1979

MARXIST SYMPOSIUM



Make Cheques and Postal Orders out to 'Socialist Challenge'.  
Fill in the form below:

Name.....

Address.....

# No more to refer down

## Mass picket, Wandsworth 13 August

By Colin Talbot

A GRUNWICK-STYLE confrontation is scheduled for the London borough of Wandsworth next Monday.

The Wandsworth & Battersea Trades Council has called a mass picket for that day at Bellamy House, Garrett Lane, one of the two building sites where the Tory-controlled Wandsworth Council is attempting to ban picketing. The mass picket is the type of action which would be banned if Prior's anti-union proposals were to become law.

But Wandsworth Council has not waited for the new legislation. Two weeks ago it was granted an interim injunction against Lou Lewis, regional organiser of the building union UCATT, banning him from picketing the two sites over the council's plans to abolish direct works. At the interim hearing, Mr Justice Park said that he thought Lewis was 'not likely' to win the full case.

The dispute between UCATT and Wandsworth Council dates back to May 1978. Shortly after the election of the new Tory council, plans were announced to reduce direct works to a 'skeleton maintenance department'.



A total of 800 out of the 900 jobs were to be cut. To carry through their cuts the council banned the direct works department from tendering for any council building contracts.

The two sites in dispute — the one at Bellamy House, and one in Upper Tooting Park Road — were contracted out to the building firms Croudace and Turriffs. A third firm, Bovis, is also involved because it has accepted a contract from Wandsworth Council to take over the management of the direct works in order to carry out the cuts.

Turriffs were awarded the contract at Bellamy House. They are being paid 30 per cent more than the housing department's original estimate. Work on the site is due to begin on 13 August.

Workers in the direct works decided to picket the two sites in a bid to save their jobs and foil the council's plans. The Tories then appealed to the courts, saying that the pickets are in furtherance of a political rather than a trade dispute. Lou Lewis was singled out as the full-time union official organising the pickets.

Resistance to this attack on traditional union rights has been marred by the equivocation of the UCATT national leadership. The day

after the court hearing, UCATT general secretary Les Woods said that the union would fight the issue through the courts and 'will of course obey the interim injunction'.

This statement contrasts with Woods' announcement in the union's newspaper *Viewpoint* that UCATT are 'supporting to the full the picketing that is taking place at Wandsworth'.

UCATT's regional council responsible for the Wandsworth area has pledged 'maximum assistance' for the workers and promised to continue picketing the two sites.

It was with just such attacks on trade union rights in mind that the 1,100-strong 'Defend Our Unions' conference on 22 June adopted a 'Code of Conduct' for disputes. The first point of that code is 'no crossing of picket lines', which is exactly what the mass picket at Bellamy House will be out to ensure on 13 August.

The picket starts at 7am and deserves the support of every trade unionist in London. A victory in Wandsworth would not just save 800 jobs, it would be a massive warning to the Tory government not to press ahead with its anti-union laws.

### Code of Practice

- 1 No crossing of picket lines.
- 2 For defence of 100 per cent closed shop and for sanctions to be applied against any individuals breaking closed shop.
- 3 For full rank & file discussion and democratic decision making by traditional secret ballots.
- 4 Strikes to be run by elected strike committees. Pickets to be positioned at whatever locations necessary to win the dispute and in sufficient numbers to ensure that picket lines are observed.
- 5 All appeals for backing and financial assistance for disputes to be carried out wherever practicable.
- 6 Support calls made by strike committees for mass and sympathy pickets.
- 7 No settlement of disputes without full report back to, and decision making by, the members concerned—no 'official' arbitrations or enforced settlements.

Rank and File Code of Practice: 75p per 100, inc. postage, from Defend Our Unions, 265a Seven Sisters Road, London, N4.

## Court picket, 19 August

THE appeal of housing activist Piers Corbyn, sentenced to 28 days imprisonment under the trespass law for resisting the eviction of squatters from Huntley Street last August, will be heard at Knightsbridge Crown Court on 14 August.

The call for Piers' sentence to be reversed has been supported by several prominent labour movement representatives, including Arthur Latham, Chairperson of the Greater London Labour Party; Richard Balfe, Labour member of the EEC Parliament; Doug Grieve, General Secretary of the Tobacco Workers Union (along with three members of his executive); and Trevor Phillips, President of the National Union of Students.

A demonstration of support for Piers outside the court is being planned, and if the sentence is upheld daily lunchtime pickets of the prison he is held in will be mounted.

Piers told *Socialist Challenge*: 'One hundred and fifty rehoused for one in prison is not a bad score. But my sentence — the first imprisonment ever under the trespass law — is a threat to all occupations by trade unions, student and community groups.'

'For this reason it's important that there is a big demonstration when my appeal comes up and that the fight goes on afterwards if I lose. Whatever happens, no one should be deterred: the only way to defend occupations threatened with evictions is still to carry on and extend them.'

Piers' co-defendant, Jim Paton, was found guilty on 2 August and given a 28-day sentence suspended for one year. He was not even present at the eviction and was convicted on the basis of a phony 'verbal statement' drummed up by the police. He is appealing. Knightsbridge Crown Court, 1 Hans



Crescent, SW1, 10am, Tuesday 14 August. For leaflets and petitions or to pledge support for the prison picket contact the Huntley Street Defence Campaign, 55 Innis House, London SE17; tel. 701 5691 or 267 1456.

## OUR FUND DRIVE

ON SUNDAY demonstrators will be marking the tenth anniversary of the troops being sent onto the streets of the North of Ireland. They will be marching to demand that the British government makes a commitment to withdraw from the country. *Socialist Challenge* is supporting the demonstration, and specifically the 'troops out now' contingent. All this you can read and find explained in this issue of the paper.

But this isn't the only week that *Socialist Challenge* gives coverage to Ireland. We don't think people have much claim to be called socialists if they aren't prepared to campaign against British imperialism's operations just the other side of the Irish Sea. We've backed up this belief with regular, consistent coverage of Britain's Irish war, week in, week out; regular reports of what the British media want to cover up: the army's role in Ireland and the campaign in Britain to get the troops out.

*Socialist Challenge* has been almost alone in playing this role. And we can't do it in a vacuum. First off, it's pretty useless getting articles written if the printed copies rot in our offices, or in our supporters' front

rooms. We need the papers to be sold, to get out to people who are perhaps unhappy about what's going on in the Six Counties but not yet convinced of the case for getting the troops out now.

So we want you to make a special effort with this week's paper, to sell *Socialist Challenge* on its Irish coverage. We'll have bundles available on 12 August. We want to have a mass sale then, and we want supporters to take papers back to sell to people who hear about the demo afterwards, who ask them at work what they did at the weekend. The paper campaigns on this issue — make use of it!

Second, our regular Irish coverage takes resources. To be more precise, money. A member of our editorial staff has to be working on our Irish coverage every issue. Producing it is a question of putting the resources of the paper behind the struggle to get British imperialism out of Ireland.



Those resources are incredibly slender. We depend on our readers to keep us going through contributions to our Fund Drive. So — show us that you agree with us on the importance of Ireland by giving our special summer fund a massive boost over the next week or two.

Our thanks this week to:

Swansea IMG	£32.50
Myles Shelly	2.00
Alloa supporter	25.00
A Genn-Bash	10.00
K Park	1.00
KP Forrester	2.00
A Rainbow	2.33
R Hallday	5.00
B Drummond	20.00
Anon	5.00
MB	15.00
Hackney IMG	100.00

'In memory of Joe'	10.00
Anon	40.00
John Cranwell	2.00
Anon	100.00
George Grime	1.00
K Tidimas	5.00
Preston IMG	22.00
Outer West London IMG	30.00
Swansea IMG	27.50
Brent IMG	45.00
South East London IMG	16.00
Anon	8.00
Week's total	£416.13
Cumulative total	£11,472.88



## Stop the chat and fight back

Liverpool  
to  
Blackpool,  
1—5  
September

**Will I get paid my dole money?**  
Before you go on the march just tell the dole office you are going on the march and ask for a holiday form. You will get your money paid to you as normal.

**What about food and accommodation?**  
The marchers will be sleeping in big tents we have hired. All food will be provided free to all marchers. We will be collecting the money from trade unionists up and down the country.

**What sort of entertainment is laid on?**  
Big dances and discos are being organised for every town we will be in. Several punk rock, rock and reggae bands have already offered their services. While we are telling them that we've got the right to work we'll make sure we have a good time. It will all be free for the marchers.

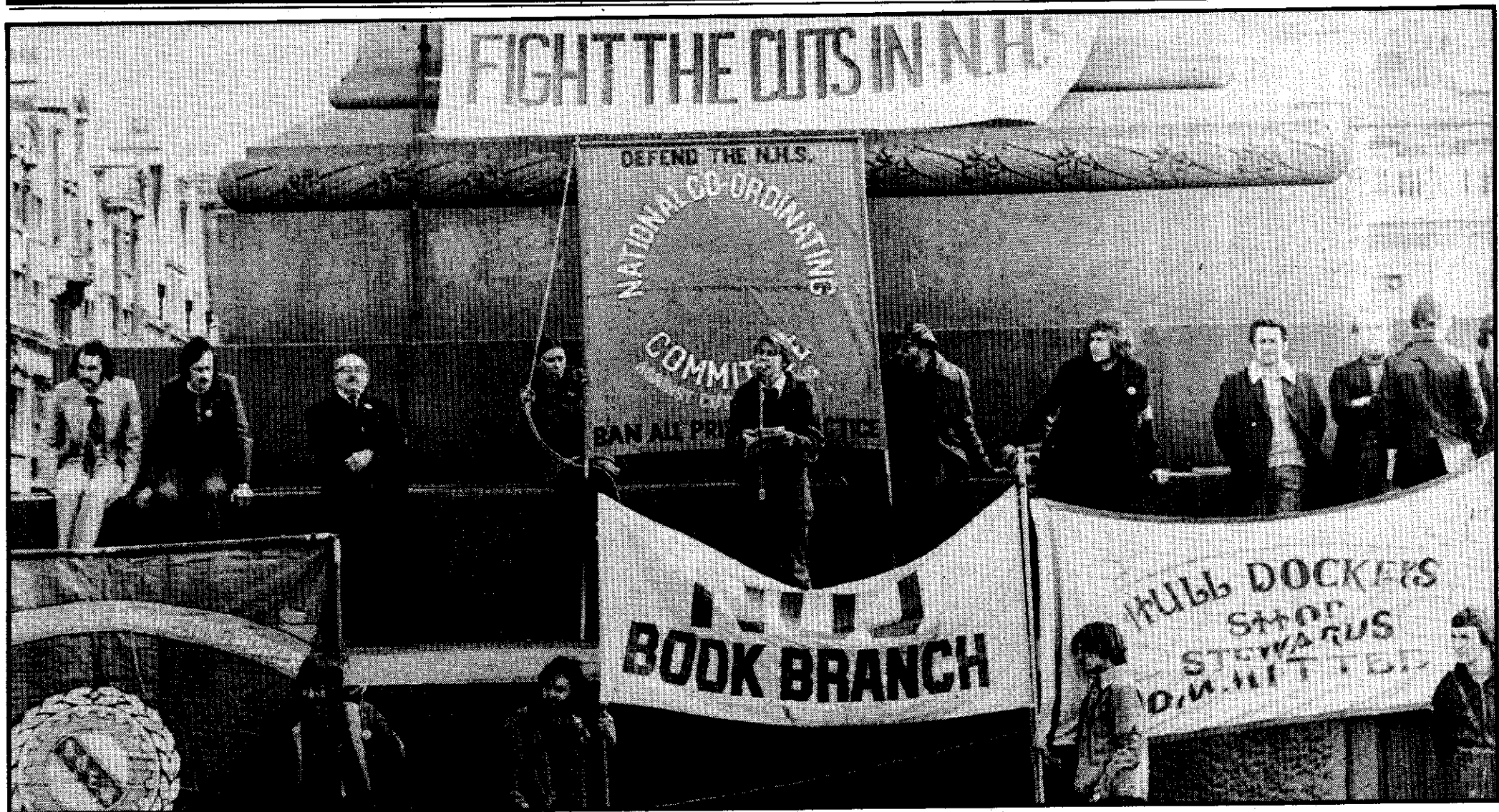
JOIN THE MARCH

Name .....

Address .....

Send to Right to Work Campaign, 265a Seven Sisters Rd., London N4 (phone 01-802 0978).





# Lambeth-Southwark-Lewisham: a fight for the whole NHS

LAST week the Tory government suspended the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Area Health Authority for its refusal to impose drastic spending cuts in line with government policy. The authority insists that such cuts can only be made at the cost of jeopardising the lives of people in the area.

Socialist Challenge spoke to Janet Maguire, a health worker in one of the hospitals on the firing line — Guys. Secretary of her ASTMS branch, Janet is also secretary of the Campaign against Health Cuts in Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham.

**How serious are the cuts demanded by the government?**

The Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham AHA is one of the largest in the country. It is responsible for three of the country's biggest teaching hospitals — Guys, Kings and St Thomas's.

These hospitals contain some of the country's top doctors and surgeons in highly specialised fields, such as heart surgery, kidney transplants and neurosurgery. Many of our patients come from all over the country to get treatment they could get nowhere else: in some specialities as many as 80 per cent of patients come from outside the area.

These hospitals are also responsible for training a very large number of doctors and nurses who then go to work in hospitals in every part of Britain.

So the hospitals in Lambeth, besides serving the local population, play a central role in the national health service. The cuts in Lambeth will therefore affect the entire service.

What's more, the only way to save the £8 million demanded by the government is to cut into some of the most essential services. It would mean, for example, that the authority would have to place an embargo on buying new equipment. This would strike directly at the special role of the Lambeth hospitals, for the specialists would no longer be able to keep abreast of new developments in medical technology.

At the same time, because the health service is so labour-intensive, the only way to make really big cuts is to cut the number of beds. Something like 1,500 are at risk.

In practice it would mean the closure of several of the smaller hospitals in the area as well as reducing the number of beds available in the big teaching hospitals. You can get an idea of the scale of the cuts if I say that 1,500 beds would be equivalent to one of the three large teaching hospitals closing down.

The result of cutting beds is that waiting lists will grow ever longer. Patients already have to wait two years for an orthopaedic operation — an artificial hip, for example. In maternity, a couple of months ago, we were sending mothers home within

two days of their giving birth. Seven days is normal practice.

Of course, the beds won't be scrapped. When beds have been left standing empty for a while, they'll be offered to the private sector, so as not to 'let them go to waste'. So the cuts will result in a transfer of desperately needed resources from the NHS to the private health sector.

**Will people die as a result of these cuts?**

Yes, they will. Take for example heart pacemakers. We have 1,500 patients from all parts of the country fitted with pacemakers.

To make economies, the AHA has discussed the idea that patients living outside the Lambeth/Lewisham/Southwark area should no longer be provided with pacemakers. Yet in

many areas, Kent for example, there are no facilities to fit pacemakers. This means that people could die.

Other proposals going the rounds — like cutting back on kidney transplants or other treatment of patients with kidney failure — would have even worse effects.

And of course growing waiting lists mean people needing all kinds of treatment will die before they can get attention, particularly the elderly.

**Why did the AHA decide to refuse to implement the cuts?**

The Labour government asked the AHA to keep their spending within 1977-78 levels, while not making proper provision for inflation. The AHA tried to avoid making cuts, and ran up an overdraft in order to meet its

obligations. This is what the press call 'overspending'.

What broke the camel's back was the refusal of the Tories to make allowance for the extra expenditure that will result from this year's wage rises and their jacking up of VAT. In effect, the government is financing its Budget with the lives of NHS patients.

The rebellion was led by the Labour councillors on the AHA. However, not all Labour Party members on the AHA are standing firm. Stan Hardy, for example, is collaborating with the Regional Health Authority who have stepped in to take over.

Most serious of all is the fact that while Labour was in office the AHA itself drew up extremely detailed plans for cuts, though they were hesitating to implement them. These plans will now fall into the hands of the government.

**How are local health workers responding to the news?**

People on the wards are furious. Many of them are talking about occupations and work-ins the moment the first cuts are imposed. Support has been coming in from many labour movement bodies. NUPE and COHSE have condemned the government. We also have the support of local tenant groups.

The Campaign Against Cuts in Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham was set up in late January to organise the fight against the cuts. It has the official backing of the three trades councils in the area and numerous trade union bodies, both in and beyond the NHS.

We have printed 20,000 leaflets to explain the meaning of the cuts. These are being distributed at all the hospitals and major shopping centres in the area. We are organising a petition, and a big public meeting for 8 September.

But what we must prepare for are occupations, sit-ins, and a campaign of non-cooperation with the new authority. We've got to build up to industrial action by all workers in this area to stop these disastrous cuts.

## Cuts—the real waste

By Dave Bailey  
THE cuts currently being considered by local authorities are not only inhuman — they are a classic case of false economy, as a detailed study of the cuts being proposed in Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham reveals.

Many of them are simply a case of passing the buck to some other department of the welfare state. Consider these proposals:

- ★ GPs to take on more responsibility for issuing drugs to patients, to save the hospitals' drug costs.

- ★ GPs to give more family planning advice, to save the expense of family planning clinics.

- ★ Other health authorities to pay more for the use of the area's laboratory services.

- ★ Local councils to take on more responsibility for the mentally 'sick', so that the number of beds and health visitors can be reduced.

This is buck-passing. It will

increase frustration and misery but without saving any government money at all. Worse still, many of the cuts are utterly self-defeating. Consider these examples:

- ★ Tougher controls over meals to patients on the ward (i.e. less substantial meals). Result: longer recuperation time.

- ★ One Lambeth hospital recently tried to economise on an expensive drug. Result: far more expensive kidney transplant operations had to be done twice.

- ★ Fewer beds and longer surgery waiting lists, including abortions. Result: more women demanding maternity and post-natal facilities.

- ★ Fewer family planning clinics. Result: more abortion and maternity facilities required for unwanted births.

- ★ Recruit less agency staff. Result: more time wasted hunting through ever more chaotic medical records.

- ★ Cut off the heating and ask staff

to wear warmer clothes. Result: more colds, more time off, less work done.

The social services have already been cut to the bone. Any further cuts can only be panic measures which, by accelerating breakdown and chaos, will permanently damage the services they are supposed to provide. This damage could only be put right by far greater expenditure in the future.

The only way to ensure efficient use of resources in the interests of the working class is to **fight the cuts**. NUPE shop stewards in the City and Hackney District have called for a day of action on 13 September and a mass lobby on that day to demand that the local AHA follow the example of Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham and refuse to implement further cuts. NUPE shop stewards in Tower Hamlets and Newham are considering taking similar action.

This, together with industrial action against the cuts, is the sort of action needed to save our social services from cumulative breakdown.





## When Labour fought ... and won

By Stephen Marks  
ON FRIDAY 29 July 1921 a march of thousands formed up outside Poplar town hall in East London. In front of the brass band and the union banners was a group of men and women in official robes and chains. Above their heads flew a banner which read 'Poplar borough council marching to the High Court and possibly to prison to secure equalisation of rates for poor boroughs'.

The Labour councillors, led by *Daily Herald* editor George Lansbury, were prepared to go to jail to win their case for rich London boroughs to share the cost of social services and other rate burdens with poorer areas. They won their struggle after a month in jail, and have been an inspiration ever since.

Noreen Branson's new book, *Poplarism 1919-1925* (Lawrence & Wishart, £7.50), provides us with a timely opportunity to examine the relevance of their struggle today, when many socialists look with various degrees of hope to left Labour councils to give a similar lead in the fight against the Tory cuts. The first contrast with today that strikes one in this immensely readable and moving book is the deep roots which the overwhelmingly working class councillors of Poplar had in the local community.

### Mass support

Before deciding on the rates protest which led them to jail the councillors called a delegate meeting of Poplar trade unionists which voted to support their stand. And local tenants (which in those days meant tenants of private landlords) were organised to start a rent and rate strike should the government empower other bodies to collect the rates Poplar council was refusing to levy.

Noreen Branson writes: 'The mere fact that the Poplar Labour group felt itself subject to the local party itself resulted in an unusually active and participating electorate, rather than one which put a cross on a ballot paper every three years and then forgot



about it in between... It was really the mass support of the electorate which had enabled the councillors to win their battle over the rates.'

This meant that the government treated them with care on two subsequent issues where they were defending workers' living standards: poor relief, and council workers' wages.

Some of the reasons why Poplar could 'get away with it' for so long no longer apply. On the issue of rate equalisation and poor law, a major factor in their victory was that the government did not then have the power, which it now has, to suspend councillors and put in a commissioner — as was done at Clay Cross.

On wages for council employees, Lord Justice Atkinson reacted to their minimum rate of £4 (including equal pay) by ruling that the councillors could not allow themselves to be guided 'by some eccentric principles of socialist philanthropy or by a feminist ambition to secure equality of the sexes in the matter of wages.'

After a long battle Neville Chamberlain, the Tory minister in charge of local government, brought in the present law giving governments the right to suspend councils. But as a sweetener, it provided a once-for-all suspension of the penalties on Poplar.

In the years since then local

government has lost powers, and the mass base of the Labour Party on the ground has diminished. Today local Labour parties are often so weak that small groups of leftists can win control of a council without necessarily having the base behind them that Lansbury and his comrades had.

All this means that in today's fight against the cuts the role of workplace organisation and trade union strength is much greater. What is surprising in the Poplar story, even after making allowance for the high level of unemployment, is that there was no industrial action in support of the council's stand, or any suggestion of any.

But this does not let Labour councillors off the hook. If they want to prove their view that the Labour Party is where socialists should be, let them follow the example of Lansbury. In the words of Noreen Branson:

'The significance of the Poplar councillors during these years was, that as one of the first groups of socialists to achieve a working majority, they were also among the few who refused to remain confined within the limits of the system in which they found themselves. They believed that it was their responsibility to bring about major changes in the conditions of life of their electors and in so doing to help build a movement which would one day lead the country to socialism.'

## Tory Cleveland wield the axe...

By Dave Carter  
Assistant Secretary, Middlesbrough Trades Council  
FIRE brigades in County Cleveland are to receive less money for breathing equipment; and school children in the county are to receive no further road safety instruction.

These are just two of the cuts proposed last week by Tory-controlled Cleveland County Council. Other cuts include fewer holidays for the disabled, fewer home helps and care attendants for the old, and fewer specialist teachers for the blind and disabled. Children will be further hit by an end to language classes, swimming lessons, grants for school uniforms and school milk. Street lighting is also to be reduced.

The police, magistrates and probation service are to be spared the cuts, though the Chief Constable kindly promised to recycle waste-

paper and make police uniforms last longer. The Labour opposition asked the Tories to 'reconsider', and suggested an increase in the rates instead. The Tories pointed out that it was Callaghan who introduced cash limits on local spending and started the cutbacks.

Cleveland county councillors were greeted by a lobby of 70 protesters when they met last Wednesday. Children, housewives, NUPE staff, community workers and local trade unionists joined the lobby, organised by the Cleveland Cuts Campaign and the County Association of Trades Councils.

It will be up to these bodies to broaden the campaign in the coming months to draw in all groups affected by the cuts and to draw up alternative policies to those of the Tory council and its lap-dog Labour opposition.

## ...and so does Labour Islington

By Dave Burn  
Islington NALGO

OVER 400 members of the Islington Branch of NALGO took strike action for a half day on 31 July to protest against the level of cuts being planned by Islington Council. This action resulted in a number of libraries, nurseries, social workers' teams and the Housing Department being closed for the afternoon. A rally and lobby of the council were held.

Islington Council has been well in advance of the Tory government in implementing cuts in services. Last March it chopped £4¼ million from its programmes to keep the rates down. Now it is talking about axing a further 10 per cent from all its services in response to the Tories' 5 per cent cut in the rate support grant to local authorities.

This will mean a further £6 million taken away from the desperately needed services to the people of the borough. The council is threatening to

close libraries and swimming pools, cut the housing programmes and axe jobs next year. It has already shown its callous attitude to those in need by stopping the provision of emergency telephones to housebound, chronically sick and disabled people.

Already the cuts have caused a deep division within the local Labour Party, which holds 50 out of the 52 council seats. Thirteen local councillors and two out of the three constituency Labour parties in the borough have sponsored a conference against the cuts for September (when detailed plans for cutbacks will be under discussion in the council).

NALGO, which is backing the conference, and the other council unions will be attempting to push the fight against the cuts into high gear by September. They will be demanding that the council stops carrying out the Tories' policies for them and starts fighting the cuts. A programme of action will be drawn up to put some weight behind these demands.

# TROOPS OUT NO

## YES!



I'll make the assumption that most comrades present hold a common theoretical viewpoint, one based on the Leninist concept of self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.

Many, not only on the left, pay lip service to this principle and say, yes, we would like to see Ireland one country. Labour, Liberals, even Tories would probably say, yes, in the long term, we would like to see a united Ireland. Then they add — but not now.

Similarly with the case for troops out. Most people say, yes, we think that the troops have to get out...but not now.

For the bourgeoisie the usual argument — not just as applied to Ireland, but in other imperialist situations — is predictable: there would be a blood bath if troops withdrew now, the natives aren't capable of ruling themselves.

But what is the argument the British Communist Party puts forward when it says that the theoretical view of Irish self-determination applies...but not just yet?

For an answer, let's examine what the **British Road to Socialism** says: 'a democratic solution, based on the implementation of a Bill of Rights, the end to all repressive measures, the withdrawal of troops to barracks, and financial and other measures to begin to tackle the appalling problems of poverty and unemployment. These steps would create conditions in which sectarian strife could be ended

and British troops withdrawn completely...

I will quickly go through a number of these points. We can turn to the **Morning Star** of 9 March 1979 to find the following on the Bill of Rights: 'It would mean...an end to torture, internment and beatings...an end to discrimination...it would mean the security forces would be made to answer to the people for their behaviour.'

So if a Bill of Rights was passed all these nasty things would cease. But even today there are laws which forbid torture in the North of Ireland, yet we all know that torture goes on. There are laws which forbid discrimination; we all know that discrimination continues. There are laws which are meant to prevent murder by members of the SAS — but the murders go on and the murderers get off scot free.

If these previous laws and European Courts and all the rest cannot prevent what is not supposed to happen from happening, what difference will a Bill of Rights make? I would like clarification on that.

So too on the advocacy of 'the withdrawal of troops to barracks'. I would argue that this is a meaningless formulation. There is no halfway house between Ireland and Britain. You are either for the British troops staying in Ireland, or you are against. British troops were stationed in Irish barracks in August 1969. As soon as Callaghan said, onto the streets you go, on they went.

Another point made in the **British Road to Socialism** is that the British government should give 'financial and other measures' to tackle unemployment. I would like to see the British government pour in billions of pounds to wipe out the 12 per cent unemployment rate and the one in three poverty rate. But to imagine that British imperialism would ever do that is to spread the most amazing illusions as to what the role of British imperialism in Ireland is.

So what does this argument amount to? It runs: if a Bill of Rights is passed which wipes out torture, if the troops are withdrawn to barracks, if all these financial measures are taken and if this ended sectarian strife, then the British troops could be withdrawn. To lay down those sorts of conditions for troop withdrawal is to put off the day for that withdrawal way beyond the foreseeable future.

What is the theory behind this

argument as to why British troops have to stay in the North of Ireland? It is found in the **British Road to Socialism's** phrase that its aim is 'to create conditions in which sectarian strife can be ended'. In other words, it is 'sectarian strife' which is the problem.

We all agree that in the North of Ireland workers fight workers, workers march against workers, vote against workers. We have to ask why this is the case.

Some say it is a religious war, but don't imagine many here believe that so I won't bother answering it. Others say the conflict is over the desire of the Loyalists to remain with Britain. To answer that, all that is needed is to cite the different stands Loyalists have taken on the link with Britain. Sometimes they have wanted an independent Ulster, sometimes, via Stormont, semi-independence. In 1914 Loyalist leader Carson even threatened to make an alliance with Germany against Britain.

So why are the workers in the North of Ireland so illogical as to fight each other? They are not illogical at all, for what they are fighting for are very real, very practical and very political things.

Political in the sense that they are fighting over whether the Irish people have the right, the immediate right, to rule themselves. The Loyalists say no, the Republicans say yes, the British government says no. This is the basis of the conflict — the unresolved national question.

Let us take this one step further and examine why this question rouses the feelings it does. As Marxists we look for a material base. I could quote figures showing how Protestants have proportionally more jobs, better jobs, better houses than Catholics. All the evidence is there in government figures and I needn't labour the point, but such is the material base of the conflict. The border, the undemocratic nature of the Northern Ireland state, guarantees these differentials.

And because the conflict is posed in this way — the national question as it fundamentally affects both sections of the working class — the Irish working class will remain divided, as they always have been, while the national question remains unresolved.

As proof, members of the Communist Party should examine how their own programme has fared. We are told that the CP-inspired



### BRITISH LABOUR AND IRELAND 1969-79

A new pamphlet by Geoff Bell with cartoons by Cormac, which analyses the costs of bipartisanship over the last ten years. It is available from The Last Shop, 328 Upper St., London N1, cost 40p + 10p post. Bulk rates available on request.



# W?

## SHOULD British troops be withdrawn from the North of Ireland immediately? That was the topic debated last month at a session of the Communist University, organised by the Communist Party.

Speaking for immediate withdrawal was **GEOFF BELL**, a member of the Editorial Board of Socialist Challenge. Against was **CHRIS MYANT**, assistant editor of the Morning Star. Below we print an edited version of the debate.

Better Life for All Campaign has attracted 300,000 signatures in the North. But there is all the difference between getting people to sign a piece of paper and getting them to do anything about what they are signing.

When has the 'Better Life' campaign brought onto the streets the tens of thousands who have marched on H Block, for 'Brits out', or even behind Orange banners? It never has. Even in Britain, where the campaign is officially backed by the TUC, only 200 took part in the last march.

Or we can look at this question another way. In the European elections the party standing on the 'Better Life' ticket — Official Sinn Fein — received 4,000 votes for two candidates; the single 'Brits Out' candidate, Bernadette McAliskey, got 34,000 votes.

The reason for this is illustrated by a conversation I had when Socialist Challenge was doing a story on why 'Better Life', unlike other Irish marches, had been given permission to march in Trafalgar Square. The press officer at the Department of the Environment said to me: 'Oh, are they to do with Northern Ireland, that lot?' And then said that permission had been given because the march was 'non-controversial'.

But if something in the North of Ireland is non-controversial it is also irrelevant. And 'Better Life' — the demands for civil rights — are irrelevant because the answer to those demands has been given. It was given in August 1969 when the Loyalists attacked Catholic areas in Belfast, in 1971 when internment was introduced, in 1972 when Britain killed 14 unarmed demonstrators on the streets of Derry.

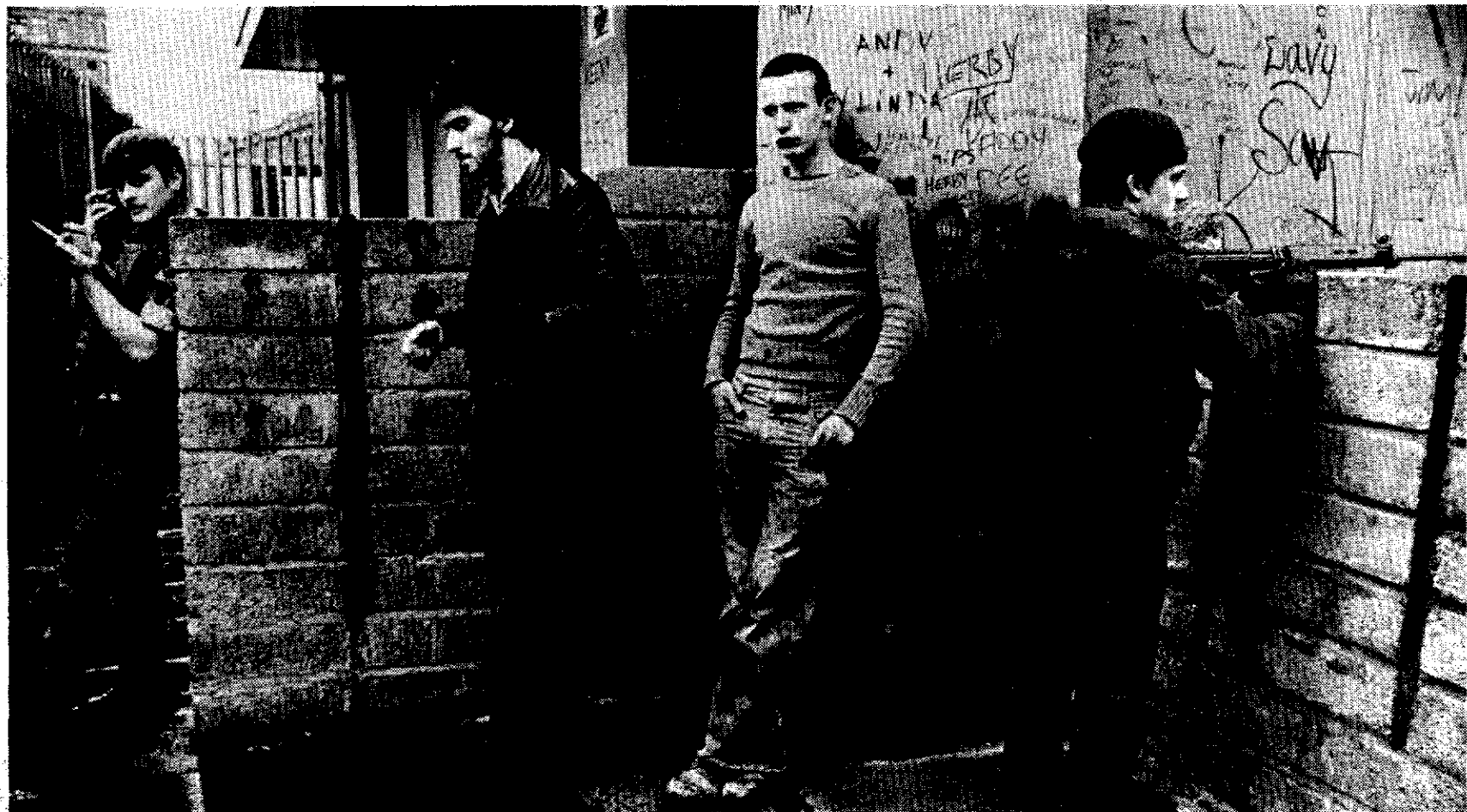
By that time it struck most people in the North of Ireland, or at least most Catholics, that to ask for civil rights from a government which was doing all that was no longer relevant. That ball game was over, and the Catholics lost it. This is why the movement to get the Brits out has spread as it has in the North of Ireland over the last four or five years.

The difference between the two positions being debated is simple. One says that when 'sectarian strife' ends British troops can be withdrawn. We say that only when the national question is solved, only when Britain gets out, will 'sectarian strife' end.

What divides the people of Ireland and what divides its working class is Britain's presence. To then turn round and say, well at least that presence stops the Irish fighting about it, is like saying that at least in South Africa apartheid keeps the blacks and whites apart.

I do not claim that the immediate withdrawal of British troops and the breaking up of the partition settlement which that would inevitably lead to would immediately solve everything. But it is true that the longer Britain has stayed — especially during the last ten years — the worse the 'sectarian strife' has become. The longer Britain has stayed the more feelings have risen about its right to stay.

Accordingly, if the removal of troops would not immediately solve everything, that removal is a fundamental precondition for what we all want to see — the unity of the Irish working class.



# NO!

THE greatest shame which I see hanging on the shoulders of the British labour movement, and the British trade union movement in particular, is its persistent ignoring of the problems the Irish people face. In particular, its persistent ignoring of the repression which has been going on in the North of Ireland.

For 50 years our labour movement has tolerated Unionist repression in the North of Ireland, and more particularly in the last ten years it has tolerated a crisis which has meant accepting officially sanctioned policies of murder, torture, mass harassment, and systematic brutality used against whole sections of the communities in the North of Ireland.

As far as the Communist Party is concerned, our aim is absolutely clear: that is, to achieve the independence and unity of Ireland. But it's one thing to state an objective; what you also have to do is to work out ways and propose activities which can lead to the achievement of that objective. And one of the big problems that we have to overcome is quite clearly the forces that were able to keep Ireland divided in 1921.

If the barriers which had lain in the way of full Irish independence in 1921 were to be found in the City of London or the Parliament at Westminster then I think our job — to complete the unfinished business of history and achieve a 32 county independent Ireland — would be relatively easy.

The difficulty is that those barriers also lie in Ireland itself, and particularly in Northern Ireland. They lie in the system of Unionist discrimination, in the repression that successive British governments have nurtured and kept alive. It's this system, this mass political influence of Unionism, which has made the struggle for Irish independence over the last 60 years so difficult and complex.

Simply declaring 'troops out' in this particular context, simply saying that Britain must withdraw, that the majority of the people of Ireland have a right to rule their own country, is no

answer to the practical realities and political influence of Unionism in the North of Ireland.

What we need to discover is a programme of political action and social and economic change which, as it is implemented, can enable the people of Northern Ireland, and ultimately of Ireland as a whole, to find the capacity to oppose British rule and the effects that rule has for them. That means, as a very important first step, that they also must find the desire to end British rule.

Yet at the moment the political basis on which the union has rested for the last six decades is now stronger, in many senses, than it was 20 years ago. There is no doubt whatsoever that if one compares the political map of Northern Ireland today with that of 15-20 years ago, reaction now has greater support in the working class.

To say that you won't overcome this situation until you have thrown out Britain is in my view to say that you won't be able to throw out Britain for a very, very long time indeed. For Britain isn't going to go from the North of Ireland until it is made to go.

Of course the British government faces problems in Northern Ireland. For a long time it has wanted to replace the one party rule of the country which Unionism has represented with a system which is more akin to that which operates in other developed capitalist states. It has wanted to replace repression with what you might call political massage of the masses, but it has been unable to mould a centre force out of the sectarian monster that it has helped to create in the North of Ireland.

The government has tolerated right-wing Unionist violence on a horrendous scale. They have done that because Unionist right-wing violence and murder, whether directed against Protestants or Catholics, helps to intimidate and keep divided the working class. Above all, they have tolerated right-wing Unionist violence because to have opposed the forces of the UDA and UVF to any serious degree would have been to release forces for working class unity.

What about the struggles of the Provisional IRA? Is it winning its war

for national independence? True, the IRA is very much stronger than Westminster likes to admit. But I would suggest that there has been IRA activity — in particular its campaign of bombing commercial targets and its tit-for-tat response to the sectarian killings by the right-wing sectarian Unionist organisations — that has helped to re-establish and cement right-wing Unionism as the main political force in the Protestant working class.

The IRA, in my opinion, would do more to further the cause of the Irish people by ending its campaign than by continuing it. At the present it is a cover behind which the British military, the RUC and the Unionist right wing are able to hide their violence.

In condemning the policy of the IRA I am in no way supporting the military repression which is taking place there. Communists have opposed that since the very start. But just to withdraw the Army and leave all else as it is will not lead to any constructive change in Ireland as a whole. Our first task must be to win conditions in Northern Ireland by which the working people can be drawn together in unity, in action, in struggle for common objectives and common demands.

There is no other basis on which we can create the kind of mass movement which will be required in Ireland as a whole if we are to end British rule there. And even a casual visitor to Northern Ireland can see united struggles building up from below in the context of the social and economic crisis which bedevils all the people of Northern Ireland.

The issue in the last ten years has been how much effort the right wing and the British behind them had to put in to keep that unity from growing and developing. The issue for us is how we can get involved in action alongside Irish workers in that real life working class struggle in the North of Ireland.

It is my firm belief that the working class in the North of Ireland, as a whole, in its majority, can be won for the cause of Irish independence and freedom. When it is, that united working class will be Ireland's surest weapon; far more important for the

struggle against British imperialism than a few hundred members of the Provisional IRA, or a few shops blown up in the centre of Belfast, or even a few hundred soldiers shot dead.

Significant though those figures may appear to be it is a cost imperialism is perfectly happy to bear if it means the Irish people remain disunited and if it means the same exploitation of the labour power of workers in the North of Ireland can continue.

And it is this reason — the view that the working class as a united political force can be Ireland's surest weapon against Britain — which is why the Communist Party doesn't simply say that Britain must withdraw from Ireland now. To say we want the troops out means you also have to say, right at the beginning, we want democracy in.

That's no magical formula to solve the problem. Rather it is a means of providing the people of Northern Ireland, and through them, the people of Ireland as a whole, with the capacity by which they can struggle effectively for that change, for that independence and unity. Above all it would lay the basis for altering the balance of power in Northern Ireland in favour of those forces urging unity and through that those forces urging national independence.

When it is achieved, when we have shifted that balance of opinion, broken the grip of Unionist right-wing ideas over the mass of the working class in Northern Ireland, then we will be able to achieve the objective which we all want — the troops out. In that we are not merely saying that the Irish people have a right to rule themselves, we are also putting forward policies and a programme of action which will enable them to exercise that right.

We don't say that when sectarianism ends then the British Army can be withdrawn. What we say is that only when we begin to overcome sectarian divisions in the working class, only then will we be able to build — the workers of Ireland and the workers of Britain together — the kind of force which will throw the troops out. For thrown out they will have to be.

All pictures were taken from Camerawork: Reporting on Northern Ireland, a new publication from Half Moon Photography workshop. Available from 119-121 Roman Road, London E2. Camerawork costs 60p, plus 15p p & p

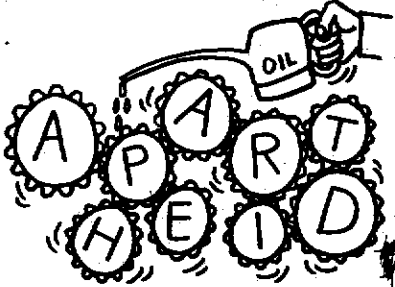
# Carrington caught in BP oil slick

ON 23 July 1903 a British military force overwhelmed the defenders of the West African town of Burmi. By this act, they brought the Sokoto Caliphate — the most important independent state in the region — under British domination and laid the foundation for the colonial state of Nigeria.

Last week Nigeria took its revenge, when an heir of that expeditionary force — British Petroleum — was unceremoniously booted out of the country.

If Nigeria's action involves a compounding of business with politics, it's not necessary to go too far to see where they learned their lesson. For the last two decades of the 19th century, southern Nigeria was ravaged as a freebooting army under the flag of the Royal Niger Company opened the country up for British trade. When they began to meet staunch resistance in the north at the turn of the century the British army simply took over their free enterprise crusade.

Nigeria's takeover of BP was greeted by Lord Carrington with blimpish indignation. 'They will regret the timing of this action', he was reported to have spluttered to the press.



But 1903 is long gone. A thousand men backed up by four Maxim machine guns and a 75mm. cannon would not fare very well against the 250,000-strong Nigerian army. Nor does the present state of the British economy make economic warfare



advisable.

The fact of the matter is that, despite all their bluster, the protests of Carrington and the Tories over the BP nationalisation cannot go beyond words. Even these don't carry much weight.

Carrington has insisted that there

is no truth in the Nigerian charge that their oil is being used to supply South Africa, in contradiction with the UN General Assembly's call for an embargo. But BP openly admits that it supplies oil to South Africa, denying only that it comes from Nigeria or the North Sea.

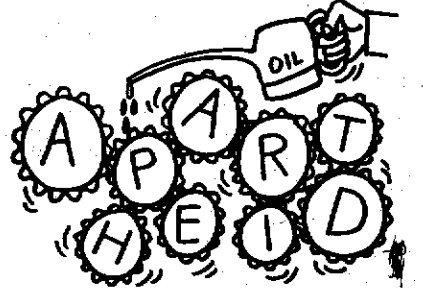
In fact it is public knowledge that

BP is operating a government-approved 'swoop agreement' which allows it to exchange both Nigerian and North Sea oil for oil from other countries, which is then sent to South Africa. The hydrocarbons bubbling through the Shell/BP refinery in Durban may not have 'Made in Nigeria' stamped on them, but one

thing is sure — they would not be there but for the Nigerian oil flowing into the UK.

Moreover, there is no doubt that BP's extensive investments and operations in South Africa provide major support to the apartheid regime. Between them Shell and BP supply South Africa with over 40 per cent of its oil, and their refining, processing and distribution network is essential to the South African economy.

BP's operations in both Nigeria and South Africa are inextricably



wound up with those of Shell. The Nigerian government should indeed 'think again', as Carrington has asked them to — and take over Shell's assets as well.

That is the only way to prevent the use of Nigerian oil in a web of dirty deals to ensure that the South African police and army have the sort of fuel reserves necessary for such operations as the invasion of Angola.

Nor should the blow to the oil companies be softened by paying them 'compensation'. They are hardly on the breadline given their hold over the international transport, processing and distribution of oil. BP has almost shrugged off the Nigerian move, saying that it will buy Nigerian oil on the commercial market.

The money raised by the take-over of the oil companies should go to those who need it and have suffered from the companies' conduct — the freedom fighters of Zimbabwe and South Africa.

## Muzorewa runs out of time

By Richard Carver

BISHOP Abel Muzorewa's lacklustre performance as the saviour of white Rhodesia is arousing growing concern in British ruling circles.

The 'internal settlement' remains unrecognised by the world. The parliament elected in April is torn by disputes. The Patriotic Front guerrillas continue to do well in the war. All this is convincing the Tories that an all-party agreement is the only way to guarantee a pro-Western settlement.

Muzorewa's latest gesture has been to renew offers of an amnesty to defecting Patriotic Front guerrillas. But the problem is not really a military one at all.

During the elections the Rhodesian state had some 70,000 people under arms. These are supplemented by some 8,000 black auxiliaries — party militias grouped in a detachment of the security forces known as Pfumo Revanhu (Spear of the People).

The white forces have recently received up-to-date arms consignments from South Africa — armoured cars, troop transporters, land cruisers and arms and ammunition — as well as US-made Huey helicopter gunships which saw service in Vietnam.

The Patriotic Front, meanwhile, has no more than 12,000 guerrillas in the field — 2-3,000 ZAPU, 8-9,000 ZANU. Their largest weapon is an armour-piercing rocket.

The real problem for Muzorewa is that his government is waging war against an entire population, as is shown by the level of morale within the security forces.

Black conscription has proved a farce, with only a handful enlisting and widespread urban protests

against the draft. The only black soldiers enthusiastically committed to the present regime are the auxiliaries — and then only because it gives them a licence to plunder.

White morale is no better. Many of those who endorsed the 'internal settlement' in the white referendum in March have not stayed around for the results. Most worrying to the government is the flight of skilled personnel. An estimated eleven hundred highly qualified people left the country between December and May — engineers, doctors, nurses, accountants and draughtspeople.

The remaining whites cannot have been cheered by Muzorewa's political problems. Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole, one of the signatories to the 'internal settlement', denounced the election as a fraud the moment he saw his party going down to defeat. His sour grapes had little international impact but did create domestic problems which culminated in the killing of 183 pro-Sithole auxiliaries last month and the arrest of 100 of his party members.

Although Sithole and his supporters have now finally taken up their parliamentary seats, Muzorewa will be worried that they may link up with James Chikerema, who recently defected from Muzorewa to set up his own Zimbabwe Democratic Party.

Splits and expulsions from his party are nothing new for Muzorewa. Before Chikerema the most celebrated departure was when Justice Minister Byron Hove was expelled last year. Purged with Hove was Reverend Arthur Kanodereka. The two were planning to launch an opposition party when Kanodereka was assassinated last December. Hove is in exile.

But however ruthlessly Muzorewa may deal with opposition, his

increasing isolation makes it less and less likely that he will gain unconditional Western backing. Even Thatcher must finally be aware that lifting sanctions cannot work



ZAPU leader Joshua Nkomo — waiting in the wings

miracles. The biggest drain on the economy remains the war, which costs some \$1.5m a day as well as disrupting agriculture and transport. Add to that the fact that the

majority of urban blacks are now reckoned to live below the poverty datum line and it becomes clear why Bishop Muzorewa has little political future.

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# Reconstruct Nicaragua — but for whom?

By Dave Kellaway

NICARAGUA is in ruins. More than 30,000 out of a population of two and a half million have lost their lives, a third are homeless, and 750,000 are without work. It is hoped to salvage the coffee crop, but the cotton yield is expected to drop by 75 per cent — and cotton usually accounts for a quarter of export earnings.

Somoza burnt three-quarters of the factories, and the gross national product is expected to fall by 15-20 per cent. The foreign debt is 1.3 billion dollars, and an estimated 2.5 billion dollars aid is needed for immediate purposes.

Despite the devastation, the people are displaying the enthusiasm born of a truly popular uprising. Clean-up, food distribution and production brigades are everywhere.

At the same time, the leaders of the provisional government (made up of the Sandinistas and 'progressive' bourgeois figures) flit between negotiations with the Cuban workers state, the US state department, other

Latin American states, and European social democracy.

Government measures have flowed thick and fast. The banks have been nationalised, partly to stem the flight of capital (250 million dollars in the first days) and to stabilise the financial infrastructure. All of Somoza's land — 30 per cent of Nicaragua's best — has been nationalised, but will remain in the hands of state administrators. Only fallow land will be given to the 60,000 landless peasants.

## Economy

Somoza's capital has also been taken over, and some people estimate that the new government now controls 60 per cent of the economy. But further nationalisations of imperialist and capitalist interests have been ruled out. A mixed economy has been proclaimed in which the state will 'regulate foreign investment to maintain national independence'.



Sandinista militants parade through the streets

As for elections, government statements remain cagey. But municipal elections could take place soon. Full democratic rights to organise exist, and the purging of Somoza's supporters will be by civil trial without summary execution.

These changes are big gains for the Nicaraguan masses, and will inspire the mass struggle growing in other Latin American countries. But government leaders continue to insist that Nicaragua will not be another Cuba.

In fact US officials are said to be pleased with the moderate tenor of the new government. Their aim now is to try to keep it that way by using aid as blackmail.

A big interventionist role is also being played by international social democracy, which has secured 2.8 million dollars from the EEC. European imperialists can use a social-democratic image to profitable effect in pursuing investment projects in Nicaragua.

Nothing could be more significant than the Socialist International's choice of a special envoy — Mario Soares, the man who did most to save Portugal for capitalism in 1975.

The Sandinista leaders argue that the present coalition with capitalist forces is needed to consolidate a national democratic stage of independence, required by the special conditions of Nicaragua. They say that the tremendous dislocation makes socialist measures impractical, and that the need for international aid and the danger of intervention also demand caution.

However, the anti-imperialist tasks and the work of reconstruction which grip the masses today can only be carried through within a socialist perspective. The very dislocation of the economy requires a centralised plan of action based on workers control and popular mobilisation.

Capitalist development, even moderated by a large state sector, will be unable to meet the needs of the masses, especially in the trough of a new recession which will make the drive for profits even more insatiable.

As for the need for aid and the danger of intervention, one need only note that a third of the world today is organised in non-capitalist societies which can provide aid and 'protection' against imperialist intervention — though so far Cuba and the other workers states appear reluctant to take any steps which could destabilise detente in the US sphere of influence.

## Mobilise

For socialists everything must be centred on the demand for a workers' and peasant government, for the Sandinistas to break with the bosses and mobilise the masses in order to carry out a real land reform, develop workers control of nationalised industry, annul the external debt and set a date for a constituent assembly. This would have to be linked to demanding aid without strings, calling on working class support throughout the world, and an alignment with the workers states internationally against imperialism.

This also underlines the need to build Nicaraguan solidarity in Britain. The focus must be on defending the gains of the uprising against imperialist sabotage, demanding no strings on UK aid, getting labour movement delegations to visit Nicaragua, and generally organising the fullest debate and information. For all resources contact: Nicaragua Coordinating Committee, 20 Compton Terrace, London N1.



## Picket protests repression of Tamils

A HUNDRED militants from Sri Lanka picketed the Ceylon Tea Centre on 28 July in protest at recent repression directed against the Tamil-speaking minority on the island.

Northern Sri Lanka — where the main concentration of Tamil people is centred — has been under a state of emergency and curfew, backed up by a full-scale military occupation, for several weeks. There have been widespread arrests of militants and a number of suspicious deaths which bear the mark of the security forces.

A special anti-terrorist law has been rushed through Parliament to deal with dissenters, and there is every reason to believe that these attacks on democratic rights will extend beyond the Tamil regions.

The Tamil people have major historic grievances against the state dominated by the majority Sinhala-speaking population. The main Tamil political organisation — the Tamil United Liberation Front — is the official opposition to the right-wing UNP government.

But many younger militants who support the cause of an independent Tamil state (Eelam) are looking for more effective ways of fighting for their national rights than the parliamentary manoeuvres of the TULF. Some of them have begun a campaign of armed actions against the Sinhala authorities.

While the Tamil people in the north have long been settled in Ceylon, those in the east were brought into the island in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to run the British-owned tea

plantations. They are among the most dispossessed people in Sri Lanka today, stripped of most civil rights and working under appalling conditions. Current government policy aims to 'repatriate' a third of them to India.

The Tea House picket was mounted by a committee of Tamil, Sri Lanka, and British groups, which has now named itself 'The Committee Against Repression of the Tamil Speaking People in Sri Lanka'. Its main demands include: the ending of the state of emergency, an end to the killings and torture of Tamils, troops out of the Tamil areas, and an end to incitement of racial hatred in the island.

The committee is planning a major action for next month's visit to Britain of President Jayawardena of Sri Lanka.

## Argentine mission to London

From the British Argentina Campaign

NEXT WEEK Britain is to receive a visit from an Argentine training ship — the *Libertad* ('Freedom'). The ship is on a goodwill-cum-trade mission to step up interest and enthusiasm for Argentine products and the Argentine government, a government which has been described by the *New York Times* in a recent editorial as perhaps 'the bloodiest in the world'.

This government, found a recent delegation of New York lawyers, is directly responsible for the disappearance of at least 10,000 people since it came to power in 1976. It was also, with Israel, the most faithful supplier of arms to the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua, right up until the last days of that bloody war it waged against its own people.

The visit from the *Libertad* is part of Argentina's search for a 'godfather' (or godmother in our case), a friendly sponsor to defend it in international forums. From Britain it is also looking for help with nuclear technology. So Britain's Minister of State with special responsibility for Latin America, Nicholas Ridley, has been having cordial chats in Buenos Aires with the Argentines.

One immediate result of his visit has been the announcement that ambassadors will be restored; they were withdrawn in 1976 after the

Argentines had protested at the Shackleton mission to the Falkland Islands.

So all the signs are that Maggie Thatcher will be only too delighted to play fairy godmother to Argentina's Cinderella. After that, no doubt she will award her seal of good housekeeping to President Pinochet of Chile, and send a British ambassador back there.

After that, perhaps visas for Somoza and the Shah?

DAVE KELLAWAY of the British Argentina Campaign adds:

We will be organising an appropriate welcome for Videla's ship and exposing the truth behind the Argentinian Navy's friendly 'open house'. We will have material showing how naval training schools have been used for the detention and torture of militants, many of whom have subsequently 'disappeared'.

Among the thousands who have disappeared are feminist leader Anna Maria Pifferelli and Trotskyist militant and trade union convener Jose Paez.

Everyone who has some time should assemble at 2pm on Tuesday 14 August at the end of West India Dock Road.

For more information, phone 01-229 1750.



# Abortion— TUC names the date

IT'S definite—the TUC is organising a national mass demonstration against the anti-abortion Corrie Bill on 28 October.

This absolutely unprecedented step gives us the best opportunity ever to build a really mass demonstration. It will also encourage women around the world to call on their trade union federations to show similar support for women's struggle to control their fertility. It shows that the years of campaigning for support from the labour movement have not been in vain.

But the possibilities for mass mobilisation will only be fully realised through consistent local work. The TUC is being flooded with anti-abortion letters and many trade unionists have yet to be convinced of the case for a woman's right to choose.

Local campaigns will still have to take up the fight in union branches and trades councils to convince all trade unionists that they must turn out to demonstrate their support.

And we have to push the TUC to do more than just issue a call. The labour movement has the resources to organise trains from the major centres to London. They did it for the

Industrial Relations Bill—we must demand they do it for 28 October as well. They should produce thousands of leaflets and posters for distribution inside and outside the trade union movement.

TUC policy is for 'a woman's right to choose, free abortion on request'. Union-sponsored MPs should be told to support TUC policy on this. The trade unions should use their strength in the Labour Party conference to ensure that the party commits all its MPs to vote against this Bill.

This would put an end to the so-called 'free vote', and ensure that all Labour MPs vote in the interests of women. No one is going to force an MP to have an abortion (especially as most of them are men anyway), but their vote could force thousands of women to endure pregnancy and childbirth and bring unwanted children into the world.

These are the sorts of demands that must be put to the TUC. The call for a demonstration is excellent but if the TUC is really in support of a woman's right to choose it must be prepared to take those actions necessary to defend the interests of women and demonstrate that defence of abortion rights is important for the labour movement as a whole.

# Southall appeal to Commonwealth Conference

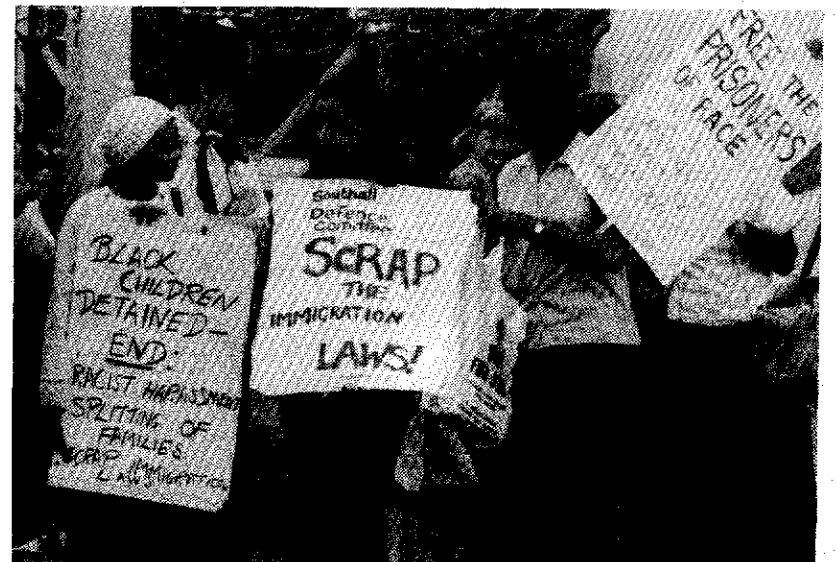
THE Southall Defence Committee has sent the following telegram to the leaders of the independent black states at the Commonwealth conference and the Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

Similar telegrams have been sent by other local organisations, including the Indian Workers Association.

For centuries British imperialism has had no hesitation in poking its nose into the affairs of other countries around the world wherever its interests were at stake. As the Nigerian government's nationalisation of BP shows, those days of unlimited imperialist power are over. It's now high time that the British ruling class's record towards its imperial subjects at home should also come under international scrutiny.

ON behalf of black people of Britain we appeal to you for justice. In Southall, the largest black area in the country, the British police went wild. Thousands were beaten up, hundreds were arrested and our anti-racist brother from New Zealand was beaten to death by the Special Patrol Group.

There are 342 political prisoners in Southall today. We were arrested for daring to demonstrate against racism.



We are now being denied a fair trial by white magistrates. We have lost all hope in the British system of justice. It seems to us to be based on hypocrisy and cant.

We appeal to you to take up our case at the Commonwealth conference. We urge you to send a team of inquiry to investigate what happened in Southall. We want you to instruct your High Commission to attend

courts when we are being tried and observe the procedures that are followed.

The British white establishment thinks that it can trample over our human rights because of the colour of our skins. Any support from abroad will only help the cause of anti-racism and anti-fascism in Britain.

Solidarity with the African people! No sell-out in Zimbabwe!

## Racist trial flops

JAMES Anderton's Manchester cops were humiliated last week during a short-lived trial of two Asians.

Nazir and Munir Ahmed were arrested in July last year after six men broke into their house in the middle of the night. Thinking the intruders were NF members the Ahmeds attempted to defend themselves but were severely beaten up. The six men

turned out to be plainclothes cops and the Ahmeds found themselves facing charges which could have meant years in prison.

After over a year's delay the trial began in Manchester on 30 July, with the court packed out by supporters of the Ahmed Defence Committee. But faced with thoroughly contradictory police evidence, the judge stopped the

trial on the second day. He ruled that the Ahmeds had no case to answer.

Manchester's Chief Constable, James Anderton is fond of saying how good relations are between his cops and the Asian community. The Ahmeds' trial has shown how that, when it comes to race relations in Manchester, the police are part of the problem.

## Mayhem at NF bunker



By Andrew Jenkins

IT'S night of the long knives time in National Front. Scandals, expulsions and splits are threatening to turn Britain's most prominent fascist organisation into a state of mayhem similar to the last days in Hitler's bunker.

The background to the crisis is a dramatic decline in the NF's finance and membership. Most regions have registered less than 60 per cent of last year's membership.

The political divide in the NF's national directorate finds Andrew Fountaine, Anthony Reed-Herbert and Andrew Brons on one side. They

argue that the NF has to relate to the extreme right in the Tories. Martin Webster, on the other hand, insists that the NF has to keep its base among the poorer sections of the white working class.

But these political differences have become intermingled with questions of money and 'personal behaviour'—Martin Webster's in particular. One of the reasons behind moves to oust Webster is that if he goes a large sum of money will apparently be available for the NF's coffers.

But if Webster has few friends he still has influence. One rumour currently heard in fascist circles is that Webster has information that could embarrass fellow members of the directorate if he decided to 'go public'. Certainly it is not friendship which has caused John Tyndall to line up with Webster.

But Tyndall was on Webster's side at last week's crisis meeting of the national directorate. The move to expel Webster, led by Fountaine, ended with Fountaine facing the chop.

Fountaine has hit back by sending a letter from an ex-member of the directorate, Gerald Oldland, to the police. The letter makes allegations about Webster's behaviour towards Oldland's son.

But Fountaine is still expected to come off worse in the power struggle, and if his threatened expulsion goes ahead it will add to the NF's financial worries. Fountaine and his supporters are well entrenched on the board of 'NF Properties', the only part of the Front which appears to have any money.

Some elements in the British Movement are hoping to profit from the NF's troubles, but the BM has its own 'credibility' crisis—its members are currently selling a news-sheet entitled 'Adolf Hitler's contribution to the promotion of European peace'.

## CAMPAIGN NEWS



A group of trade unionists supporting the campaign are producing a leaflet '10 reasons why trade unionists should oppose the Corrie Bill'. This will be available through the NAC offices.

Local campaigns can use the TUC call to gain a hearing in many more trade union branches and trades councils than previously. Letters from the TUC informing them of the call will be sent to every trades council and all affiliated unions. This will give a good opportunity to propose sending a speaker to the branch from the local campaign, support for activities, donations and other help.

With the support of the local trades council and Community Health Council, Brent NAC has called for a broad campaign against the Corrie Bill. Both the trades council and the CHC will be providing facilities to send out mailings as widely as possible. A public meeting is planned for September. In the meantime street

leafleting and petitioning will be organised along with a stall at the local show.

Local activity is also taking off in Cleveland, covering Stockton, Redcar, Ormsby and Middlesbrough. Local supporters are taking up the action of the Labour MP for Teesside Thornaby, Ian Wrigglesworth, who voted for the Corrie Bill.

The local Association of County Councils have committed themselves to actively support TUC policy in favour of a woman's right to choose and mobilise for the 28 October demonstration. If you want to help phone Liz on Middlesbrough 242685.

Brixton Carnival on 2 September will feature reggae bands, punk bands, singing and dancing by the ethnic groups in the local community, food, sideshows—and a NAC stall!

Badges, stickers, posters, leaflets, speakers notes and general information available from the NAC offices at 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 (01-278 0153).



# HERBERT MARCUSE 1898-1979

By Michael Löwy

THE WRITINGS of Herbert Marcuse, who died last week aged 81, made a significant contribution to the massive youth radicalisation which reached its peak in 1968.

Here was an almost unique instance of an academic scholar becoming a leading ideologue of a mass (student) anti-capitalist upsurge. Rudi Dutschke and the leaders of the German Socialist Students (SDS) considered themselves his disciples, as did the Berkeley protest movement, Angela Davis, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the Movimento Studentesco in Italy, and others.

Of course, most of the radicalised students in the 1960s did not read his writings, and he was almost unknown in France before May '68. But the fact that some of the movement's leading cadres were influenced by him meant that many of his ideas achieved a wider circulation among the mass of students.

One reason for his impact was probably that Marcuse, unlike his friends from the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research (Adorno, Horkheimer, Habermas), gave full and open support to the students and their aims. But the main thing was that their feeling and intuitions so closely related to the theoretical problems which concerned Marcuse.

## Negation

What were the elements in his philosophical, sociological and political conceptions which appealed to the young people who, from the anti-war demonstrations in the USA to the Paris barricades, were desperately trying to fight capitalist barbarism?

1. **Negative philosophy.** According to Marcuse, negative rational thought must be critical, subversive and destructive towards the given state of affairs. It is a protest, rejection and condemnation of the irrational character of the established order.

It negates and criticises the existing social reality, not from an abstract standpoint but from the point of view of the potentialities present in the reality itself: 'The dialectical concepts transcend the given social reality in the direction of another historical structure which is present as a tendency in the given reality.'

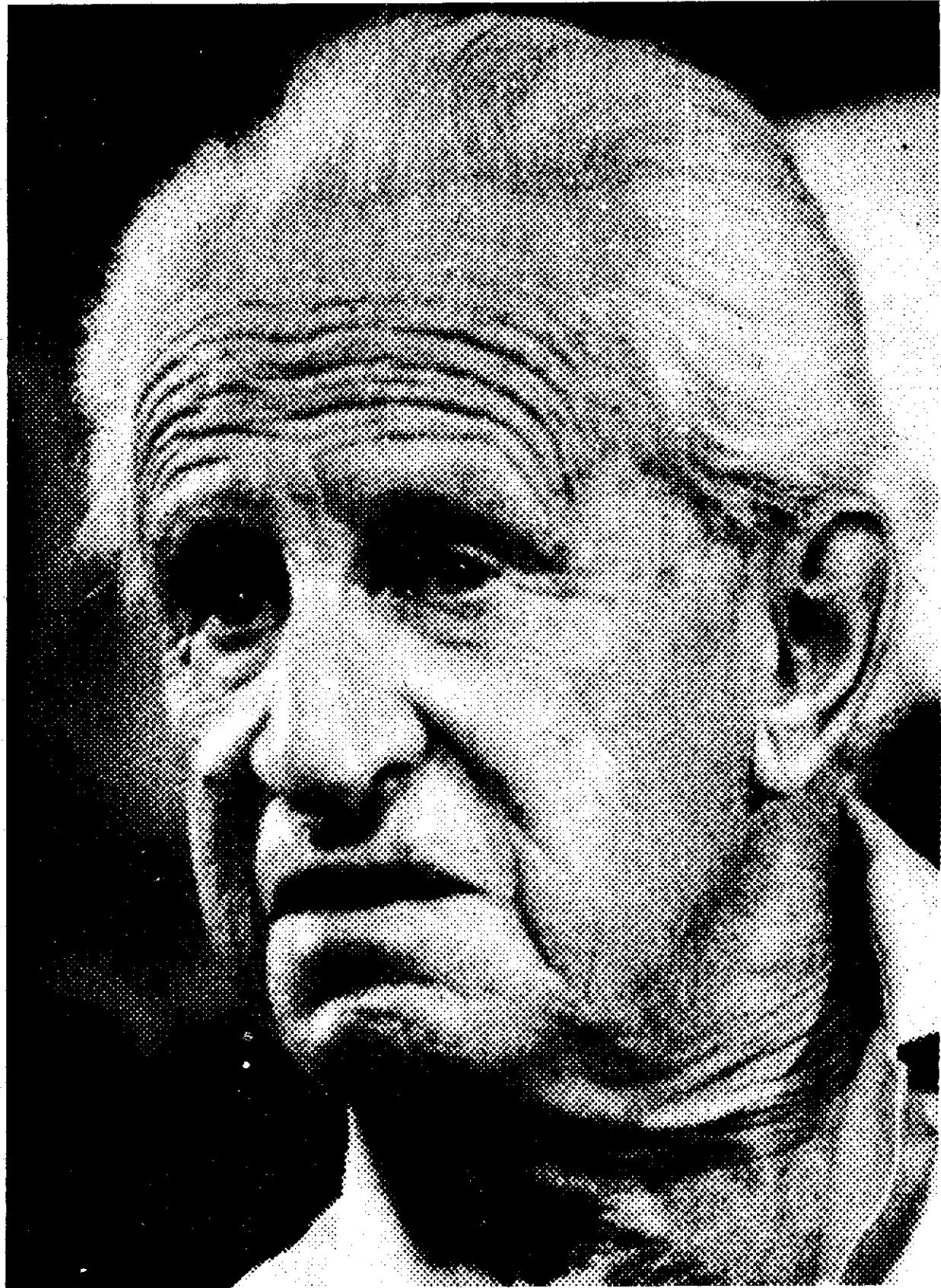
Negative thought is therefore rigorously opposed to the positive method which, from Auguste Comte to the modern 'neutral' and 'value free' social science in the USA, is a one-dimensional way of thinking which bows to the given facts, takes the established order as the only possible framework, and satisfies itself with the immediate empirical appearance.

## Positivism

Linguistic philosophy — which, as Wittgenstein said, 'leaves everything as it is' — and 'operational' industrial sociology are two classic examples analysed by Marcuse in **One-Dimensional Man**. He shows that they are committed in advance to the existing framework, and that, in their procedure, the range of judgement is confined within a context of facts which excludes any judgement of the context in which the facts themselves are presented.

This critical onslaught on positivist thought is one of the most interesting aspects of Marcuse's work, and it helped a whole generation of students to fight the hegemony of bourgeois academic social science.

2. **The critique of one-dimensional society (from Nazi Germany to imperialist America).** This application of his negative method to advanced capitalist society dates from the late 1930s when — trying probably to analyse some of the reasons for the Nazi triumph — Marcuse wrote an essay, 'On



Hedonism', which dealt with some burning political issues.

Marcuse stressed first that capitalist society and alienated labour limit and deform the needs, aspirations and capacities of humanity, and the horizon of their demands. Capitalism itself creates the deformed and mutilated needs which can be satisfied within the given social framework. The quality which characterises these false needs, their essence, is **unfreedom**.

Insofar as their artificial needs are satisfied, people think they are happy and embrace the system that oppresses them without external compulsion. Individuals see their interest only in getting along with the given order. Terror merely supplements the illusions of the governed.

Marcuse insisted in the same essay that the liberation of humanity and its true needs is not an abstract moral act but requires that the means of production be at the disposal of the community, the national reorientation of the productive process towards the needs and wants of the whole society, and the active participation of individuals in the administration of the whole.

In the 1960s Marcuse applied the same conceptual tools to another regime based on mass social

conformism — US capitalism, which, despite its liberal appearance, showed itself capable of crimes no less barbarous than those of fascist Germany. He defined the advanced industrial society of the USA as a one-dimensional system 'in which ideas, aspirations and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to the terms of this universe'.

## Freedom

In this system the productive apparatus produces not only the commodities but also the need for them. It produces the false needs for wasteful and status consumption, as well as various other forms of artificial, aggressive and competitive needs. And through the manipulation of needs and consciousness, the dominant powers thus prevent the emergence of any truly negative opposition.

The freedom of this society is a false one. The people have the illusion of a free choice, but actually they choose between things which are essentially similar: newspapers, commodities, political parties, presidents, which are all part of the prevailing system. Thus emerges a new kind of totalitarianism — based not on terror but on manipulating the consciousness of the people, on

affluence and on technological achievements — which eliminates or integrates all fundamental qualitative opposition to the regime.

**One-Dimensional Man** (1964) ends on a deeply pessimistic note: 'The critical theory of society possesses no concepts which could bridge the gap between the present and its future; holding no promise and showing no success, it remains negative. Thus it wants to remain loyal to those who, without hope, have given and give their life to the Great Refusal.'

This reveals one of the main theoretical flaws in Marcuse's thought: the absent 'bridge between the present and its future', which is of course the social agent of radical change, the revolutionary subject.

In 1964 Marcuse's view was that the working class had been integrated into capitalism's affluent society and was no longer the agent of revolutionary change. He saw two main mechanisms for this: (a) in the sphere of consumption, the raising of the standard of living; (b) in the sphere of production, the increase in white-collar workers and the decline in blue-collar jobs.

In relation to the first point, Ernest Mandel stressed in 1968: 'Whatever the increase in consumption of the working class may have been, neo-capitalism hasn't modified in any sense whatsoever the basic nature of work in a capitalist society

as alienated labour.' And in answer to the second argument, it is easy to show that intellectual labour is increasingly being reduced to a proletarian or semi-proletarian condition (as he himself was later to recognise).

Marcuse's position, in fact, amounted to a stalemate in the 1960s. On the one hand, he saw 'marginal' strata — students and national minorities — as providing the only radical opposition to advanced industrial capitalism. On the other hand, he admitted in 1967 that 'the workers are still and always the only potential agent of a possible revolution'.

## After '68

One can say that the picture of an almost completely 'integrated' capitalist society was to a certain extent significant for the Eisenhower-Kennedy era in the USA. But it was not relevant for Europe, and largely ceased to be so for the USA from the mid-1960s. Moreover, Marcuse himself was to rectify his conceptions after the events of 1968, developing a new approach to the problem of the conditions and possibilities of a workers' revolution. In 1973 he told the French magazine **Nouvel Observateur**:

'There can be no revolution of which the working class is not the vehicle. It is true, however, that the working class has changed: it has not only become larger, incorporating large strata of the old middle classes, it has also changed in quality; it is no more a miserable proletariat demanding bread and work. If the working class is to become revolutionary, this will only be by the vital need for a fundamentally different way of life, freed from capitalist values, grounded on self-determination and the evaluation of life as an end in itself.'

In any case, whatever his errors and limitations, Marcuse's contribution to the upsurge of 1968 and the formation of a new generation of radicalised youth cannot be denied. By his powerful and penetrating critique of capitalism, and by his passionate appeal for a radical change in the totality of social life, he was an authentic revolutionary thinker.

**BUILD** the 12 August demo! Troops out now! Public meeting Thur 9 Aug, 7.30pm, Deptford Town Hall, New Cross Road. Speaker: Pat Arrowsmith. Organised by SE London UOM.

**SOCIAL** by Hugo Blanco-Combate. Sat 11 Aug, 8.30pm onwards, at Basement Flat, 24 Powis Sq., London W11. Latin American food, music, and drinks.

**IMG** national Latin America fraction meeting, 11-12 Aug. Sat: Solidarity perspectives; Latin American Women's Group; Nicaragua. Sun: History of Trotskyism in Latin America up to 1963 (open to sympathisers) — finishes in time to join Irish demo. For details phone 01-852 1671.

**HANDS Off Ireland!** No. 8 now out. Main feature is full length interview with Kieran Nugent in which the origin of the blanket protest is explained. Other articles include: the Irish War and the British Working Class, in which John Fitzgerald explains the connection between the Irish struggle and the struggle of the British working class. Also articles on British strategy, British Terror after the Bennett Report, the attacks on Sinn Fein and Hands Off Ireland campaigns. 24 pages for 25p (plus 10p p&p) RCG Publications Ltd (SC), 49 Raiton Road, London SE24 0LN.

**HANDS OFF IRELAND!** Rally: Against British Imperialism in Ireland! Film: The Patriot Game. Speakers: Hands Off Ireland, Provisional Sinn Fein, ZAPU, speakers from other liberation movements also invited. Sunday 12 August, 6pm, NUR Assembly Hall, Unity House, Euston Road, London NW1 (nearest tube: Euston). Admission: 50p (40p in advance).

'**LABOUR'S MISSPENT YOUTH**' by Jack Cleary and Neal Cobbett — an outline history of the LP youth movement from the 1930s to today. Contains a detailed account of the 1960-65 period which led to the 'Keep Left' (SLL) breakaway and during which the YS was the seedbed of all the present day far-left groups — **A Workers Action** supplement, 25p post paid.

**WORKERS ACTION** No 148 contains the sixth instalment of the first English language publication of the 1910 debate in the German Social Democracy between Luxemburg and Kautsky on socialist strategy. Covers all the main issues now raised by the 'Eurocommunist' current.

**FILM GROUP** requires two administrators for distribution, production, studio management, etc. Must be unemployed. 01-3520538.



# Socialist Challenge

# OLDHAM

## Maple Mill — A cause to rally for



By a member of Oldham Textile Workers Action Committee

LAST FRIDAY, in the Lancashire town of Oldham, an industrial dispute started over the sort of issues the British trade union movement was meant to have settled in its favour in the 19th century.

But also involved is a cancer which remains all too present in the latter half of the 20th century: the racist exploitation of immigrants — an exploitation of which the union involved is part and parcel.

This is why the name Maple Mill must now be recorded on the consciousness of every trade union militant and every anti-racist in Britain as the struggle to be won in the coming weeks.

Maple Mill is owned by the multi-national Courtaulds, who last year made a profit of £64 million. One beneficiary of those profits was the Oldham Provincial Textile and Allied Workers Union, because that union has a financial investment in Courtaulds. It is also the main union at Maple Mill.

That is one explanation for the gross exploitation workers at Maple Mill have suffered over the years. Compulsory overtime, 12-hour shifts with no meal break, speed-up — that is what working at Maple Mill has meant for the largely Asian workforce.

In one department 16 Asian workers are doing the work done by 35 several years ago for the same wage. Indeed, some of the workers earn £2 less than they did previously.

It is the Asian workers who have suffered most. In one department Asians are meant to do twice the work of one white worker — a worker who is backing the Asians' demands all the way.

The Oldham Provincial Textile and Allied Workers Union has largely ignored the conditions of its Asian members. When Asian workers raise complaints the union tells them to put them in writing — even though it knows that most of the Asians cannot write in English.

If a worker takes an interpreter to the union officials refuse to talk with the interpreter present because he/she is not in the union.

All this finally came to a head last Thursday when three Asian workers in one department were told by management to do the work normally done by five.

The three asked management to be allowed to phone the union, but management refused — although white workers have free use of the phone. When the union was finally contacted it told its members to work

according to management instructions.

The next day, after a series of meetings, the Asian workers still refused to operate the speed-up. Eventually they staged a sit-down protest in the mill. When the workers left the factory the strike began.

On Saturday a white supervisor came to the factory gates and said white workers could enter the factory but Asians could not. Sadly, some white workers did go in, although others are backing the Asians.

The Maple Mill strike committee has now formulated a series of demands which testify to the simplicity of their case. They include 'an end to understaffing', 'proper cleaning of machines', 'meal-breaks in accordance with factory legislation', 'reasonable temperature and air-conditioning in the mill', and 'no sackings or victimisation'.

Over 140 workers, mainly Asian, are now outside the factory gates. The struggle they are waging has to be seen in the context of the peasant background from which many of the workers come; their lack of union experience; the disgraceful treatment they have received at the hands of their own union.

But at the same time it has another context — the recent growth of anti-racist activity in and around Oldham, culminating in the defeat of the attempt to deport Abdul Azad. Such activity has enabled the previously isolated Asian Community to link up with other anti-racists.

The anti-racists have been asked for — and given — help in the fight against the conditions at the mills. And the Asians have gained enough self-confidence to organise themselves.

A recent meeting to discuss the exploitation of Asians in the local textile industry was attended by representatives from eight other mills. Already workers at another mill are discussing an overtime ban in support of the Maple Mill strike.

An obvious comparison can be made with Grunwick, and already Grunwick strike leader Mrs Desai has promised her help in the strike at Maple Mill. In the end the Grunwick workers were defeated, but their methods of struggle and the lessons of the struggle remain relevant.

Those lessons must now be applied to start organising the largest possible show of solidarity with the workers at Maple Mill. Already Tameside trades council has backed the strike. That example needs to be followed hundreds of times over. Messages of support to Mr Ishaq, 26 Brompton Street, Oldham, Lancashire.

## Rover — BL management on the offensive

By Pat Hickey  
Deputy senior steward, Rover SD1 Plant

SHOP STEWARDS at British Leyland's Rover SD1 plant at Solihull have overwhelmingly rejected management plans to axe 1,445 jobs at the plant. The four-year-old plant is the most modern in British Leyland and assembles the 'European Car of the Year', the Rover 3500.

Management blames a static market, stagnant productivity and inefficiency for cutbacks in production from a line rate of 1,850 a week to 1,250. Current proposals are for one of three assembly systems to be closed completely and for job cuts in all areas

of the plant.

Management are using cutbacks in production to go on the offensive on staffing levels throughout SD1. The cut in production is about one-third, but proposed cuts are about 42 per cent. For example, in the two remaining systems line speed remains the same but over 150 jobs are to be lost. In some areas the proposed cuts are 50 per cent.

Management have also refused to reveal their forward plans for SD1. But it is obvious to all that if SD1 is not viable at 1,800 cars per week it is still less so at 1,250.

Many shop stewards feel that cutbacks are temporary and once management have smashed the unions

on the question of time study the plant will be expanded again. Mutuality on industrial engineering standards has been a major obstacle to speed-up and management are using the opportunity to attack the unions on this issue.

But the cutbacks in SD1 cannot be seen in a purely local context. The crisis in the car industry is world-wide and the fight to defend jobs and conditions is only beginning.

With unemployment heading for 2 million and 50 per cent of school leavers expecting to be unemployed this time next year, every job must be seen as the property of the whole working class and not just of an individual.

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