

Socialist Challenge

KICK OUT THE TORIES

STEELWAR



THE 1980s have started in the best possible way with 100,000 steelworkers on strike in a direct challenge to the Tory government. Already the battle lines have been drawn.

BATTLE LINE ONE is over the miserable six per cent pay offer made by the British Steel Corporation and backed by the Tory Industry Secretary Keith Joseph. With inflation running at 20 per cent that would mean a slashing cut in the living standards of steel workers. And this is what the Tories are out to do to all our wages.

BATTLE LINE TWO involves what the Tories call 'secondary picketing'. The steel unions have called for the stopping of all steel imports. That means solidarity action by dockers, railway and other transport workers — the very type of action the Tories want to outlaw in their 'reform' of trade unions.

BATTLE LINE THREE concerns the Tories' industrial strategy — sacking workers to pay for the bosses' crisis. Joseph and his puppet Charles Villiers — the highest paid boss of any nationalised industry — say 52,000 steel jobs have to go because the industry is in a mess.

But who is BSC losing money to? BSC's interest payments on loans increased from a rate of 8.2 per cent in 1972 to 13.4 per cent in 1978. Compare that with the American steel industry interest and dividends payments which amounted to 6.5 per cent in 1972 and 6.05 per cent in 1978. It is BSC's payments to the bankers which should be chopped, not workers' jobs.

These are the issues in the strike. A victory for the steelworkers would be a defeat for the Tories' attacks on jobs, wages and union rights. That's why the steel confrontation amounts to a war against a whole range of Tory policies.

It's a war neither the steelworkers, nor the rest of us can afford to lose. This government must be brought to its knees.

THE KEY TO VICTORY

- *No movement of steel or raw materials, either at the docks or on the railways
- *No special exemptions for private industry, run down the steel stock and boycott the use of all private and imported steel
- *For all out strike action, the craft unions and steel workers in the private sector should join the strike
- *For international solidarity from European and American steel unions in boycotting the British industry
- *Every trade union and Labour Party branch should support the steel workers by setting up local labour movement support committees through the trades councils.

Photo: LARRY HERMAN

MAKE SURE THE TORIES LOSE

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)

Address.....

EDITORIAL

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1. Editorial: 01-359 8180/9. Distribution and advertising: 01-359 8371.

A New Year's Resolution

DEAR COMRADES

THE future of Socialist Challenge is in danger. Sustaining a 16-page weekly paper requires at least 5,000 sales each week through local groups, as well as a quarterly £2,500 for the fund drive. We do not have the rich backers, the advertising or the mass outlets which shore up the bourgeois press. Presently we face a stark choice — unless we can increase both the sales and the fund drive to the required figures we will have to reduce the size of the paper to 12 pages. Local group sales are up to 4,000 per week, but we have to go beyond this to keep Socialist Challenge afloat.

The election of the Tory government presents the paper with new tasks and new opportunities. The Tories are on the attack, while the politics of the Labour leaders are inadequate to fight them. The need to hammer home alternative socialist policies has never been greater. The hostility of the working class to the Tories' attacks has already erupted in big struggles — abortion, cuts, steel. There is a massive audience waiting for our politics

if we are prepared to reach out to it.

In the present situation there should be no major problem in selling the paper; we don't have to be stuck at 4,000 local sales. However, to take the paper outwards to its new potential audience there has to be an end to the conservatism that exists among IMG members and Socialist Challenge supporters who do not believe they can sell more papers.

Targets

Every IMG branch has been set a target for the number of papers it should sell. Half the branches outside London have already met these targets; a small number have already gone over them. There is absolutely no reason why the London branches and those in the rest of the country which have fallen behind should not meet their targets — if they did we would see an end to many of the financial problems that beset us, let alone the boost it would give to the political influence of the paper.

We need a 16-page paper. Every week we are forced to make harsh choices about what not to print, such is the scope of the anti-Tory struggle. If anything we need more than 16 pages to take in all the developments in the class struggle. At present we are installing a new computerised typesetting machine to ease our production problems and improve the design and content of the paper; to win more people to socialism and to build the fightback against the Tories.

But all this depends on our readers and supporters, and time is not on our side. Either we go forward very rapidly or we will be forced to cut back. This is why we are making this urgent appeal to every IMG branch, every Socialist Challenge group and every individual supporter of the paper. We are asking you to expand your sales and raise money for the paper as quickly as possible. We are not asking for anything impossible or unrealistic.

Make sure that your New Year resolution helps carry forward the struggle for the socialist alternative.

Corrie — a tremendous responsibility for the women's movement

By Penny Duggan

THE THIRD and final reading of Corrie's anti-abortion Bill will soon take place. Changes in the arrangements of the parliamentary committee examining the Bill will ensure that it returns to Parliament for a final vote in February. Now is the time for anti-Corrie campaigners to redouble their efforts against the Bill.

It is unlikely that enough MPs will change their votes to reverse the huge majority that the Bill won in its second reading last year. But mass action, particularly by large sections of the labour movement, still has the potential to stop the Bill. The Tory government would be forced to recognise the weight of opinion against restrictive legislation and it would point ahead to the problems of implementing the Bill in the face of strong resistance from women and doctors.

The Campaign Against the Corrie Bill and the National Abortion Campaign are proposing a week of action against the Bill beginning on 2 February.

Demonstration

A recent Scottish trade union conference on abortion decided to organise a Scottish demonstration on 2 February. This proposal has already won the backing of the Scottish TUC and the Glasgow Trades Council. Such demonstrations would set the week of action off to a good start, and should be repeated around the country.

Trade unionists cannot rest on their laurels because of the TUC 28 October demonstration and good initiatives like that in Scotland. The TUC is presently saying that it cannot organise further action against the Corrie Bill as it would be a diversion from the major struggles against the cuts. If the TUC was prepared to stick its neck out and fight for the democratic rights of women against Corrie it would be a tremendous boost to the confidence of all those fighting the Tories.

The Scottish trade union conference can teach us many lessons about the coming fight against Corrie. It revealed that although many unions were prepared to go on the big TUC sponsored demonstration in October they were not prepared to consistently involve themselves in the campaign. The attendance at the conference was limited to local government workers, civil servants, teachers and some trades council delegates.

The conference made a commit-



ONE-fifth of all patients in this San Salvador hospital are victims of illegal abortions — Corrie will make this more common here too.

ment to go out and win support for the week of action by organising among women, in the trade unions, among youth and students and in the Labour Party. The possibilities for winning support in all these sectors is by no means exhausted.

Pollok

Kathy Finn explained how she won Pollock Constituency Labour Party to oppose the Corrie Bill despite the fact that the local MP is James White, a notorious anti-abortionist. Even in such an unpromising situation much support can be won.

Whether the Corrie Bill is passed or not we have to go on building the abortion campaign.

If the Bill falls we have to immediately start the fight for the full implementation of the 1967 Act by making the provision of NHS abortion facilities obligatory in every area. The campaign is also committed to opposing every NHS cut, we don't want one section of the health service played off against the other.

We have to move beyond defence of the 1967 Act and start thinking about the positive gains that women need to strengthen our ability to face

future attacks. The Labour Party should be pressurised to fight — both in and outside Parliament — for a woman's right to choose.

Despite the TUC-sponsored demonstration and the enormous strides that have been taken in winning support for abortion rights in the labour movement it is still primarily women who will have to lead the fight for their rights. It is the independent pressure of women that has forced the labour movement to act, and this pressure must be kept up to maintain and increase this level of support.

Here the women's movement has a tremendous responsibility to ensure that there is the maximum mobilisations against the Corrie Bill in February. Not only do they have to bring women to the demonstration, but spearhead the struggle to win the organised power of the trades unions to fight alongside us.

The National Union of Students has already committed itself to a national stoppage of education in support of the mass lobby and rally against the Bill on 5 February. This kind of support has to be won everywhere.

How to campaign against the Corrie Bill

- Abortion campaigners welcome to NAC National Planning Meeting, 5 January, London. Phone NAC: 01-278 0153 for venue.
- Half a million signatures on the petition by 14 January. Available from/return to: CAC, 374 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1. 01-278 0153.
- Trade union month of action in January.
- Local and regional demonstrations on 2 February to start week of action.
- Mass lobby and rally, Central Hall, Westminster, 5 February organised by CAC and supported by the South East region of the TUC.
- Women's Assembly, Central Hall, Westminster, 8 February.

HOMENEWS

Showdown '80

How the steel industry tumbled into the smelter

By Patrick Sikorski

THE TORIES want a showdown in steel. The wage 'offer' — representing no new money — came in the same week as the announcement to the unions that the British Steel Corporation wants another 60,000 redundancies.

This is in addition to the 15,000 jobs that will be lost as a result of the closure of the Corby and Shotton steel plants, which was announced last July.

Sir Keith Joseph has made it clear to BSC chairperson Sir Charles Villiers that the corporation must balance its books by next March or make the 'necessary' cuts.

This makes a nonsense of the Tories' claim that they will not intervene in negotiations between management and employers. As Industry Secretary, Keith Joseph is in effect chief executive of all the nationalised industries.

Productivity

The miners were able to settle for a 21 per cent pay rise without any productivity strings despite being told that there was no money for rises over 15 per cent. The Tories were understandably not keen to take on the miners. With the appalling record of the leadership of the steel strikers, especially the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, the Tories are confident that the steel workers are a soft option.

As well as the closures and mass redundancies, what's on offer to the steel workers is a wage cut, through the removal of the guaranteed working week and weekend working, productivity dealing, and no new money when inflation will reach 20 per cent this year.

The Tories' plan is to rationalise the steel industry by shrinking the present production capacity of 21.6m tonnes into line with demand, now running at 17.6m and still falling. BSC will probably notch up an even bigger loss in 1979 than its £309m deficit the previous year. The corporation has lost over £1,000m since 1975.

Looking at figures like these it would seem that the arguments of the mass media, the Tories, and the management that BSC's problems are caused by poor productivity (for which read 'a lazy, overpaid workforce'), foreign competition, and a cash crisis must have some foundation.

Symptoms

A cash crisis does exist in BSC and British steel is being undercut by imports. But these are only symptoms, not the disease.

The crisis in the steel industry is a structural one. The heart of the matter is that the British steel industry failed to adopt the oxygen steel making methods after the Second World War. Instead the private owners clung to the outdated open

hearth method. To modernise the industry would have taken around £4,000m at 1967 prices in a situation of collapsing profits.

Only the state could spend this kind of money. BSC was formed by the Wilson government in 1967 to take this step. Along with the investment required was the need to scrap old plant with resulting mass job loss.

Investment

The aim was that instead of the 30 or so major steelmaking plants BSC should concentrate production at five plants. These were to be Scunthorpe, Redcar, Ravenscraig, Port Talbot, and Llanwern. But so soon as the bulk of the investment programme finished it became clear that the projected boom in the '70s would not last and that prolonged recession was approaching.

Was this the bad planning and inefficiency of which the nationalised industries are regularly accused?

The simple truth is that private capital was not prepared to invest in restructuring the industry.

The first nationalisation of the steel industry, by the 1965-67 Labour government, was a necessary step. Even with the recession that then set in the industry was to be saved by the private owners in the immediate post-war period. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the steel industry was in a state of crisis. This was not simply the case in the early '50s and the Tories after their election victory in 1951 denationalised steel.

Ribbons

But by the 1960s competition from the giant modern, fully-integrated steel mills in West Germany, Japan and the USA had cut 14 major British companies to ribbons. British capital needed bailing out and Harold Wilson obliged. The 16-year gap between the two nationalisations meant that the problems faced by the steel workers today are much more acute than they would have been in the '50s.

The emphasis of the first nationalisation was on increasing capacity and production during the post-war boom. Labour's policy for BSC in the 1960s was to eliminate costly and outdated plant on a large scale.

Now the Tories want to push through massive restructuring in bulk production to serve sections of British industry which would have to pay more for steel from abroad, and to provide basic steel for the privately-owned specialised producers. Profitable sections of the industry will be hived off to the private sector.

The only interest of the private owners and their Tory representatives in parliament and government throughout the post-war history of the industry has been to extract the maximum profit from steel at the least risk to their private capital. They have not been interested in a British steel industry.

It would be fatal for the labour

SHOTTON 10,725 men

● 6,400 JOBS TO GO

LLANWERN 9,235 men

● 400 JOBS LOST

WHITEHEAD 1,030 men

PANTEG 960 men

CLYDESDALE 2,615 men

CLYDEBRIDGE 1,150 men

● UNDER THREAT

LANARKSHIRE 395 men

● TO BE CLOSED

DALZELL 1,110 men

● UNDER THREAT

RAVENS CRAIG/GARTCOSH 7,390 men

● UNDER THREAT

HALLSIDE 605 men

CRAIGNEUK 1,385 men

GLENGARNOCK 290 men

EBBW VALE 4,400 men

ORB/COOKLEY 2,750 men

PORT TALBOT 12,485 men

● 2,300 JOBS TO GO

TROSTRE/VELINDRE 5,250 men

BARROW 435 men

WORKINGTON 2,545 men

BEWSEY RD/MONKS HALL 1,075 men

SHELTON 650 men

BILSTON/WOLVERHAMPTON 2,505 men

● 2,000 JOBS LOST

JARROW 325 men

CONSETT 4,335 men

● 430 JOBS LOST

HARTLEPOOL/STOCKTON 3,075 men

REDCAR/LACKENBY 17,685 men

● 1,200 JOBS LOST

SKINNINGROVE 1,045 men

STOCKSBRIDGE/TINSLEY 8,135 men

ROTHERHAM 9,540 men

RIVER DON 2,440 men

● 400+ JOBS TO GO

SHEPCOTE LANE 2,380 men

SCUNTHORPE 17,385 men

● UNDER THREAT

CORBY 11,820 men

● 5,000 JOBS TO GO



The main BSC plant

Plotting the closures

The main BSC plant, shown above, is the largest in the world. It is the main source of steel for the country.

movement in the steel industry. It is not the British steel industry that is in trouble. It would be to accept that the industry has to be made 'viable' — that is profitable — before it can be re-expanded. That is to accept the need for massive rationalisation.

The workers' interest is to defend their jobs and living standards. The fate of British steel is not their responsibility. The farce of worker directors and union officials like Bill Sirs who sit on the BSC board at present and who are powerless to stop mass sackings and closures makes this clear.

What is needed is a campaign based on the independent self-activity of the rank and file steel workers. The national strike on pay must become an all-out strike against all job loss as well.

Elections

Mass meetings of the whole workforce should elect steel action committees in every plant to run the strike. It was strikes led by such rank and file committees in the Port Talbot, Velindre and Trostre mills in South Wales in 1976 which turned back Labour's plan to cut the wages bill by £179m at the expense of 40,000 jobs.

These committees will have to immediately move to shut down the private steel mills. Bill Sirs has said that they are exempted from the action and has even suggested that

BSC will close in a matter of days. But the workers must be ready to picket their way to the strike before it starts.

Protection

However, even if the strike were successful and the closure plan were withdrawn it would only be yet another temporary respite. What is needed is protection against a reduced work load, whether through recession or technical change. What should happen is that the contracted workload should be shared by the same number of workers with no loss of pay.

A fight for this demand must be taken up in the course of this strike — not after it. If it isn't then the strikers will have no answer to the attacks from the management and the Tories that their strike will only drive the industry deeper into bankruptcy, resulting in more redundancies.

The demand for work-sharing with no loss of pay would unite all steel workers, overcome sectional conflicts, and avoid tying up the struggle in secondary wrangles about whether this or that plant closes down.

The guaranteed working week partly establishes the principal of work-sharing with no loss of pay. This is why BSC is so keen to get rid of it. Far from being sacrificed, this gain must be extended.

Countdown to the strike

ON 3 December the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, representing 90,000 manual workers, put in a claim for a 20 per cent wage rise. The offer from the British Steel Corporation was a maximum 2 per cent, with 1 per cent for many of the ISTC members.

This offer was tied to local productivity deals, together with a demand by the corporation for an end to the guaranteed minimum wage paid to steelworkers to offset the effects of short-time working.

On 8 December the ISTC's executive called for a national strike to begin on 2 January, and has since rejected further offers strictly tied to productivity deals.

The original pay offer came a matter of days after BSC announced 30,000 redundancies on top of the 25,000 it had demanded earlier in the year. The corporation aims to meet the government's requirement for BSC to show a profit by April. It has lost over £1,000m since 1975.

SUPPORT THE STEEL STRIKE

SOUTH WALES RESISTS JOBS' SLAUGHTER

By Celia Pugh

STEEL workers are engaged in their first national strike since 1926. Then, they struck in solidarity with miners' struggle to defend jobs and conditions. This time it's the other way round. The miners are throwing their weight behind the steelworkers.

BSC's decision to double its coal imports, as well as its proposed closures, threatens many miners' jobs.

Along with transport workers and dockers, miners and steelworkers are preparing to stop steel coming into the country, prevent any movement of steel between plants, and force BSC to give in to the wage demands of the steelworkers. They know this strike is not just



about pay. It is the first national challenge to the Tory government. Not only are wages at stake but also thousands of jobs.

In South Wales, three quarters of the Llanwern and Port Talbot steelworkers face redundancy. George Wright, General Secretary of the Welsh TUC, argues that this will mean the loss of 15,000 miners' jobs and the closure

of 21 South Wales pits. In its wake will follow the livelihoods of dockers, transport workers and thousands who service the mining and steel communities.

With this threat looming, the Welsh TUC is laying plans for a day of strike action to defend jobs on 21 January. Miners, railway workers, engineers, dockers and of course steelworkers, are discussing support for this action. Emlyn Williams, South Wales president of the NUM, has already received pledges for strike action from five other British coalfields if Welsh miners take action on 21 January.

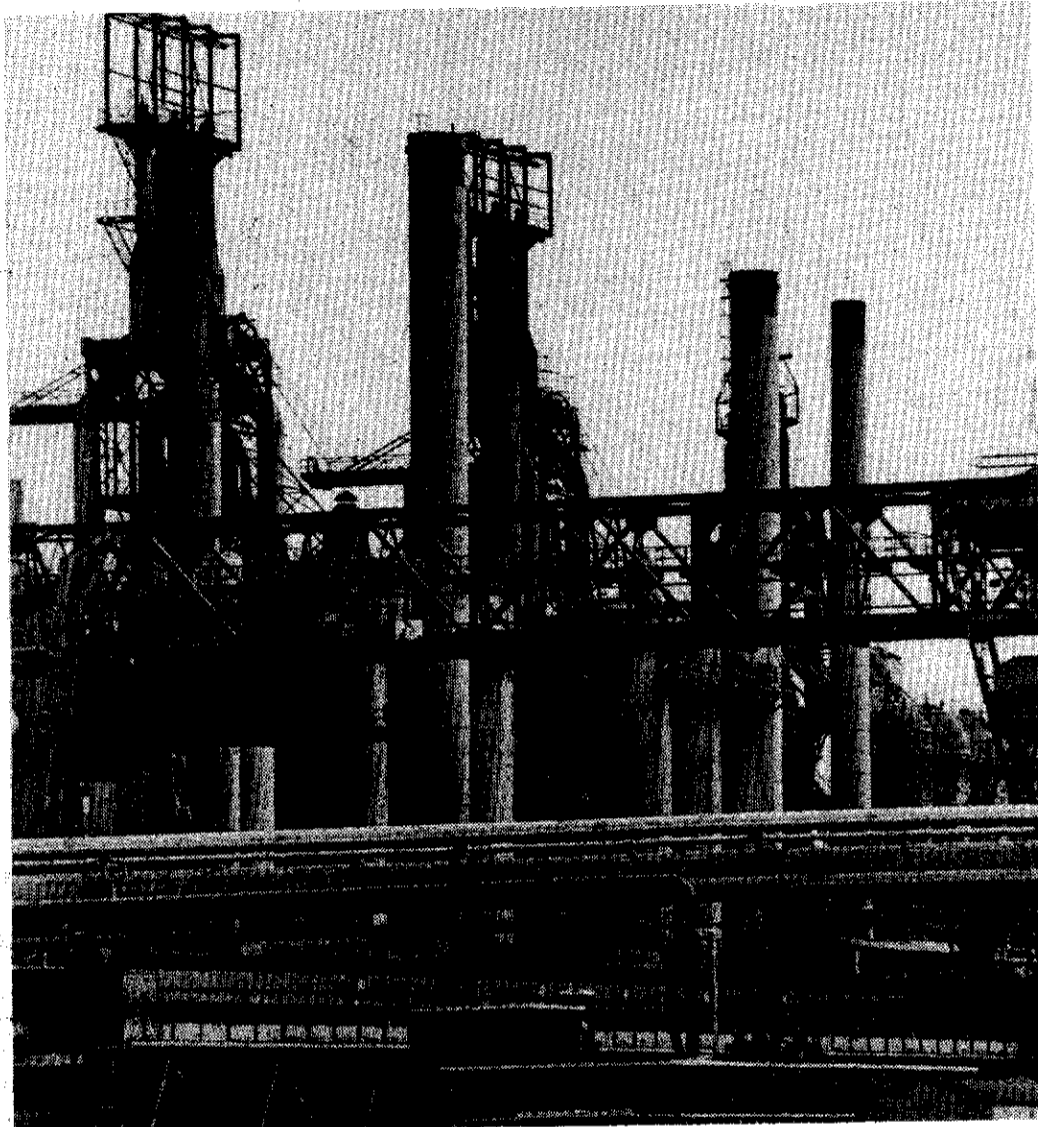
Some doubts are being cast over the likelihood of this regional general strike in Wales, because the ISTC national executive has not yet given its backing and South Wales steelworkers are reluctant to strike out alone against job loss. They don't want to see their struggle isolated and defeated, as happened at Corby because of the inactivity of the national union, despite a massive local campaign.

The head of steam built up through national strike action can be used to challenge the passivity of the union leaders on jobs. George Wright predicts that the present strike over pay will 'run into another ISTC strike from 21 January in defence of jobs'. Let's hope he's right.

With proposed boycott action by transport workers and dockers, the steel strike is off to a good start. As stocks of steel run out, whether in the car or can factories, trade unionists will have to be on the alert against steel imported from other countries or sneaked in from private steel plants.

Bill Sirs has threatened that 'we will put pickets wherever they are necessary regardless of Jim Prior'. If he sticks to this, then the whole of the trade union movement must turn out to make sure that the steel strike is brought to a successful conclusion.

This means that solidarity action must be prepared in every town, whether there is a steel plant or not. The steelworkers are taking the lead against the Tories. They deserve the support of every trade unionist and Labour Party member in Britain.



PORT TALBOT steelworks near Swansea — three quarters of the workers could go

Will the Liaison Committee fight the Tories?

By Denny Fitzpatrick

THE Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions is probably best known for initiating mass unofficial strike action against the Tory Industrial Relations Bill in December of 1970.

It continued to put pressure on the official trade union movement throughout the life of the last Tory government which was toppled by the miners' action in 1974. Since that time it has kept a low profile.

The British shop stewards movement has suffered one of the biggest insults in its history with the suspension of Derek Robinson.

Backing from the LCDTU, which meets on 26 January, will be crucial to the campaign being waged in the AUEW to remove Duffy from office for his refusal to defend Robinson.

The ten per cent support needed to win a recall ballot of the membership on this issue could be gained if the LCDTU decides to endorse the 'Rule 15' campaign.

With a national steel strike and the Tories preparing to try and enforce restrictions on effective picketing the confidence could not come at a more opportune time.

The mass movement at the base must be strengthened in their fight against the Tories. The conference should adopt the Code of Practice if it really wants to ensure that there are 'no chains on the unions'.

The LCDTU could provide a central focus for opposing all the Tories' anti-working class measures. The attacks on women's rights, the attacks on black people, the vicious spending cuts, the attempts to put more and more people on the dole need to be met by a co-ordinated response from the left in the trade unions. Even the steelworkers will not win if they are left to their own resources.

Solidarity action is key. The Labour Party and the trade unions locally and nationally must be forced to act in defence of workers rights and use their power to get the Tories out of office.

The Liaison Committee has the power to build a movement at the base that could force Tony Benn and Moss Evans not simply to talk left but to act left. Will it be prepared to use it?

Socialist Challenge supporters should put motions to their union branches now urging support for:

- 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 decision making by traditional democratic procedures—no enforced 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 enforced 'arbitration' or enforced 'official' settlements.

Code of Practice

*Strike action against the cuts on 18 February called by the South Yorkshire Council of the Labour Party.

*Support for the Code of Practice.

*Setting up trade union-Labour Party liaison committees to co-ordinate solidarity with the steel strike.

Motions for the conference should be sent to J Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park RD, Ilford, Essex.

Fight over combine secretary's job

By Geoffrey Sheridan

BL is not the only company playing the victimisation game. Lucas Aerospace management has been trying to dispense with various shopfloor leaders and the latest candidate is Ernie Scarbrow, secretary of the Lucas Aerospace combine committee.

Having first eliminated Scarbrow's job as a product engineer at the company's plant in Willesden, NW London, he was then made an offer he could only refuse — an unsuitable job at a plant in Hemel Hempstead. When Scarbrow duly turned it down, he was sacked.

That was on 5 December. The response from the shopfloor has caused the company to change its mind — at least temporarily.

Tactic

Mass meetings held at the main plants demanded full reinstatement. The tactic adopted was to isolate the Willesden site by preventing the movement of components into or out of the plant. It rapidly came to a standstill, affecting production throughout the company.

Now management has withdrawn the dismissal notice, but it has yet to decide how Scarbrow is to be employed. He expects that further industrial action will be necessary when the company offers him other unacceptable jobs.

Bonus

Commenting on the Derek Robinson sacking at BL, Ernie Scarbrow says: 'We just do not expect support from the official trade union movement. If we get it, it's a bonus.' In this case, Scarbrow's union, AUEW(TASS) — the Engineering Union's white-collar section, is officially supporting his reinstatement.

Scarbrow is co-ordinator of the working party established by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions to examine alternatives to the redundancies and closures proposed by Lucas Aerospace. He is the fourth member of the working party the company has used to sack.

Messages of support: c/o Mike Carter, 55 Sunset Place, Slough, Bucks.

SUPPORT THE STEEL STRIKE

By Brian Grogan and Steve Potter

THIS TORY government has declared war on all working people. Youth, women, and black people will be hit the hardest. But at present it is the steelworkers who stand in the front line. The Tories have picked out these workers for a test of strength with the whole working class.

Every section of society will be affected. That's why all possible support needs to be given to the steelworkers, particularly by the miners, railworkers, and the dockers. The steelworkers' strike is a defensive struggle, but it can be turned into a movement to pave the way for removing this government.

The speed and ferocity with which Tory policies have been pushed through reflects the urgent requirement of Britain's rulers to make the working class pay for the cost of the world recession predicted for 1980.

The Tories claim that the crisis is due to the working class not working hard enough and that it is paid excessive wage rates. This lie is faithfully echoed by every Fleet Street newspaper.

In fact, productivity has risen many times over the past decades. The problem for the capitalists is a feature of their own system — the tendency for the rate of profit to fall.

Misery

So the rate of exploitation of labour must be raised. Schools, hospitals, and public housing — all vital to the working class, but unprofitable for the ruling class — must be cut back. Unproductive sectors of industry like steel must be closed down without regard to the misery of unemployment for thousands.

Thatcher has enthusiastic support for these policies from the ruling class internationally. Because what is happening in Britain is only part of an international drive to reconstruct the capitalist system at the expense of the working class.

For example, the Villiers plan to deprive 52,000 steelworkers of their jobs is only part of the Davignon plan for the West European steel industry decided two years ago, which will also take the jobs of 80,000 Belgian and French steelworkers.

Living standards, public services, and employment will inevitably suffer if these policies are allowed to succeed. But more is involved.

For the Tories to win, they also have to remove some of the basic rights that have been won by the working class. That is why the Tories are deadly serious when they say they want to dismantle all the gains made by the labour movement since the Second World War.

Inflation

Public services have been slashed, with a further budget to come this month. The plan to remove 25,000 jobs in British Leyland in addition to the jobs in steel has been accompanied by a deliberate campaign against the unemployed. Dole money will be callously cut by allowing it to fall substantially against price increases.

Living standards are also under attack. VAT has doubled, the cost of mortgages has reached record heights, and rent and rate increases have been forced through. Inflation will top 20 per cent this year.

But these are only the first steps of this government. To go further, the strength and unity of the trade union movement has to be undermined. This was the number one lesson of the Heath government for Margaret Thatcher.

The suspension of Derek Robinson, the British Leyland convenor, was complementary to the aim of the Prior laws to take away the most powerful weapons of the rank and file membership of the unions — the right to effective picketing, direct democracy, and the closed shop.

The working class will be further divided on racial lines if the attack on black people through the Nationalities Bill is allowed to go ahead.

Reactionary

Women, who have made up the large majority of the new recruits to the trade union movement over the past two years, are being forced out of employment at a far higher rate than men — back into the home. Through ministerial statements, the Tories have promoted the reactionary attacks against the 1967 Abortion Act.

The Whitelaw proposals on prisons and the huge strengthening of the police are part of the drive to discipline and attack youth, particularly black youth, who are rebelling against the conditions of life which give them no future.

Internationally, the Tory government has closed ranks with the United States government. While other capitalist countries in West Europe have protested the stationing of



Sabbey — The labour movement won the last battle with the Tories.

IMG statement

Prepare for confrontation with the Tories

the Cruise and Pershing missiles on their territory, the Tories welcomed these weapons, along with a commitment to boost Britain's contribution to the war drive.

In an astonishing precedent, Britain has acquired a new colony in Zimbabwe. But the comic aspects of Lord Soames' reign should not obscure the deadly seriousness with which the Tories are now leading the military forces of this white racist regime against the liberation armies, which have the overwhelming support of the black population.

Ireland

In Ireland, the Tories are trying to persuade worried imperialists in other countries that they are not losing control.

The faltering attempt by Humphrey Atkins to provide a 'political initiative' in the North of Ireland masks a tightening of security, a reconsideration of some form of internment along with the maintenance of torture, and the barbaric conditions in H Block.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act continues to be used to intimidate the Irish community in Britain and to deter the growing sentiment for troop withdrawal.

The fact the traditionally moderate steelworkers' union has been forced into national strike action against the provocation by the British Steel Corporation shows the extent of opposition to this government's policies.

The call by the Welsh TUC for a strike in South Wales against unemployment, which is supported by steelworkers, miners and railway workers, shows the unity that can be built if the steel union leaders declare that this strike is about saving jobs.

Not only is this the way to win active support from other unions, it is the only way to unify steelworkers in towns like Corby and

Consett which are under sentence of death. For them, 2 per cent, 5 per cent, or 20 per cent of nothing is still nothing.

The defeats already sustained by the steel workers should not be forgotten. Working people in Corby initially refused to accept the closure plans. They fought, marched and protested. They were left isolated by the same Bill Sirs who is now leading the steel strike, and they were forced to retreat.

Thousands of British Leyland workers walked out without prompting from their leadership when the news of Derek Robinson's dismissal broke. Left alone, they witnessed the strike crumbling as Terry Duffy, the AUEW leader, refused to call the official action that would have had Robinson reinstated within a week.

The message is not that the unions cannot fight back, as some who should know better are now claiming. The lesson is that the trade union leaders are terrified of centralising a movement against the Tory policies that would threaten the existence of Thatcher's government and take on a socialist direction.

That sort of movement has to be fought for, giving those who feel isolated and powerless the confidence that a national mass movement is by their side.

Action

Such a movement is built through demonstrations like that called by the TUC against the Corrie anti-abortion Bill; through the 60,000 strong demonstration against the cuts called by the Labour Party in November; and the mobilisation of black industrial workers against the racist laws.

These disparate aims and actions can only be knitted into a common movement politically by raising the perspective that was first endorsed by the Scottish miners last summer —

the need to kick out the Tories. Increasingly, actions will run together. The logic is towards unified and generalised strikes against the Tories.

When the miners threw out Edward Heath in 1974, they dispelled the myth that Parliament and the law stand above the needs and wishes of the majority of the population — the working people of Britain.

Labour councils should now take up that challenge and call mass action to support their refusal to implement the Tory cuts.

Rights

Lord Denning has made it clear what he thinks the law is for in his judgements against the unions, and others fighting for their rights. Such law has always been changed when it has collided with thousands of people going in the opposite direction. The name of such a movement would be socialist.

That is what Tony Benn and his supporters in the Labour Party claim to be fighting for. They say that the main struggle today is to make sure that the Tories are not replaced with another government like that of Callaghan. So they call for support in their struggle inside the Labour Party against the right wing.

But they refuse to link up their campaign in the Labour Party, through such bodies as the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, with the policies and strategy necessary to remove the number one roadblock to socialist advance — the Tory government.

There needs to be a conscious aim of overthrowing and replacing the Labour Party leadership in the trade unions. The same trade unions which Labour Party leaders are using against the Tories.

The Communist Party has been in the line of attacking the Tories. It has supported the reforming leadership of the Labour Party and the Tories. It has been a major force in the struggle to defend the gains made by the working class since the Second World War.

Organise

The Communist Party is the only one which is prepared to support the TUC in its struggle against the Tories. The Communist Party will support the struggle to defend the gains made by the working class since the Second World War.

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Strategy

Such a party will be internationalist, breaking with all notions that there is any common interest between workers and bosses through reactionary ideas of 'national interest'. In fighting for united action against the reformist misleaders, such a party will forge a new leadership devoted only to the interests of the working class.

This sort of strategy is capable of winning many militants in the unions who presently owe their allegiance to the left reformist leaders. It can break some members of the Communist Party disillusioned with its carbon-copy left reformist ideas.

It will involve youth who are awakening to revolutionary ideas under the hammer blows of the Tories. They can play a major role in the struggle. Therefore support must be given to the decision by the recent conference of Revolution to build a revolutionary youth organisation to be launched later this year.

We consider that those who agree with this perspective should join the International Marxist Group in the battle against the Tories and for a socialist alternative.

*The substance of this article was approved at a meeting of the IMG Central Committee last weekend.

The Red Mole

IRELAND

The people have risen up against the Orange police state and British troops. They will smash British Imperialism or be smashed themselves.



The Red Mole

TO THE BUTCHER OF AMMAN:

Your friends, the imperialists, may support you to the last drop of Arab oil, but your enemies, the Palestinian Arab masses, WILL NEVER SURRENDER



SOLIDARITY WITH THE FEDAYEEN

Red Weekly

CHILE: END OF PARLIAMENTARY ROAD

Militants call for national strike



DEMONSTRATE

Red Weekly

SMASH THE TORIES ON ALL FRONTS

ALL OUT WITH THE MINERS

ING TO FIELD 3 CANDIDATES

MORE PICKETS JAILED

THE DECADE TH

THE RULING CLA

By Charles Howard

THE SEVENTIES were nothing if not action-packed. A diverse set of political convulsions saw the fall of Nixon, Heath, Tanaka, Fanfani, Caetano, Bandaranaike, Bhutto, Thieu. Tanzania invaded Uganda to overthrow Idi Amin; Vietnam invaded Kampuchea to dislodge Pol Pot; Cuba sent its soldiers across two continents to help Angolan nationalists defeat the South Africans, an event celebrated by the Soweto insurrection. The United States suffered a crushing defeat with the fall of Saigon, followed less than four years later by the overthrow of the Shah.

The decade saw a furious attempt by the United States and its allies to preserve social and political stability. But the social forces generated by the continuing economic crisis refused to be tamed. Their eruption in the very heartlands of capitalism, long considered a secure and stable imperialist zone, shook the ruling classes in Europe.

If it was Portugal that came closest to a revolution, the situation in Spain was none too easy. In both countries a turbulent transition from bourgeois dictatorship to bourgeois democracy was considerably aided by forces based inside the workers movement itself. In Portugal the Socialist Party and in Spain the Communist Party ensured, in their different ways, that the mass struggles did not overflow the dams erected by the ruling classes in the shape of new bourgeois democratic institutions.

The revolt in Portugal was itself a novel event: a combination of the social and economic contradictions in Portuguese society and the failure of the colonial army to defeat the liberation movements in Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. Rarely has the inter-relationship between the anti-imperialist struggle in the 'third world' and the proletarian revolution in the metropolis been demonstrated in as striking a fashion as it was in Portugal in 1974-75. Though of course the Watergate scandal which led to the resignation of Nixon was not unconnected with the defeat in Indochina. It was one of the Vietnamese leaders who stated that the Watergate crisis had begun on the battlefields of Southern Vietnam.

In Latin America the United States was successful for most of the decade in preventing new social upheavals. It did so by backing and arming the most reactionary regimes that continent has known: in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay. But as the decade drew to a close the guerilla struggle launched by the Sandinistas in Nicaragua culminated in a mass insurrection which toppled the hated Somoza dictatorship.

The structures of the capitalist world revealed that the system was weakest at its extremities. It was in Asia, Africa and Latin America that imperialism suffered its worst reverses. The reason for this was the continued inability of the indigenous ruling classes to develop a self-sustained and stable basis of support for their rule. The overthrow of the Shah and the fall of Somoza demonstrated that even the most brutal and well-oiled instruments of repression were of no avail against the power of the masses.

But it would be false to present a one-sided picture. It is worth recalling that the very first year of the last decade saw the defeat of the Palestinians in Jordan. The Hashemite monarch King Hussein (aided by a then obscure Pakistani military officer named Zia-ul-Haq) ruthlessly crushed the Palestinian resistance in the month which became known throughout the Arab world as Black September.

From that time on the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organisation turned their attention away from any serious opposition to the existing Arab regimes and deepened their reliance on Saudi Arabia, Libya and Syria.

The Pinochet coup in Chile was aided and

RED WEEKLY **Ford** INSIDE **FORD WORKERS IN THE FRONT LINE** More on Vietnam - pages 2,3,4,4

VIETNAM: A GIANT STEP FOR HUMANITY!

RED WEEKLY **SOLIDARITY WITH THE PORTUGUESE WORKING CLASS!** Sat. 28th September 7.30pm, Charing X. Embankment **DEMONSTRATION**

DEFEND THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION

WORKERS DEMOCRACY: ... **UNITED RESPONSE:** ... **BUILD SOLIDARITY:** ...

RED WEEKLY **ALL OUT AGAINST THE SPANISH DICTATORSHIP!** DEMONSTRATION - Saturday, 15th November 1pm, Charing X. Embankment

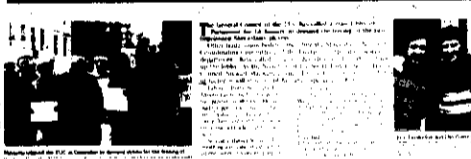
NOW SMASH FRANCOISM!

RED WEEKLY **DEMONSTRATION and RALLY NO ARMS FOR APARTHEID!** ASSEMBLY Charing X. Embankment Sunday 27 June 2.00 p.m.

SLAUGHTERED! AVENGE THESE DEATHS

RED WEEKLY **INSIDE THE CIA** 4-Page special

SHREWSBURY 2 JAILED BY TORIES - KEPT IN BY LABOUR



abetted every inch of the way by the United States. Within a fortnight thousands of trade unionists and leftists had been butchered in cold blood. In neighbouring Argentina a state-sponsored terrorism unleashed a bloodbath against the left. In Brazil, however, the phenomenal increase in the size of the urban working class saw the birth of new mass oppositions, which continue to grow in size and influence.

It was the instability of capitalist Europe which worried the general staff of imperialism. For if the fortifications were breached anywhere in Western Europe the effects on a global scale would be catastrophic for the capitalist social order. But the defeat of the Portuguese revolution in November 1975 inaugurated a temporary stability. In country after country right-wing governments were elected or re-elected to office: Spain, France, Italy, Sweden, Britain, Portugal. A victory for Strauss in West Germany would (if it occurred) cast a long shadow over the whole continent in the first years of the new decade.

The hold of bourgeois democracy and mass reformism proved to be a winning combination for the Western European ruling class — though mass unemployment and the continuing economic recession are bound in the next ten years to create fissures which it will be difficult to contain in the same way.

In Britain the beginning of the Seventies saw a build-up of steam inside the labour movement against the policies of the Heath government. From 1970-74 the British working class, undeterred by constitutional niceties, led a sustained struggle against the Tories. The fall of Heath in 1974 led to two general elections, from which Labour emerged victorious, but the small majority it secured soon disappeared. Nonetheless the election of a Labour government on the heels of a mass working class upsurge led many workers to believe that the Labour government would at least implement some important radical reforms. They were to be disappointed. Neither the Wilson nor Callaghan

THE DECADE IRELAND DIDN'T GO AWAY

By Geoff Bell

TEN YEARS ago James Callaghan described the North of Ireland this way:

'The troops organised a meals on wheels service for old people in Londonderry, took youths from Belfast climbing in the Black Mountains, organised dances and so on. As Christmas approached, the flood of invitations to individual soldiers became almost embarrassing. One senior officer described the inhabitants in his area in Belfast as, "the nicest, friendliest, most hospitable and sometimes most maddening people in the world", which I thought summed it up rather well.'

For Britain the decade that followed these optimistic, patronising words saw many false dawns. According to the last Northern Irish Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, internment in 1971 would 'weed out the gunmen'.

Three years later the British government promised its Constitutional Convention would 'command the most widespread acceptance throughout the community'.

Optimist

One of the greatest optimists was Roy Mason, the decade's longest serving Northern Ireland Secretary of State. In 1976 he declared, 'the security forces have an increasingly detailed inventory of who the significant terrorist figures are... the leaders face a chilly prospect'. The next year his message was, 'the situation will get better... for the terrorist there can be no hope', and in 1978 he promised 'gradual but marked progress to the restoration of normality'. Mason's last year, which he shared with Humphrey Atkins, saw more British soldiers killed in the North of Ireland than in any year since 1972.

At the start of the decade there were 2,500 British troops on the streets of the North of Ireland, today there are six times that many. With CS gas, plastic bullets, rubber bullets and police computers, 'security' was the North of Ireland's only growth industry in the last ten years. For Britain the 1970s was the decade when Ireland refused to lie down and be quiet.

Symbols

Why it did not is best symbolised by three occurrences, all of which took place in the first half of the decade: internment in 1971; the fall of Stormont in 1972; the fall of the Assembly and its power-sharing executive in 1974.

The first showed that the British promises of civil rights were a mirage and that the age old policy of coercion was their preferred 'solution'.

The fall of Stormont — the old Northern Ireland 'home rule' parliament — in 1972 displayed the failure of coercion.

The fall of the Assembly two years later — brought about by a Protestant general strike in protest against the idea of sharing power with Catholics — suggested that as far as the Protestant working class was

concerned, while the North of Ireland state remained they would spring to its defence along with all the injustices which went with it.

The consequences of each of these dramas were not immediately clear; what was involved the British reaction to them, or rather the inaction. Note this, written just before the fall of the Assembly:

Pledges

'If at any time the Assembly and the Executive should be made unworkable through a deliberate refusal by the majority to play their part, then in my judgement the United Kingdom would be entitled to reconsider her position and her pledges on all matters.'

The writer of that sentence was James Callaghan but when the Protestants did exactly what he warned against, Callaghan and the Wilson government in which he served stood idly by. By and large the rest of the British labour movement followed suit.

There are signs that this at last is beginning to change. It is much easier to raise and discuss the issue of Ireland in the Labour Party and in the unions than it has been for six or seven years. For the most part this is explicable by events in Ireland itself.

The three turning points have worked themselves out in the shape of the three bourgeois politicians who dominate Irish political life today.

Swept

From the Northern Protestants there is Ian Paisley who swept all before him in the recent European election when he amassed a total of 170,000 votes. For the Catholics, the new leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, John Hume, has proved himself the most enduring politician. In the South the new premier, Charlie Haughey, began the decade as an alleged ally of the Provisionals. That Haughey was chosen by his party to lead Fianna Fail in the next election suggests that many regard such a reputation as an electoral asset.

Paisley, Hume and Haughey have each in their own ways insisted that the over-riding issue in the North of Ireland is partition; that they have attained the positions of authority they have suggests their estimates are shared by the majority in their different communities.

None would be where they are today if it was not for the anti-imperialist movement in the North and in particular the Provisionals. It was the Provos who saw before anyone else that what counted in Ireland was the unresolved national question; a contention which has been disputed much in the last ten years, but which few would argue with today. If the 1970s has been anyone's decade it has been that of the Provisionals.

Prophecy

As to what the next ten years offer, the last ten have shown how uncertain a business prophecy can be.



BERNADETTE DEVLIN-McALISKEY, still fighting



GERRY FITT, deposed SDLP leader



JOHN HUME, SDLP leader



BRIAN FAULKNER, Last Unionist PM



PEACE PEOPLE — Where are they now?



IAN PAISLEY, Loyalist hero

There was, for example, the Peace People and their promise in 1976 that they would end the violence 'in a few weeks'. Where are the Peace People now?

Nevertheless a couple of predictions can be tentatively suggested; that Britain's latest political initiative, Humphrey Atkins' constitutional conference, will fail to solve anything is the most obvious. This in turn is liable to lead to more self-questioning in British society about just what exactly its government and army are doing in the North-east of Ireland. Indeed according to an article in the *Sunday Times* Margaret Thatcher somewhat shocked her colleagues at a recent cabinet meeting when she asked, 'why don't we leave Ireland?'

Perhaps the safest bet of all for the 1980s is that many more in Britain will be asking that question as the months and years proceed.



JAMES CHICHESTER-CLARKE — former Unionist PM, now Lord

Women's trial begins

The trial of 11 feminists arrested in Armagh during an International Women's Day picket last year began as Socialist Challenge went to press. The women were assaulted and held during a demonstration outside Armagh women's prison.

At the initial hearing on 31 October in Armagh the accused, including members of Women Against Imperialism and playwright Margaretta D'Arcy, entered the court room wearing T-shirts bearing the feminist symbol and the slogans: 'Prisoner of War Status Now' and 'Smash H-block'. They refused to stand when the magistrate entered the court.

Most of the day was taken up by the evidence and cross examination of the chief prosecution witness, Inspector Donaldson, and the police doctor. The Inspector's excuse for the unprovoked attack on the demonstrators, numbering about 50 women and children, was that he acted to prevent an ugly scene developing between the women and some Loyalist counter-demonstrators. None of these Loyalists was arrested.

Some of the women charged faced serious double assault charges and the possibility of a prison sentence.

YOUTH

REVOLUTION ROCKS THE BOAT

By Redmond O'Neill

'TRADE union leaders like Duffy won't give full rights to apprentices and young workers because they are scared about what we would do if we got the power.' That was the view of one of the young workers who attended the first national conference called by the socialist youth paper Revolution in mid-December.

Given the success of the conference and the number of young workers at it, he was dead right. The conference was attended by 70 people from all over Britain representing a membership of 200 in local Revolution groups. It was called to prepare the launch of Revolution as an independent revolutionary youth organisation in May 1980. The wide ranging discussions showed that Revolution had come a long way since its launch in 1978 by the IMG.

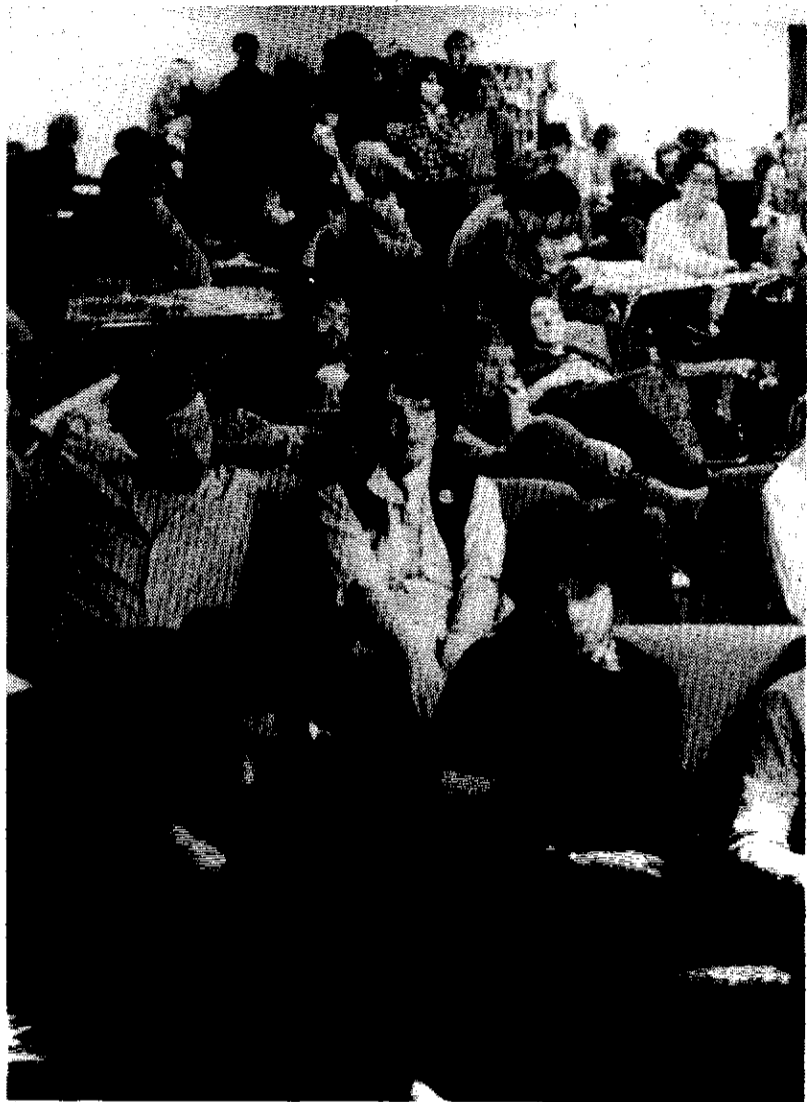
In opening the conference, Alix from Wandsworth explained: 'If we're going to set up a revolutionary organisation we need to be crystal clear on the programme we want to base it on; the political perspectives we are fighting for; who we want to reach with our ideas; and how we are going to organise ourselves so we have a fully democratic organisation, and one which can strike together once we have decided on action.'

That's exactly what the conference did deal with — building an independent youth organisation. Workshops were held on the trade unions; the National Union of Students, the National Union of School Students; racism and imperialism; Ireland; youth oppression; and women's liberation.

It was agreed that Revolution needed its own programme as a guide to action in the class struggle. Mark, introducing the draft programme, explained that in his view Revolution should be committed to build a party and an international organisation — for him the IMG and the Fourth International — and that this would be an important part of the debate leading up to the launch of the new organisation.

No vote was taken on this at the conference because it was felt that such a decision could only be meaningful once Revolution was actually establishing itself as an independent organisation, and as such making its own decisions about its relations with other organisations on the basis of complete control over its own affairs.

The conference decided to begin moving from a federal structure to one based on the principle of unity in action and freedom of discussion



The family is fundamental. Parents can get away with anything — they have the right to beat kids, just like teachers do.

democratic organisations. Finally it was agreed that, as part of the fight for unity against the Tory government, Revolution would continue to fight for a single united revolutionary youth organisation, in particular approaching Rebel and the Socialist Youth League for discussions about fusion.

The conference was a tremendous step towards the launching of a new proletarian socialist youth organisation in Britain. The National Committee elected from the conference was itself a good demonstration of Revolution's success in winning working class youth to revolutionary politics: it has 16 women and 14 men — [12 of them

young workers, 6 school students, 8 students, and 4 unemployed.]

Revolution will be the first youth organisation in Britain for many years which, whilst clearly defining its political relations with all other organisations, at the same time does so from a position of retaining its own organisational independence.

The aim between now and May is a dues-paying membership of 300 organised in local Revolution branches and a successful fund-drive of £3,000 to put the organisation on its feet.

Donations can be sent to Revolution, PO Box 50, London N1. (Cheques/POs made payable to Revolution).

COME TO THE BRANCH MEETING — BUT YOU CAN'T VOTE

THE workshop on the unions highlighted the problems young workers face in industry. Derek, an apprentice in the Boilermakers' union from Middleton, put forward his view:

'The union does little for apprentices. We get terrible pay, the worst conditions and when I started to kick up a fuss I was invited to come along to branch meetings — only to find out I couldn't have a vote! At first I thought of getting all the apprentices to resign to win us rights in the union, but my friends told me that this was a cop out. "It's not the unions that are bad, it's the leaders. We can't fight them outside", they told me.'

Barbara from London agreed, but she thought the NUSS could do a lot more to introduce school students to union principles. The workshop decided to call a special school for Revolution supporters about organising inside the unions prior to the launch of the new organisation in May.

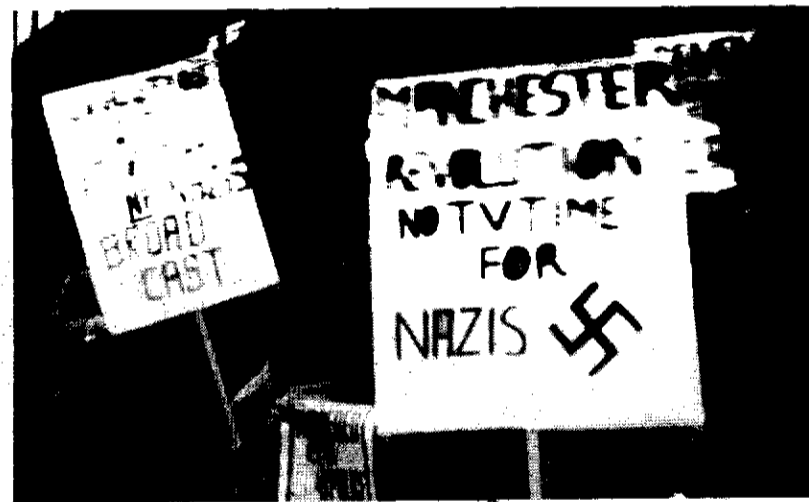
Jim from Birmingham explained the more general problems of youth in the workshop on youth oppression:

'The capitalists want a society where no-one rocks the boat, no-one challenges the status quo, where the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Youth aren't trained to fit into the mould so the schools are designed not to educate us, but to make us part of the ideal bourgeois system.'

'The family is fundamental. Parents can get away with anything — they have the right to beat kids, just like teachers do. Religion is poured down our throats to ensure we're morally pure. We're sexually repressed, financially dependent and patronised.'

'Adults are not the cause of youth oppression. The people who make the real gains from oppressing us are the capitalists because they're the ones who get the factory fodder or the skilled work for a cheap price, who get the passive population and get another generation ready to oppress their kids.'

Many other issues were raised. Would a socialist society abolish education? What should the age limit be for membership of Revolution? Perhaps there should be no age limits but supporters should be accepted as long as they are oppressed as youth. These questions will be part of an ongoing discussion in Revolution groups.



INTERNATIONAL

ZANU blood on British hands

By Richard Carver

RHODESIAN TROOPS were ordered in against Patriotic Front guerillas on Sunday. Only this time it was all right, of course, because the order came from the British Governor, Lord Soames.

The troops were instructed to patrol the border areas — supposedly to prevent 'infiltration'. This followed a clash between Rhodesian troops and a ZANU group on Saturday night in which two guerillas were killed, several injured, and ten captured. Here too the Rhodesian troops were acting under Soames' authority.

This bizarre use of one side in the ceasefire to monitor (and kill) the other was an utterly predictable outcome of the Lancaster House agreement. The only way the guerillas would have a fair chance would be if Britain pulled out completely instead of giving 'legal' cover to the white regime's murder gangs.

The first victim of the ceasefire may well have been ZANU commander Josiah Tongogara — ironically one of its main architects. Unless the car crash in Mozambique in which he died last week was the most absurd historical coincidence, the likely culprits are to be found within the Rhodesian security forces.

Such a murder would be easily within the

capabilities of the white regime, which puts aside considerable funds to finance right-wing oppositionists in Mozambique. English-speaking whites have been reported at the scene of a series of atrocities against Mozambican civilian targets.

Tongogara's prestige among the guerillas and the Zimbabwean people could hardly have been higher. He was probably the only nationalist leader whose reputation crossed party lines. When he died he was on his way to Salisbury to call upon fighters in the bush to move to the ceasefire rendezvous points.

Murder

Tongogara's death makes this exercise all the more difficult, since many guerillas will draw the obvious conclusion that he was murdered — and that the ceasefire is therefore not worth the paper it was written on. This again points to Rhodesian responsibility.

Now that the Patriotic Front has agreed to the Lancaster House compromise, the white forces have everything to gain if it drops out of the settlement. The British would then be committed to supervising elections involving only the whites and Bishop Muzorewa.

The press has enthusiastically picked up on



Tongogara was known as an advocate of military and electoral unity.

speculation that Tongogara was killed by ZANU members opposed to unity with ZAPU, the other wing of the Patriotic Front. Tongogara was known as an advocate of military and electoral unity.

Political murders are not unknown within the liberation movement, and so the possibility

cannot be finally ruled out — but more often such killings are Rhodesian operations dressed up to cause the maximum confusion. Tongogara himself was the victim of just such a frame-up in 1975 when the ZANU chairperson, Herbert Chitepo, was murdered in Zambia.

In any case, the break-up of the Patriotic Front is by no means just a ZANU tactic. Although ZAPU now poses as the defender of unity, it is equally keen to contest the February elections on its own.

This split — and possibly many smaller ones — will add to the general fragmentation and paralysis of Zimbabwean politics which will be one of the first fruits of the Lancaster House agreement.

The Tory government hopes that Zimbabwe will remain just this side of civil war until the February elections are over and the 'transfer of power' completed. Then, the plan goes, the Patriotic Front can be left to face the consequences of the deal they have done.

As things are going at present the crisis may come even earlier. The white forces could use the privileged position given them by Soames to provoke a total breakdown before elections can take place. British troops would be far from neutral in such a conflict. That is why they must be pulled out now.

Threat to women in Iran

THERE were two full pages on Iran in *Socialist Challenge* (6 December). But they completely missed out the women's struggle.

There will be no accurate analysis of the Iranian revolution and the ensuing events without analysing the economic and social position of women. The women's issues are the real issues, and the real political struggle today for at least half the population is on that front.

Under Islamic ideology it is possible to create a patriarchal, male chauvinist, sexist state in which women, whose position is centred in the family, would be totally subjugated to men. Such a state could function and continue by enslaving women at home in free domestic labour, child producing and rearing, educational and welfare care of children, and also of the old, sick and handicapped in the usually large patriarchal family.

The new Iranian constitution has all the provisions for such a state, and the authorities have already started enforcing them. That is why it was so crucial to read behind the events of the US embassy occupation in Tehran when the referendum on the new constitution took place.

Although the genuine anti-imperialist feelings of the Iranian masses cannot be doubted, the main issue is whether a religious government with clearly reactionary internal policies (e.g. on national minorities, women) can be capable of fighting imperialism at all?

Along with defending the Iranian revolution and the overthrow of the Shah's regime, we must say loudly that all is not well on the Iranian front; that the situation is a 'return to the dark ages' and to medievalism as far as the women's position goes. The danger is that the masses are behind the clergy and religious ideology in Iran today.

I feel that the beginning of a new fascism is taking root in Iran. We can only struggle effectively if we are aware of it and ready to combat it with all our forces. Revolutionary socialists must come down to earth from their high theoretical programme on nationalisation of the banks and planned economy to deal with everyday issues like discrimination against women, basic democratic rights, unemployment, physical violence against the people.

The best fruit of our revolution is the birth of a women's movement (which recently held its first conference), along with the upsurge in the struggles of the national minorities. The movement is small and needs all the support it can get from socialists — unless they think that a male socialist state would do for now.

If women are crushed by the fanatics then the socialists will be next to go. Remember Indonesia. Khomeini is a leader able to repeat it on a larger scale. **MANNY (member of Iranian Women's Group)**

Cost of 'The Thirties'

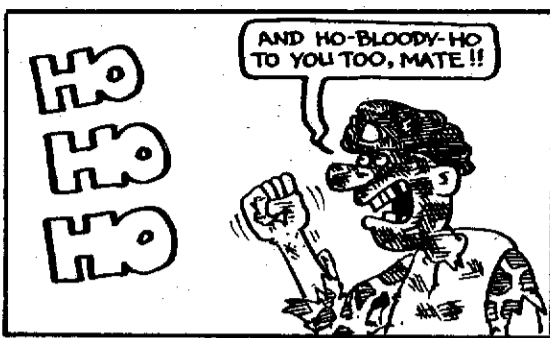
MEGAN Martin's review of 'The Thirties' (6 December) misses out on one important point — the cost to the public of mounting such a prestigious and meaningless exhibition.

Rumour has it that one, temporary, mezzanine floor in the exhibition cost £150,000 — enough to fund a community arts project for ten years. Meanwhile the Arts Council is cutting back on everyone else's expenditure. **SHIRLEY FRANCIS (London E5)**

*The Thirties exhibition is at the Hayward Gallery, South Bank, London SE1, until 13 January.

Precedent for 'terrorist' swap

THE international pressure on the Irish government to sign the ruling classes' global agreement on the



exchange and return of 'terrorist' suspects is an example of history repeating itself.

As the contradictions and tensions of the feudal mode of production deepened in Europe in the 16th century, it resulted in a growing oppression of the serfs. The peasantry responded by deserting the manorial farm. The feudal backlash from the barons and landlords entailed collective agreements for the exchange and return of captured peasants.

The increased repression of members of the working class engaged in national and anti-imperialist struggles is just one feature of the growing contradictions of the capitalist mode of production and the heightening of the international class struggle.

N. LONG (Woolwich)

Ultra-left?

IT was 'ultra-left' of Julian Atkinson, writing on the Labour Party (13 December), to state that Ralph Miliband 'could not be described as left, let alone ultra-left'. Miliband, who has contributed so positively to socialist literature and has been instrumental in setting up centres for Marxist education, certainly has every right to be described as 'left'. **GREGORY CAREY (Leeds)**

*We agree. The sentence in question should have read: 'Jenkins fails to point out that this "mythology" (about Bevanism) is itself the product of a rather broad current including Ralph Miliband, David Coates, and a host of writers who could scarcely be described as left, let alone ultra-left.' We apologise for this error, which occurred in the course of editing Julian Atkinson's article.

The role of journalists

I MUST reply to the criticisms by Geoff Collier (SWP) and Brynley Heaven (13 December) of my article on the demise of *Hull News* (29 November), as important lessons can be learned for alternative media.

Geoff accuses me of 'waffling' and 'mistakes'. He says: 'What does seeking advertising from "businesses least tuned into competitive markets mean?' Well, what is the difference between Ford Motor Co. and Joe Bloggs Corner Garage? Inability to distinguish between the two, reliance on big advertisers, was a main reason for the collapse of *Hull News*.

He argues that the paper collapsed because of the Trades Council's isolation from the labour movement. But this begs the question. Hasn't sectoralism and poor cross-union organisation always been a historical weakness of the British trade union movement? *Hull* is symptomatic of many trades councils. And isn't this what the Defend Our Unions Campaign is trying to counter?

On the question of donations from the movement, if the comrades hadn't jumped overboard as soon as

the paper sprang a leak they'd have an accurate record of the financial situation.

In the future battles against Thatcher the mass of workers will rally round their traditional organisations and leaderships. Hence the importance of driving cross-union initiatives like *Hull News* deep into the labour movement. When, as in 1974, the left leaders of today betray the mass struggles of tomorrow, a mass fighting opposition will be necessary to remove them. The fleecing of non-competitive capitalist units through advertising must be subordinated to this political task.

Moreover, *Hull SWP* were split down the middle on *Hull News*. The majority agreed with Tony Cliff's view, expressed at the time, that it was an 'adaptation to Bennism'. In reality this division flowed from the SWP's confused attitude to the united front. But Geoff and the minority, however, adapted not to Bennism but to the elitist ideology of professional journalism. They lined up behind the editor — who viewed workers as being 'not literate enough to write *Hull News*'. Therefore it would have to be a paper for the workers rather than of the workers.

Even worse, Brynley and Geoff supported the editor's refusal to publish the Trades Council's 'Statement of Principles' in the first issue. Apparently, before we could publish our policies in our own paper we would need the OK from this erstwhile Bernstein and Woodward! Such antics reduced the paper to a parody of a bourgeois tabloid, the foibles of a clique taking precedence over democratic decisions. On the media scare, both radio and YTV uncritically reproduced the statements of the car dealers that they were not backing a 'trade union paper'. What's this if not snowballing a 'run' on advertising?

The lesson is that it is the role of journalists not to substitute for but to service the activists in the field. Ultimately, however, the responsibility for the situation lies with the Trades Council for not initiating a hard political discussion before selecting personnel. **NOEL HIBBERT (Hull)**

WARF comic — missing the point?

WITH regard to Bisi Williams' review of Leeds WARF's comic (6 December), we would like to make the following points.

As white women attempting to analyse our own racism and confront institutionalised racism in society, we in no way presume to speak for the black community — nor would they expect us to. We envisage the comic being used as a focus for discussion in predominantly white areas where racist attitudes and prejudices are often totally ignored or go unchallenged.

Bisi Williams seems to have completely missed the point by attacking one remark out of context — 'He's on the scrounge like the rest of them'. This is, after all, a common

comment about blacks, an uninformed and wrong comment. Moreover the teachers and discussion leaders who will use this comic should have the nous to amplify the stupidity and ignorance of such a remark.

Yes, we do know about, have discussed, and have taken other action on institutionalised state racism, but we decided to start at the level of white adolescents who may not yet have analysed or even have been given an explanation of how the state does enforce racist laws and controls. We have written teachers' notes pointing out that the types of racism illustrated in the comic are only the immediately apparent types. Racism is ingrained in society — we hope the comic (which was never intended to be a major analytical treatise) will generate discussion of the question at a deeper level than is possible in a 'comic'.

LEEDS WARF (V. Anderson, W. Collins, G. Lacey, J. Keogh)

The numbers game

YOUR article on the conference of the Socialists Workers Party (6 December) was good, but one point worried me. Duncan Hallas has been quoted as admitting that the effective membership of the SWP is about 1,500, and their own members confirm this. Even if it has a paper membership of 3,600 you should make it clear what sort of members you are talking about, or you will mislead readers.

Lying about numbers is a bad habit and we should stop it. It misleads militants outside the organised groups and can mislead us in deciding our tasks. There is the danger of over-estimating our collective strength, and there is the opposite danger of pessimism about the political impact a small group can have in a favourable situation.

We should tell the honest truth about our numerical strength and set an example. Probably there are no more than 3,600 people active in revolutionary organisations in Britain all together. Let's at least be honest about our resources when we discuss our political objectives. And if we can overcome the tiresome competitive attitude we know so well we will also be able to discuss political differences honestly in terms of what we call on the workers to do, not who has more members in the AUEW.

I'm afraid the largest revolutionary organisation in Europe is probably the OCI in France, with 1,800 to 2,000 members, although they claim 6,000. That should be a lesson to us. **CHRIS YOUNG (Oxford)**

Inevitable betrayal

GEOFF Bell's report on the past five years at British Leyland (6 December) is an excellent explanation of how the recently victimised workers helped to prepare the ground for their own victimisation. It is a thorough indictment of the reformist nature of the Stalinist leaders of the Leyland workers — unable even to gain reforms in the interests of the workers.

But if defence of those victimised is to be effective and is to take the Leyland workers forward it must be combined with more than even unremitting criticism of the policies put forward and carried out by those same leaders; it must state clearly the need to replace the plant and national union leaders as well as their policies.

It is not good enough, in fact it is wrong, to conclude that 'If Robinson, Brindle, and the rest had rejected "participation" ... they would have

been in an infinitely stronger position today'. The policy of the Stalinists and other reformist riff-raff is inevitable, and they are not misguided socialists as some readers of Geoff Bell's article might be led to believe.

The point is that it is revolutionaries in Leyland and throughout the labour movement who have to offer a socialist alternative to the present mis-leaders like Robinson, not pin hopes on what might have been if only the reformists had not done what they did. **NIGEL BROWN (Dudley)**

LETTERS published on this page will normally be cut to at least 400 words, to ensure that the maximum number of readers can express their views.

Anonymous letters will not be published unless there is a very special reason, but real names will be withheld from publication on request.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

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

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

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

BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.30, Sat. 10-4. For more info phone 643-9209.

BRIGHTON: For more info phone Nick, 605052.

BRISTOL: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. For more info contact Box 2, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Montpellier, Bristol 6.

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

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

EDINBURGH: SC on sale every Sat, Princes St, 12.30-2. For more info phone 554 0196 or write: Box 6, 1st May Bookshop, 45 Niddry St.

GLASGOW: SC on sale Saturdays 11-1 outside Central Station, Thurs, Fri 5-6pm same place.

GRAVESEND: SC Group meets regularly. Details from Gravesend Tigers, Box 13, Gravesend.

HAMILTON: — supporters sell SC every Saturday in the Hamilton shopping centre, 1-5pm. For details of local activities contact John Ford, 53 Elliott Crescent, Hamilton.

HACKNEY SC meeting: 'What is happening in Iran?' Speaker: John Leadbetter. Tues 8 Jan, 7.30pm, at the Britannia pub, Mare Street, E8.

LEEDS SC on sale Sats 11-1 Shopping Precinct, Armadale Centre Headingley, Harehills Shopping Centre.

OXFORD: SC sold Fri, Kings Arms, 12-2, Sat, Cornmarket, 10-2. For more info phone 47624.

PADDINGTON SC on sale every Sat 11.30-12.30pm at the Westbourne Park Road Junction, and every Thursday at 5.15pm at Ladbroke Grove Tube Station.

S.W. LONDON: SC on sale at Oval tube kiosk, Herne Hill BR kiosk, Tetric Books (Clapham High St.). Also on sale Sat 11-1, and Thur/Fri mornings at Brixton tube.

SHEFFIELD SC on sale every Sat. 12-1pm Fargate.

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

TEESSIDE: SC sales at Newsfane shops in Cleveland Centre and on Linsthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, and at Greens Bookstall, upstairs in Spencer Market, Stockton High Street.

TOWER HAMLETS SC supporters sell papers every Fri 5-6pm, Sat 11-12.30, Sun 10.30-12.00 Brick Lane.

WORKING male socialist, 23, needs accommodation, North London. Domestically minded. Reply: 21 Castle St, Aberdeen, or via Colin, Aberdeen 574068.

STRIKE against Corrie! 5 February mass lobby of parliament; Central Hall rally, 2pm. 8 February: women's assembly, an all women's protest against the third reading of the Corrie Bill, Central Hall, 2pm — bands/theatre/dance/songs/speakers. National Abortion Campaign/Campaign Against Corrie.

THE OTHER BOOKSHOP

Combat in the Erogenous Zone, by Ingrid Bengis — Wildwood House, £2.95

Gender Advertisement, by Erving Goffman — Macmillan, £2.95

Spare Rib Women's Liberation Diary 1980 — £2.00

328 Upper Street, London N1 2XQ (Tel. 01-226 0571)

RUDOLPH Bahro is free. Twenty-three months after his arrest by East Germany's 'People's Police', 15 months after his secret trial on trumped-up charges of 'espionage', the author of *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* was released under the amnesty declared on the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic and allowed to leave for West Germany.

An interview was arranged easily enough. Having pieced together his analysis of East European 'socialism' with only a minimum of access to other than the official sources, Rudolph Bahro was only too keen to talk to West European socialists.

On learning that I represented the press of the Fourth International, Bahro showed great interest, and a lot of respect, for Trotskyism: 'The Trotskyists — even though I disagree with them — have the most developed theoretical analysis,' he told me. But for Bahro, that also meant that the Fourth International would have to give up its organisational independence if it wanted to make its analysis politically effective.

Bahro's political project is the unification of all socialist currents in a single organisation; the overcoming of the sectarian divisions on the left. He is very eager to learn more about the various tendencies, and a bit incredulous when I described to him the full spectrum of tendencies to be found. 'No, not really — they can't be serious!'

Eurocommunist

Bahro describes himself as a Eurocommunist, but is ready to concede the 'opportunist' aspects in the practice of the Italian and French Communist Parties. The Eurocommunist parties have not thought out their strategy thoroughly enough. Yet a strategy of achieving a 'powerful ideological consensus of the majority' in order to 'isolate the state from the monopolies', a 'peaceful, democratic revolution against monopoly capital', is what Bahro has in mind, and where he agrees with Berlinguer, leader of the Italian CP.

Of course, we disagree on this. I challenge his preference for the Italian as opposed to the French CP on the grounds that the Italian party has persuaded the trade unions to moderate their wage demands, while the French CP protests against the austerity plans of its government.

For Bahro, the ever widening gap in living standards between the developed imperialist world and the poor countries of the Third World must be overcome by an austerity policy of the working class.

I am not sure that we are still speaking the same language, but somehow I never doubt that, despite such statements, Bahro remains a true revolutionary at heart. It is difficult to imagine him, who speaks so eloquently about 'the communism that Marx and Engels wanted', selling out the Fiat workers to Italy's bourgeois government.

Premature

A similar problem comes up in relation to Eastern Europe. Bahro declares himself against any 'premature' political activity in East Germany, and insists that until changes have been brought about in Moscow all one can do is to discuss theory — what he calls 'the ideological struggle'. 'It is no use artificially forcing political action in the GDR, nothing is gained by it. They will simply defeat us outright.'

But when pressed on the possibility of mass explosions, the revolutionary in Bahro comes through, against his theoretical reservations: 'Of course, should anything happen in specific countries, we must show ourselves to be revolutionaries and cannot act as a brake on history.'

I challenge him on some of the more controversial aspects of his book — his insistence, for example, that there should be a one-party system. In reply, Bahro maintains his view that parties represent class differences, and that there was no justification therefore for a multitude of parties once private ownership of the means of production and thus the bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie had been abolished.

But there is, as it turns out, more to it than that: 'If one acknowledges the reactions of the masses, in the GDR for example, who are still condemned to an unreflective life by the nature of their work processes, then it is unavoidable that there should still be a justification for saying: Here the party, there the masses.'

Enlightened

In other words, Bahro freely admits that he does not see the masses as capable of exercising power yet, and that he foresees an entire historical period during which an 'enlightened' elite, organised in a new 'League of



Rudolf Bahro interviewed

'We must not play with fire'

RUDOLPH BAHRO, an East German socialist, has recently been freed after spending nearly two years in jail on a charge of spying. His arrest followed the publication of his book, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*, by a West

German company.

On this page GUNTER MINNERUP recounts a conversation he had with Bahro in West Germany after his release.

Communists', will have to guide social progress in what he sees as a democratic dialogue between leadership and masses. 'We should have learned from the whole history of our movement that one cannot translate some guiding principle directly into tactical concepts.'

It soon becomes clear that two experiences dominate Bahro's political thinking: that of Prague in 1968, which makes him doubt the possibility of any fundamental political change in Eastern Europe until there has been some change in the Soviet Union, and the experience of the fascination that the 'West German model' holds for sectors of the masses in the GDR which, in his opinion, would lead to a collapse of the state if reforms were enacted too boldly.

Fatalism

Hence his hope for a 'guided' reform process, 'guided' by enlightened sectors of the bureaucracy: 'If the hour strikes, as in Prague 1968, if ... they drop their guard for a single moment ... that opens up other possibilities. In such a situation the emancipatory interests would make themselves felt right up as far as the high ranks of the apparatus.'

Until that happens, 'we must not play with fire ... out of revolutionary subjectivism and voluntarism'.

There is definitely a contrast between the revolutionary fire of *The Alternative in Eastern Europe* and the cautious fatalism of the author now that he has been released. The theoretical ambiguities were, of course, already contained in the book — but they were ambiguities, frequently contradicted by bold statements of revolutionary intransigence. Yet there is no cause for disappointment: Bahro is a true product of his background.

The enthusiastic communist and Marxist is still there, the belief in the alternative of 'socialism or barbarism' unbroken. But his Marxism has been shaped in an environment in which the masses cannot be trusted, in which Western capitalism remains the yardstick of

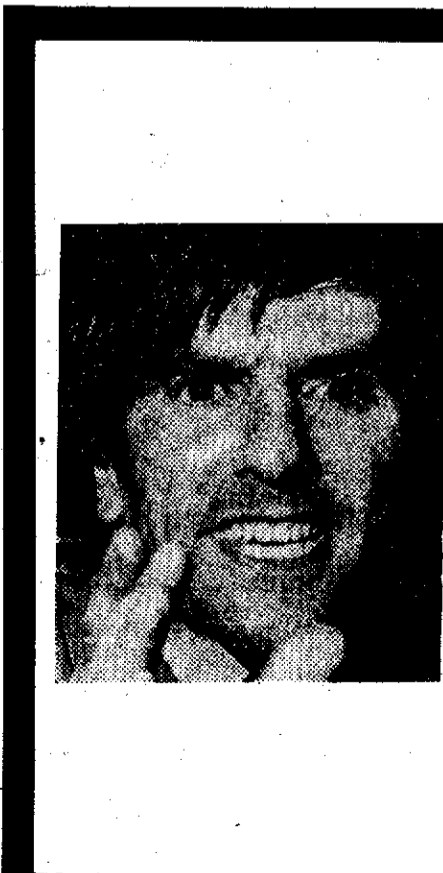
progress, and in which gradualism even appears revolutionary compared to the dead hand of the bureaucracy.

At the time of the interview, Bahro had barely spent a week in the West. His curiosity, his thirst for information about the realities of the labour and socialist movement under capitalism was still fresh and largely unsatisfied.

His declared intention is to build a united socialist movement to the left of the SPD (the

German Labour Party) on the model of the Italian Communist Party. Disillusionment will be rapid; a further clarification of political ideas necessary. Time will tell whether Bahro's future evolution will be towards revolutionary Marxism or towards the bureaucratic reformism of the Eurocommunists.

His present ideas contain the seeds of both. *The full text of the interview will be published in the January-February 1980 issue of *New Left Review*.



RUDI DUTSCHKE, who died on 24 December, was above all an internationalist. Born and brought up in East Germany, he fled to the West, but unlike many others he did not become an anti-communist but a radical. As one of the founders of the German SDS (Socialist Students of Germany) in the mid-1960s he helped to form the politics of the German student movement.

Whatever its other weaknesses the German SDS was internationalist to the core. It made solidarity with Vietnam its central concern. In February 1968 it organised a Congress for Vietnam in West Berlin, the centre of the Cold War. 25,000 people marched behind red flags and portraits of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in protest against American imperialism.

A few months later a young Nazi, inspired by the inflammatory newspaper campaign of the reactionary Springer Press, shot Dutschke in an attempt to kill him. He suffered a severe head-wound, but recovered after a number of operations. He came to convalesce in Britain, but was deported by the Tory government at the beginning of 1971. He then settled in Denmark.

But the injury to his head never fully healed. It was this which caused him to faint while having a bath and drown: an unnecessary and tragic end.

Rudi was a dedicated socialist. Our best tribute is to carry on the struggle.

Socialist Challenge

SOVIET TROOPS OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!

By Tariq Ali

THE DECISION of the Soviet Union to send troops to remove Hafizullah Amin, General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), replace him with Babrak Karmal, and occupy parts of the country must be condemned on every count.

It disregards the rights of the people of Afghanistan to determine their own future; it tramples under foot the rights of the PDPA (limited though these were) to choose its own leaders; and it will aid the most reactionary and backward-looking forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Ever since the overthrow of the Daoud dictatorship in April 1978 in a military coup, the PDPA has struggled to establish its rule. It was a difficult task in the first place. Afghanistan is an extremely difficult country in which to make a social revolution. There are only two factories in the whole country and the size of the working class is extremely small.

Shopkeepers

If you add to that the proliferation of small shopkeepers in the cities, and a deeply-rooted tribal structure with tribal property rights, the magnitude of the tasks which faced the new leaders becomes obvious.

These problems could have been overcome only by a patient process of educating the masses coupled with a series of radical social measures. But the Stalinist tradition of the PDPA, coupled with the proximity of Moscow, ruled out this course.

To institute a regime as autocratic as the one it replaced — despite much talk about democracy — was hardly likely to excite the citizens of Afghanistan. Only a thoroughgoing revolutionary democracy could have allowed the new regime to win the support of the masses. Instead the press was curbed and the model of the new government (in terms of its propaganda) was clearly the Kim Il Sung regime in North Korea.

Factional struggles in the PDPA were solved by expulsions and ultimately killings. Amin's predecessor, Taraki, was killed in September 1979 during one such struggle. The right-wing religious leaders utilised all this to strengthen their rebellion. The use of napalm and Soviet helicopters and planes to bomb the tribes into submission was bound to fail.

Popular

Now the Russians have committed themselves further to shore up a regime whose initial popular support in the first few months after the overthrow of the hated Daoud has now totally evaporated. Their style of intervention is not unfamiliar. Shoot the recalcitrant leader (Imre Nagy in Hungary and now Amin in Afghanistan), replace him with a more amenable figure, and use Soviet troops and tanks to ensure stability.

But Afghanistan is not Eastern



Soviet troops at Kabul airport



Europe. The Russian intervention will enable the right-wing rebels to win more support internally and externally. Afghanistan will become the frontline for the cold war, where Russian soldiers (carefully chosen from Central Asia) can be killed by proxy.

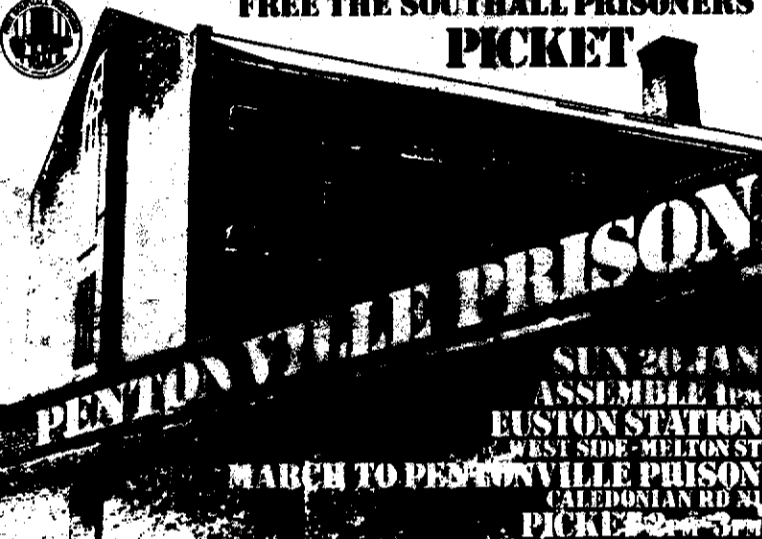
The Soviet intervention will also give succour to all those in the United States and Western Europe who have been arguing that US imperialism should play a more interventionist role in different parts of the globe. Brezhnev's message to Babrak Karmal congratulating him on his 'election to office' must surely be one of the more cynical gestures from a Stalinist leader in recent years.

Genuine revolutions can only

succeed with mass support. Any attempt to substitute Russian soldiers for the people of Afghanistan can end only in disaster. Either the Russians will have to withdraw in any event and accept a government of a different complexion, or they will get bogged down in a long war. There is no third option.

That is why we have no hesitation in calling for the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops. Far from aiding the struggle against pro-imperialist forces in Afghanistan, they can only hinder it. All observers are agreed that the motley collection of religious oppositionists have mass support, but no coherent political project. The entry of Soviet troops may well help to give them one.

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