

# Socialist Challenge

## HANDS OFF IRAN

**JIMMY CARTER** — self styled champion of human rights — is on the verge of launching a military attack on the people of Iran.

That is clear not just from Carter's talk, that the US cannot 'sit still' for 'very much longer', but also from the war preparations Carter is known to have made. For example, the US army is appealing for helicopter pilots with Vietnam mining experience and is changing the colour of its tanks from jungle green to desert brown.

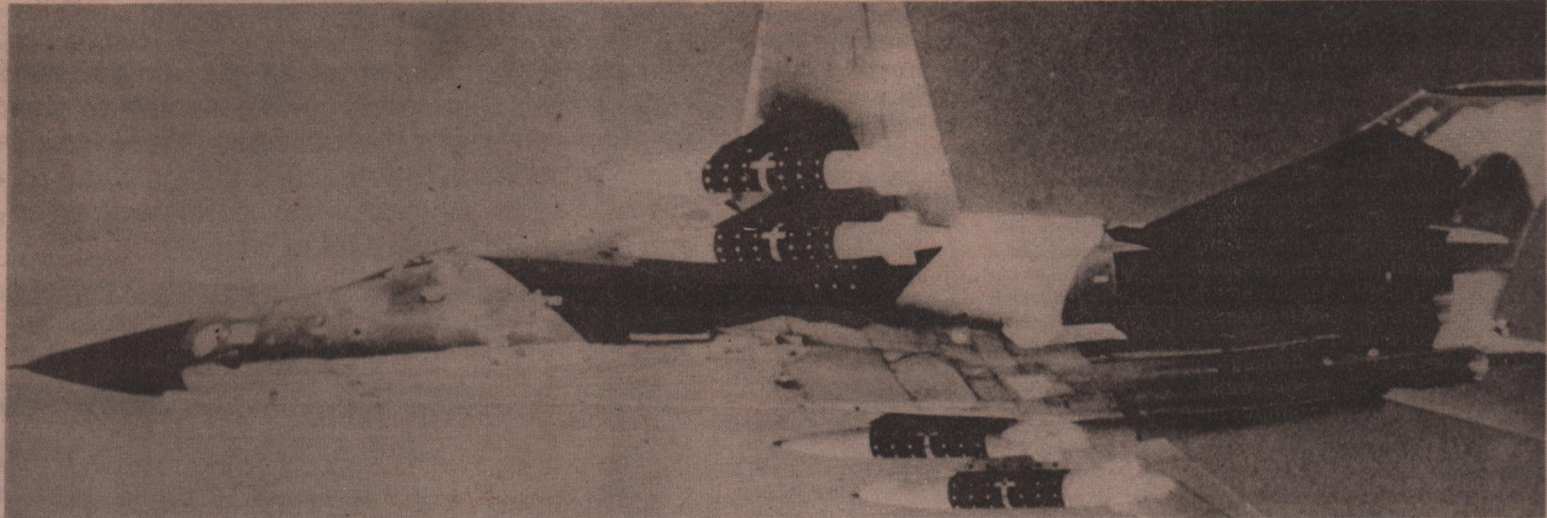
What lies behind these war moves? Western propaganda would have us believe it's all to do with securing the safety of the US diplomats and military personnel held captive in the US embassy in Tehran.

But all the experts agree that any military adventures the US would launch in Iran would put the embassy personnel at greater risk.

There is no way the US could stage some James Bond type operation and whisk the 'hostages' to safety.

On the contrary, the first US soldier to land in Iran, or the first mine to be dropped in Iranian waters could provoke the students holding the 'hostages' into killing their captives as a reprisal.

And if it was the hostages Carter was worried about then all he had to do, the very first day the embassy was captured was to have returned the tyrant Shah to face the justice of



the people he so cruelly ruled.

What really motivates Carter and his West European allies who are backing him is the anger at the determination of the Iranian people not to kowtow to US imperialism.

The kicking out of the Shah was the greatest blow US imperialism has suffered since its defeat in Vietnam. It is a defeat other countries in the 'third-world' are taking note of.

The US is frantic to try and impose its authority on nations and peoples it sees slipping

from its grasp. 'Teaching Iran a lesson' is seen as one way of doing this.

Carter has also his own, shoddy reasons for pointing the might of US weaponry in the direction of Iran — he hopes it could win him re-election as president. Apparently there are votes in bombs. Such are the glories of western democracy.

Whatever differences Socialist Challenge may have with the Iranian Government, and these are many, we have no hesitation in taking

the side of the Iranian people against US imperialism and its backers in the Tory and Labour Party leaderships in this country.

After all the 50 hostages are comparatively well. They have not been tortured or executed.

The same cannot be said for the tens of thousands who passed through the torture chambers and death camps when the old rulers of Iran were doing what the US told them to.

# BETRAYAL!



**Betrayal!** That's what defeated the struggle of the Leyland workers against the 92-page 'slaves charter' being introduced by BL management. Last week 18,000 BL workers came out on strike, determined to throw back the offensive which has been waged against them by Edwardes for 18 months.

The strike started not on the initiative of the union leaders, but as a result of the lead given by the most militant factories. But then it was all thrown away. Transport union leader Moss Evans stabbed them in the back, snatching defeat from the jaws of victory.

BL threatened to sack all the striking workers. But there was never any chance that this threat would be carried through. This threat was just a last desperate gamble by Edwardes. If his bluff has been called, it would have opened a new chapter in the Leyland workers fight.

When jobs are lost at Leyland, working conditions worsened, wages reduced and stewards victimised, let no one doubt who is responsible — Moss Evans, who ensured a famous victory was turned into a bitter defeat. Read pages 3 and 4 on how the Leyland workers were sold out.

## OUR POLICIES

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

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

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

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

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Name.....

Address.....

## HOME NEWS

# IMG £6000 emergency fund drive

THE IMG put everything it had into the recent steel strike. We had organisers permanently in the field, based in the vital areas of South Yorkshire and South Wales. We helped steelworkers get out rank and file bulletins. We played a key role in helping steel workers organise the national rank and file strike committee.

In Llanwern, a week after the strike ended, 22 steel workers attended a meeting of Steel Sheet — a rank and file strike bulletin associated initially with the IMG. Members

of the IMG accommodated flying pickets up and down the country.

Inside Fords, IMG members of the Fords Workers Group took the initiative in challenging the reformist leadership to win the right of the steelworkers to close down Fords. We helped to distribute 20,000 leaflets at Fords Dagenham.

Two leading strike leaders, Colin Herd and Bernard Connolly, are going to carry out a speaking tour for the Swiss and Belgian sections of the Fourth International in the near

future.

But leaflets, bulletins and organisers all need money. The IMG has seriously depleted its resources. To carry forward our campaigns and projects we urgently need money. We have set the modest target of £6000 by the end of June. We ask all IMG members, and all our readers to give generously to this fund.

Send cheques, postal orders made out to 'The Week' to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.

## Abortion: sexual freedom is a class issue

By Valerie Coultas

Last week Jan Parker argued in this column that while pressurising and working with the labour movement has proved a correct tactic in the abortion movement, women's autonomy within the campaign is central to confronting men's ideas and power.

To back up her argument she pointed out how it was women that forced the issue on the trade unions and that historically the trade union movement had ignored women.

No-one can disagree with the view that despite massive steps forward on the issues that have concerned women since the beginning of this century (childcare, maternity leave, equal pay, abortion), the trade union movement still holds the traditional views of a woman's role as wife and mother first and trade union activist second. The question that Jan raised is how do we change these views?

### Politics

The first thing we have to do is get our politics right on the abortion issue. Jan hints at this when she says: 'We are fighting for choice and the fight for abortion rights is essentially a struggle for sexual freedom'.

Revolutionaries do not view the struggle for choice in the same way as, for instance, Alan Fisher who told the National Abortion Campaign trade union conference in November 1978 that 'as long as women have responsibility for childcare then they should decide whether and when not to have a child.'

We say that women should control their reproductive powers because women should have the right to control their own lives. We have always rejected any time limit on abortion because of this.

Neither do we accept that it is women who should have exclusive responsibility for childcare.

The fight for the right to choose is linked to a challenge to this traditional view of women and must be placed in the context of creating a planned socialist society that puts women's needs and freedoms first and makes society as a whole responsible for childcare and domestic work.

### Class

When Jan says that it is only the economic argument in the abortion campaign (rich women can always afford abortions, poor women cannot) that makes abortion a class issue she is wrong. The fight for sexual freedom for women is part of the class struggle itself. The working class has every interest in promoting the cause of the oppressed in order to strengthen its fight to overthrow the rule of capital.

But of course, many, many workers — particularly male workers — do not view things like this. Because of the nuclear family, they, like Alan Fisher, view women as housewives, domestic servants and sexual playmates rather than trade union activists. Unemployment among women will reaffirm such attitudes.

This brings us to the issue of autonomy. In order to make the labour movement realise that women's concerns are central, women have to organise to confront these views. This is what the women's liberation movement has done over

### Abortion: opinion column

'If it weren't for women our wages would never have fallen so low. Men would have been able to stand up for themselves; but these females, these hussies are ready to abandon their home and family and to sell themselves to the capitalists, to the devil, or anybody you like for some extra bit of frippery.'

A German social-democratic worker speaking in the village of Grossenheim. Published in 'Around Workers Europe' by Alexander Kollontai (1912).



Police arresting a woman outside the House of Commons on 8 February this year — the day of the all Womens' Assembly called by the National Abortion Campaign to protest at John Corrie's restrictive bill.

the last decade and what the Campaign Against Corrie has built on over the last year.

We know that we cannot wait for men to take up our needs as women so we organise now as women to push them into taking action. The TUC demonstration last October proved this can be done.

But we must be clear about what we mean by autonomy and what we use it for. Many women support the

demands and ideas of the women's movement while not fully agreeing with women-only events, discos, demonstrations.

Over the last decade many women trade unionists have begun to fight for women to represent them as shop stewards, gone on strike for equal pay, taken petitions around their factories to get signatures against anti-abortion Bills.

Are these women not in a broad

sense part of the women's movement? In Russia when working women first started to organise in womens clubs they allowed men to come to meetings but only women were allowed to run the meetings. Is this not fighting for autonomy?

Autonomy, self-organisation is a means to an end. It is not the end in itself. When the modern women's movement first developed in the early Seventies it tried to involve men in fighting for the demands. It found that men patronised and tried to dominate, so they had to be excluded from conferences. Shouldn't women in trade unions and the Labour Party be allowed to go through the same experience and decide themselves how to deal with men? Isn't this what autonomy really means — self-government, women deciding how they think their struggle can best be conducted? Autonomy is not the same as separatism.

This does not mean that NAC should abstain on the autonomy debate. NAC is a mixed campaign that concentrates its energies on the issue of abortion but it is very much part of the broad movement for womens liberation.

### Point

At times it will decide that a particular point needs to be made about what women think and feel on an issue. This was why the International Marxist Group supported the women-only assembly on 8 February to make it clear that a male-dominated parliament was deciding to severely restrict women's rights.

We disagreed with the women who did not want the press there because we thought that even though the television cameras were held by men the publicity they were giving us was important to get across to other women.

At other times it will be necessary to involve men and indeed when it comes to powerful trade unions we must involve miners, steelworkers and carworkers in the abortion campaign. But at every point in the abortion struggle, and here I totally agree with Jan, we must make sure that women are upfront.

Only if women are seen to lead will those traditional views of women which still predominate in the trade union movement be confronted. Isn't this fighting for autonomy too?

We welcome contributions from Socialist Challenge readers on the way forward for the abortion campaign. The NAC conference will take place on 17/18 May at the Belle Vue Centre Leeds. Registration is available from Leeds NAC, Flat 1, Belle Vue House, Belle Vue Road, Leeds 3, £4 waged £2 unwaged/low waged.

### WOMEN IN ACTION READERS MEETING

Following on the success of the first issue, a readers' meeting is being held in London on Saturday 26 April at City University, Northampton Square, London EC1, from noon to 5pm. (Nearest tubes Angel and Barbican)

Copies of *Women in Action* available from Sisterwrite, 190 Upper Street, London N1. Price 30p.

# 'Evans collapsed like a pricked balloon'

By Pat Hickey, Deputy Senior Steward SDI, Rover Solihull

WITH more than 18,000 British Leyland workers on strike and the numbers growing daily, Transport union leader Moss Evans went to meet BL, declaring that the full weight of the union would be used if Edwardes went ahead with his threat to sack the strikers.

Encouraged by the statement that the 'T&G was here before BL', that the union would not be blackmailed, and that Edwardes would make no concessions, many workers were convinced that Evans would call an all-out strike.

But within hours this militancy was exposed as empty boasting. Evans collapsed like a pricked balloon.

## Money

The agreed statement that emerged from the talks with the company means acceptance of the five per cent pay rise and the 92-page document which imposes new working conditions in return for the restoration of participation and the introduction of a 10-day period of 'consultation' before major changes are introduced.

The clauses in the document which provoked the strike are intact. There will be no mutuality on staffing levels or mobility of labour. Trade union control of job allocation and overtime disappears. Relaxation allowances will be cut.

The ten day period of consultation is nothing more than 10 days notice of intent; and of course the five per cent pay 'increase' remains, because as the TGWU statement puts it:

'We were unable to extract more money from the company because it was a fact that there was none'.

The union/management-agreed statement refers to

'prior consultation' and 'maximising areas of agreement'. But the reality is that Edwardes has made no concessions. The re-establishment of participation expresses BL's confidence that shop floor organisation has been undermined giving national union officials much greater control.

The bureaucrats and their cronies, like the CP's *Morning Star*, hail this as a great victory on the grounds that the company has withdrawn its sacking threat subject to the resumption of normal work.

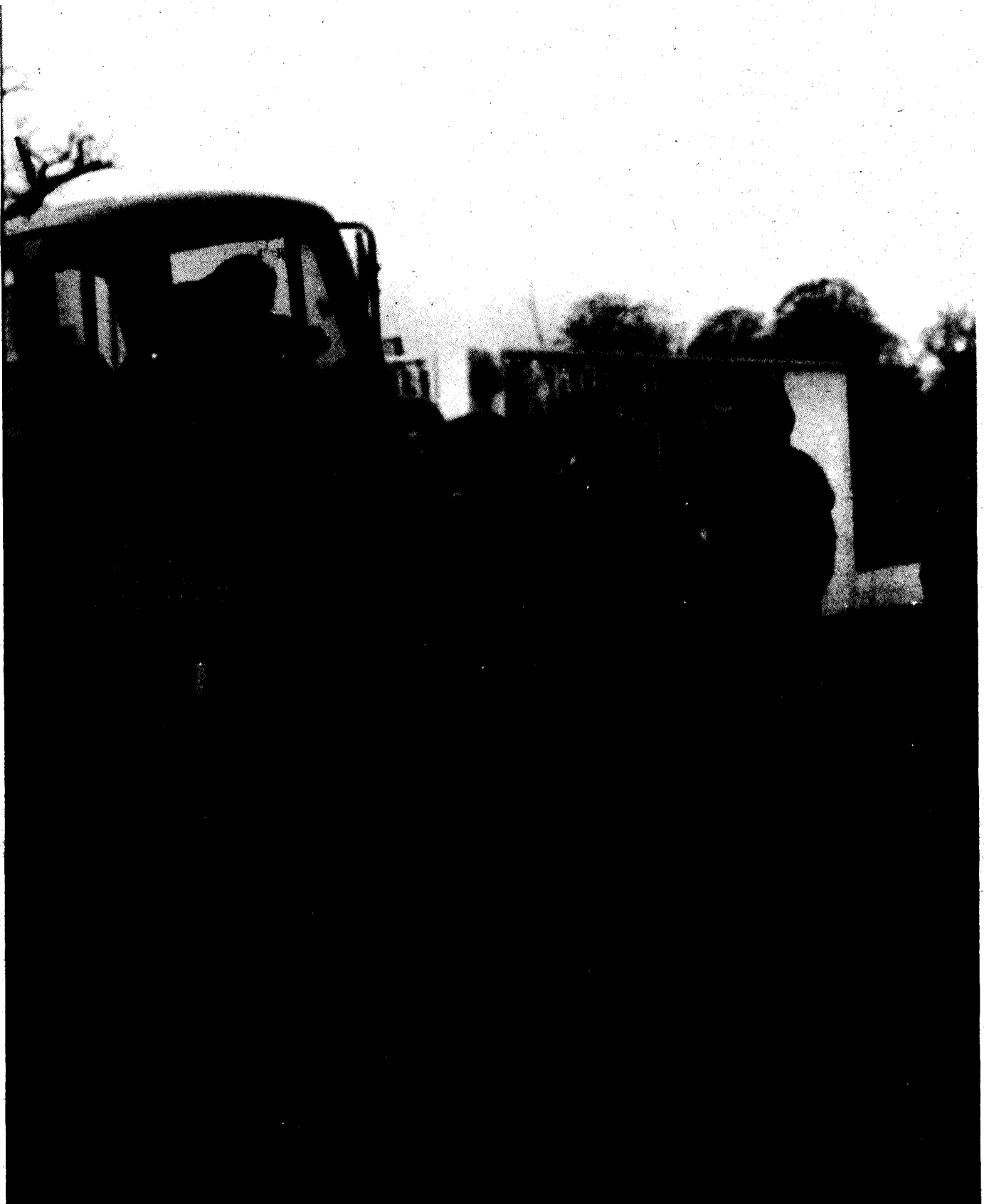
There was never any question of sacking in the event of normal working — that is in the event of complete surrender.

## Lead

The sell-out by Moss Evans is even more pathetic in view of the situation which existed when Evans made his agreement with management. It was likely that Cowley would have joined the strike and that even Longbridge, where the works committee was holding back, would probably have come out.

But Evans sabotage dispirited and demoralised the most militant plant, Rover Solihull, which had given a lead last week.

Now BL workers will have to pick up the pieces from Moss Evans' cowardice and betrayal. The company will push ahead in re-organising working conditions and attacking militants. For BL workers, it's a fight for survival.



PAT HICKEY

## Following in Edwardes' footsteps

By Leamington Socialist Challenge group

LAST WEEK 30 members of AUEW/TASS went on strike at Automotive Products in Leamington. This followed a worker's suspension for refusing to work with new technology — a computer data system — introduced by the company without prior agreement with the union.

## Factory

The strikers are picketing the factory, explaining their case to other workers at the plant and asking lorry drivers not to deliver. They are insisting that agreement with the unions has to be reached before

new technology is introduced; that suitable remuneration for those effected be provided; that proper health and safety standards are met.

## Bulletin

Taking a cue from Michael Edwardes' book the company has sent out letters telling the strikers they are in breach of contract and that they cannot come back to work until they are prepared to use the new equipment. In current pay negotiations with both staff and shop floor management have tied wage increases to agreement on the reduction of staffing levels and increased flexibility.

The majority of the union leadership representing the 6,000 workforce has been unprepared to oppose this attack on union rights. But militants inside the plant, including supporters of Socialist Challenge and Socialist Worker have started producing an Engineer's Charter news bulletin arguing the need for a united trade union opposition to the company's plans.

## Swindon: 'Bloody great sell-out'

By Chris Baldik

THE DAMAGE caused by Moss Evans' stab in the back was graphically illustrated at BL's Pressed Steel plant in Swindon.

For years this factory has been one of the least militant in the Leyland combine. But on 15 April 3,000 transport workers followed the lead set in the midlands and walked out as soon as management attempted to implement the new conditions in the Edwardes package.

Leading shop steward Tommy Tucker summed up the determination of the strikers when he said that Edwardes was 'sticking his neck out and he'll get his throat cut'. The enthusiasm shown by the workers for the strike was hailed by another steward who said: 'the sleeping giant is at last waking up'.

But three days later, at a Friday morning mass meeting, the Evans/Edwardes deal had thrown the workers into a state of confusion.

'A bloody great sell-out' was Tommy Tucker's comment. The workers, by a six to four majority, still voted to stay out. But inevitably Tuesday's mass meetings noted the return to work vote at other plants and voted to go back.

# SLAVES CHARTER

By Pat Kane

Barry Busst is a spot welder in the Jaguar Common Lane plant in Coventry. He was just one of the 18,000 car workers who were out on strike last week throughout the West Midlands. The strike was in protest at management's attempts to impose a five per cent pay deal and new productivity levels of the workforce.

Like many of the young militants on the picket lines he could not remember a strike that had involved so many workers, particularly unskilled workers who know they face the dole queue if they cannot defend shop floor organisation in these plants.

'We don't need the 92 page document to produce Sherpa vans. Our productivity is high, and we make a profit. We take in raw materials at one end, and finished vans go out the other. All the people here know that the Edwardes plan is an attack on our rights. They don't need to introduce it here. That's why we came out right at

the beginning,' he says.

But despite high levels of productivity in many of these plants Michael Edwardes wants to squeeze still more profit out of the industry.

## Metro

Longbridge shows where BL management intends to go. Here the new 'Metro' model is about to be built on two of the most automated production lines in the world. While Longbridge workers produce around 16 cars a year (about twice the average of European workers) when Metro production gets into full swing and the robots start to take over productivity is expected to rise to 23 cars per worker.

However shop stewards are unlikely to take kindly to workers being placed on the dole queue while robots take over their jobs. Edwardes doesn't want a strong shop floor organisation to create difficulties for his plans to chop the British Leyland workforce.

The militants in British Leyland

are aware of what's at stake. When we interviewed Barry he wasn't at the Coventry plant he was 'secondary picketing' in Birmingham at the Drews Lane plant. This is where most of the axles and transmissions systems are made for the rest of Leyland plants.

The workers here are mainly skilled, members of the AUEW, who hope that they will remain working despite the introduction of new technology because their skills will be more in demand. Urged on by Terry Duffy, the president of the engineering union, they were crossing picket lines.

Transport drivers were not moving lorries however and the transport union pickets were clearly determined to close this plant down completely. The recent steel strike had not passed by without car workers seeing the benefits of flying pickets. Normally in the car factories the members of the union stay at home and let the stewards conduct the strike.

This time it was different. In Rover Solihull, the senior stewards

were forced to set up a strike committee across the whole site. Hundreds of workers were turning up for picket duty. The strike was spreading into an all-out confrontation.

The transport union leaders did not want the strike movement to get out of their control. They decided to back down. As Larry Smith, Executive Officer of the TGWU put it: 'Had we not arranged this meeting with management today I am sure we would have been besieged by people from the Midlands trying to press Moss (Evans) to call an all-out strike'.

## Strike

It was not Michael Edwardes rushing back from his trip from South Africa that defeated this strike but Terry Duffy and eventually Moss Evans.

The Leyland Action Committee, a grouping of shop floor militants based in Rover, Longbridge, Cowley and Jaguar distributed thousands of

leaflets campaigning for an all-out

strike to defend trade unionism in Leyland.

## Pickets

'Stay at home pickets only help the company' said one of the leaflets. 'We need mass pickets to stop any plant that stays at work, and to stop any scabs creeping in... Those are our jobs: if we don't defend them nobody will'.

The Leyland Action Committee does not intend to give up the fight. Shop floor militants have to be organised across union lines if another Derek Robinson victimisation is to be avoided. A worker's plan that confronts the problem of new technology needs to be drawn up to give a clear alternative to Edwardes' productivity plan. Now is the time for militants in British Leyland to get together to force the union leaders to defend trade union rights.

The Leyland Action Committee invites every British Leyland worker who wants to fight back to get in touch. Phone 021-643-0669.

By THE EDITOR

HOW the establishment hates to admit when it's beat! Like a John Wayne hero in a B Western, Sir Michael Edwardes rode into town, all guns blazing.

On Thursday night he slipped out quietly, his posse frightened off by the firm stand of the unions.

But you would never have thought press reported what happened in confrontation between the trade union

BL Cars give 'work with unions' pledge

Morning Star

# Climbdown by Leyland on sack threat

# Evans gets 'Star' billing

by Steve Potter

EVANS STANDS FIRM. This was the extraordinary judgement of the *Morning Star* in the aftermath of the transport union leader's sell-out of the BL strikes last week.

The paper was commenting on Evan's gyrations after it became clear that BL workers had gained nothing from the negotiations between union chiefs and Leyland bosses last Thursday.

Yet George Guy, sheetmetal workers' leader and prominent Communist Party militant, was quoted in the *Morning Star* of Friday 18 April claiming a 'trade union victory'.

The next day's issue of the *Star* maintained this position in a prominent article by the editor, but by this time angry responses by strikers prompted him to admit: 'there are problems with the agreement reached on Thursday night'.

However George Guy was on hand again to continue the cover up for *Star* readers. The deal was the reverse of the company victory claimed by the press he explained, because the threat to sack all those on strike had failed.

But as the 'Fleet Street' press accurately noted, unlike their Farringdon Road colleagues, the company threat had 'failed' because it had been withdrawn. It had been withdrawn

because the union leaders had conceded to the most essential aspects of the company case.

The reason for the 'trade union victory' according to George Guy was the 'united front' presented by the trade unions to the company threats. 'The Leyland management then changed to a conciliatory attitude and sought ways of ending the conflict.'

This glowing version of events was denied by Moss Evans himself in his message to the striking workers, who accurately claimed that the Transport and General Workers Union had been left alone on the main issues, a polite reference to the scabbing role of Terry Duffy and the engineering union leadership.

However, apart from a temporary delay of the unilateral imposition of the companies 92 page 'slave charter' for ten days, the only gain that the CP could point to was the reestablishment of the national participation machinery in BL 'by August'.

## Bogus

But the cover up campaign of the Communist Party and the *Morning Star* which had done the opposite of 'telling the truth' had a very precise aim. Their objective was to cover up the fact that the Communist Party did not want the strike movement to succeed at any point, whether before or after the bogus 'victory'.

Proof of this can be found in the

attitude of the Longbridge plant shop stewards committee led by Jack Adams, CP member and successor to the sacked Derek Robinson.

The conditions of work document applies equally to Longbridge workers as to those who were out on strike. It would have been an ideal moment to launch a counter-offensive against the BL management.

Nothing was done. No call was made. The largest factory remained working.

The Communist Party forgets nothing and learns nothing. The cover-up campaign of the *Morning Star* is just one more episode in their road to disaster in BL.

# STEEL: WE WON'T LIE DOWN

**'The official leadership attempted to sell us out from day one'**

By Bernard Connolly,  
Craft convenor, Rotherham

THE fatal mistake the Tories made was in thinking that the leadership of the steel unions reflected the membership. While the government's assessment of the leadership was a hundred per cent correct, they got the membership totally wrong.

Their error was in not decimating the shop stewards movement first, as they have tried to do in Leyland.

The strike presented us with a further opportunity to extend rank and file organisation, and with the ending of the strike we will continue this organisation.

Central to what is going to happen now is the fight against redundancies. I don't see how the official leadership can lead that fight. As far as they are concerned, the jobs have already been sold.

The official leadership in the strike attempted to sell us out from day one. It had to be dragged kicking and screaming every step of the way. This will be the case on jobs.

All unions claim to be opposed to closures and job loss, but they ignore the pleas of the membership to fight.

I don't think it's an accident that South Wales has been picked off. There has been a campaign now for some years to pump into their heads that it's their fault that the steel industry is in crisis. We have to oppose the logic of management and the Tories.

When looking at the alternatives to the Tories' plans for BSC, the first thing to consider is not the needs of the industry but the needs of the membership. Faced with the threat of job loss, a shorter working week is essential.

This must not be made an excuse for more overtime. On the craft side in Rotherham,

1,300 members work 10,000 hours of overtime a week. Think how many more people could be employed if we cut that out.

Sometimes overtime would have to be done, in an emergency, but it should be priced so high that management is forced to employ more labour. It should be treble or quadruple time.

Here we are in the 1980s and still workers can't retire before the age of 65. We could have sabbaticals, longer holidays, longer studying at schools. How long is it since we won the 40-hour week?

We are all in favour of new technology to improve efficiency. But who benefits? We think it should be us.

Just before Christmas we negotiated locally a 16 per cent increase through the bonus, maintaining the number of apprentices and with a no redundancy agreement.

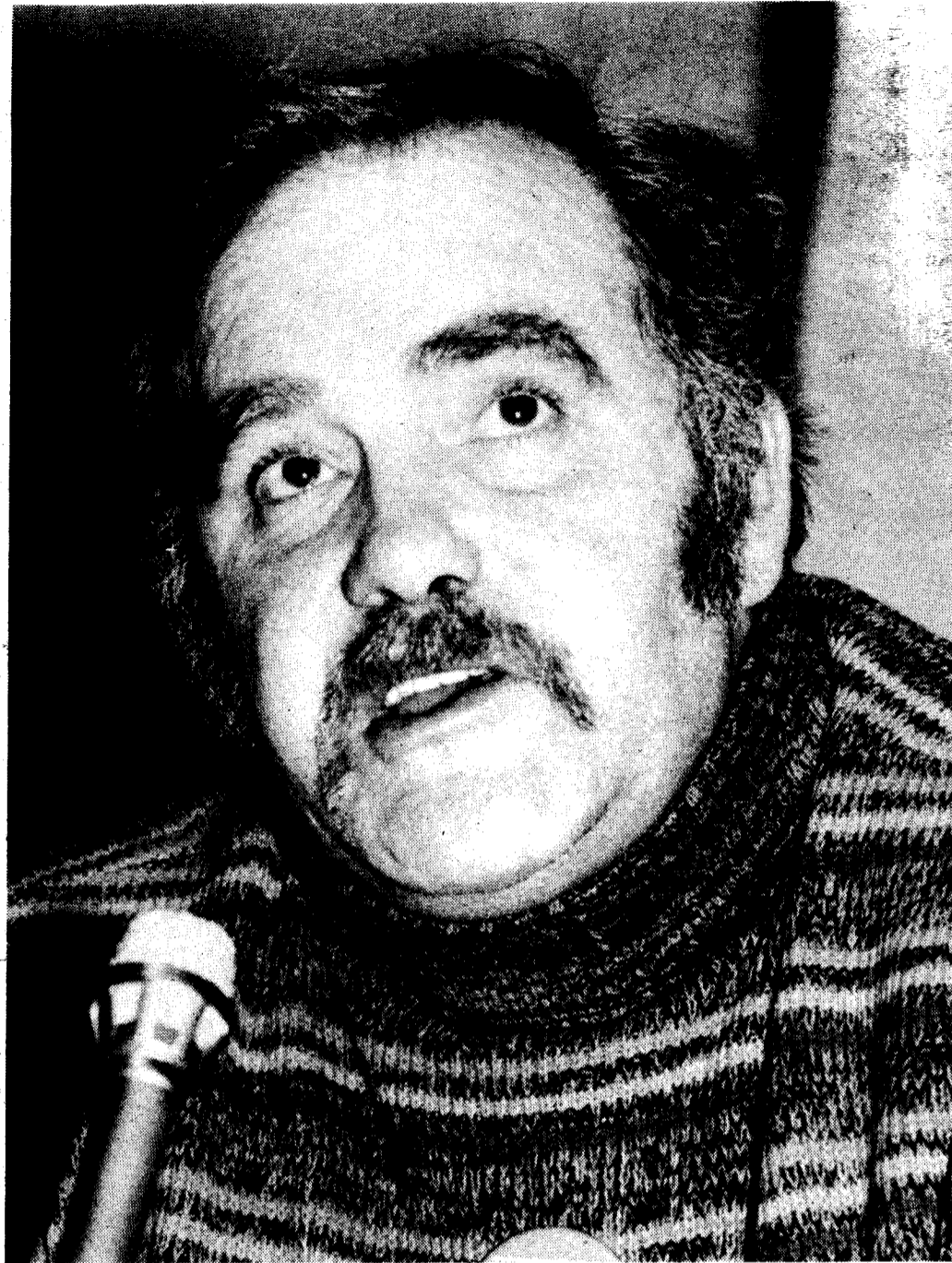
The 4½ per cent part of the national pay settlement is meant to produce 12,000 redundancies, but the initial payment covering three months is the last we'll see of it. Nobody will sell anything for that kind of peanuts.

It's important to show a united front to management. They'll pick on us where there's a weakness.

The steelworkers in South Wales have to be better organised for a fight, bury their petty differences and get it together. It's hoped that the outcome of the strike and the pressure of events will drive them together.

Even when action is official, it's a hard uphill fight. We have to become organised at area, divisional, and the national level. The unofficial national strike committee had to organise during the strike because the ISTC wouldn't do it officially nor would the other steel unions.

There are now many more activists, and in the fight over jobs it will be once again down to us.



## 'We have to work for stronger organisation at the rank and file level'

By BRIAN MOLYNEUX,  
rank and file steelworkers'  
leader from South  
Yorkshire, and a member  
of the national negotiating  
committee

JUST one day after the steel strike settlement was announced over 20,000 Yorkshire steelworkers spontaneously walked out.

At the Shepcote Lane plant in Sheffield, they didn't want to go back until management agreed to boycott every single firm which had crossed the picket line during the strike. And there were over two hundred firms on the list!

These walk-outs throughout the country show two things. First, morale is high, and so you can't talk about a defeat. Secondly, if proper leadership had been given in each area, then the walk-outs would have been as good as, if not better than, the ones in Yorkshire.

At the Yorkshire district level we were prepared for a sell-out. At the meeting to discuss the settlement we put across the view that although our leadership sold us out there was lots to do within our own factories; that could go above and beyond the national leadership.

We told the meeting how we were organising, and how this needed to be kept up. We welcomed the day when steelworkers would be on the picket lines of other workers.

A joint committee is beginning to organise now, to get steelworkers on other picket lines; to support



demonstrations such as that against the Special Patrol Group on 27 April. We want to maintain the militancy and organisation which existed during the strike.

From the second week our strike was seen by the mass of workers as a political strike.

We had to be careful about how we posed the strike. In the sixth week we decided we didn't want a situation where the only enemy was Thatcher, because there are also the BSC bosses.

Now that we are back, the hate for the bosses is there and we have to relate to other questions outside the plant.

We will be pulling people out on 14 May, and other actions like the Blair Peach demonstration. Steelworkers will want to join in the local pickets of the police station that the

organising committee has called for.

It will be difficult. We have to work for a stronger organisation at the rank and file level, but we mustn't be afraid of it.

Following the strike we have set up a joint shop stewards committee in every plant in South Yorkshire, except in Rotherham.

Every action we take, we will publicise to the ranks. Every time we are asked to speak, or if we set up links with other steelworkers in Europe, as we are doing with West German workers, then we will explain in our weekly bulletin what we have done.

In that way we will be accountable for our actions.

We want a mass shop stewards meeting every three months. This will elect officials for the joint shop

stewards committee. We have already agreed on the representation for different unions.

A 200-strong mass shop stewards meeting will be the controlling body, and the joint shop stewards will meet each week. Each department will decide what it wants to put in the newsheet.

We have to consider a national committee, and even international links. This might seem to be pie-in-the-sky, but we already have West German, French and Basque links. At some stage we need to take on Brussels, so we have ideas for an international bulletin.

This union is going to change. The first step has to be a campaign to get Bill Sirs to rescind the cancellation of this year's ISTC conference. We have already started passing resolutions to that effect.

At this time especially we need a conference to take stock of the sell-out, assess where the union is at, and prepare plans for the next battles.

### Militants

In the meantime we are organising a conference in South Yorkshire to draw the lessons of the strike. We are expecting the key rank-and-file militants to attend.

The settlement includes a 4½ per cent clause. This won't affect anyone at a local level. BSC is really after 60,000 jobs; not 12,500. No one will negotiate for that.

What the settlement has done is to decrease our ability to negotiate locally, because savings for BSC are involved in productivity deals, and this reduces our autonomy at a local level. It gives a limit to what can be

negotiated locally.

In 1975 there was a work measure incentive scheme on the books. It is there today, and nothing has been concluded. Some departments at our works have negotiated on this and are getting money. Other places haven't. It is that chaotic. There isn't any machinery to jointly negotiate this, so the weak branches and the weak workers get hammered.

### Jobs

That's the way it is with the 4½ per cent. They start negotiating with 4½ per cent at a time when they are threatened with mass redundancies and they are under enormous pressure to negotiate loss of jobs with 4½ per cent.

That is why we wanted a straight increase. We have lots of slim-line agreements. There are lots of names for them, but they all involve demanning. None of them has been adhered to locally. We put all these national deals in a drawer when we work on local agreements.

South Wales will be hit hardest on jobs. The steelworkers there have to take the initiative, and not rely on the officials. There is no way that — relying on Bill Sirs and the union machinery, with a few lobbies of Parliament — they will keep 10,000 to 15,000 jobs.

They need to approach us for help, and it will be there. It would be good if fifty of the steelworkers came up to Yorkshire for a few days and had the chance to talk to steelworkers here and live with them; talk to workers at the gates; hold meetings; and even put a few pickets on to test the feeling here. This would be a good morale booster.

# HOMENEWS

## Support for strike call growing in Scotland

With three weeks still to go before 14 May, support for the TUC's call for a Day of Action is growing, and more and more unions are coming to the conclusion that the only effective action on that day will be strike action.

Manufacturing industry will be widely affected: in Glasgow the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions has agreed to a one-day strike, and in Dundee and Edinburgh leading trade unionists backed the strike call at meetings organised by the trades council.

Those who might be considering going into work on that day will experience considerable difficulty. Most buses will be off the road due to the TGWU support for the strike.

Going by rail will be impossible as both the NUR and ASLEF will be out. Even those who have contrived to go by sea will find that the National Union of Seamen will be preventing this.

If all these obstacles are overcome, the heroic 'scab' may find that the way to his or her work is finally barred by the actions of NUPE workers who unionise the janitorial staff of many public buildings.

Those who contemplate such a risky progress to work on that day should make double sure that they don't suffer any unforeseen accidents — it seems likely that most hospitals will be operating 'emergency' cover only.

Support for the strike is also likely to be overwhelming among the miners. Throughout Scotland pit head meetings have been arranged where the decisions will be taken to support the strike.

At the moment support is growing within the white-

collar public sector unions. The decision of the NALGO executive to give the go-ahead to any form of action on that day is being discussed in the branches.

The teachers' union, the EIS, has not yet come out in support of action on the 14th, though unofficial action is being organised.

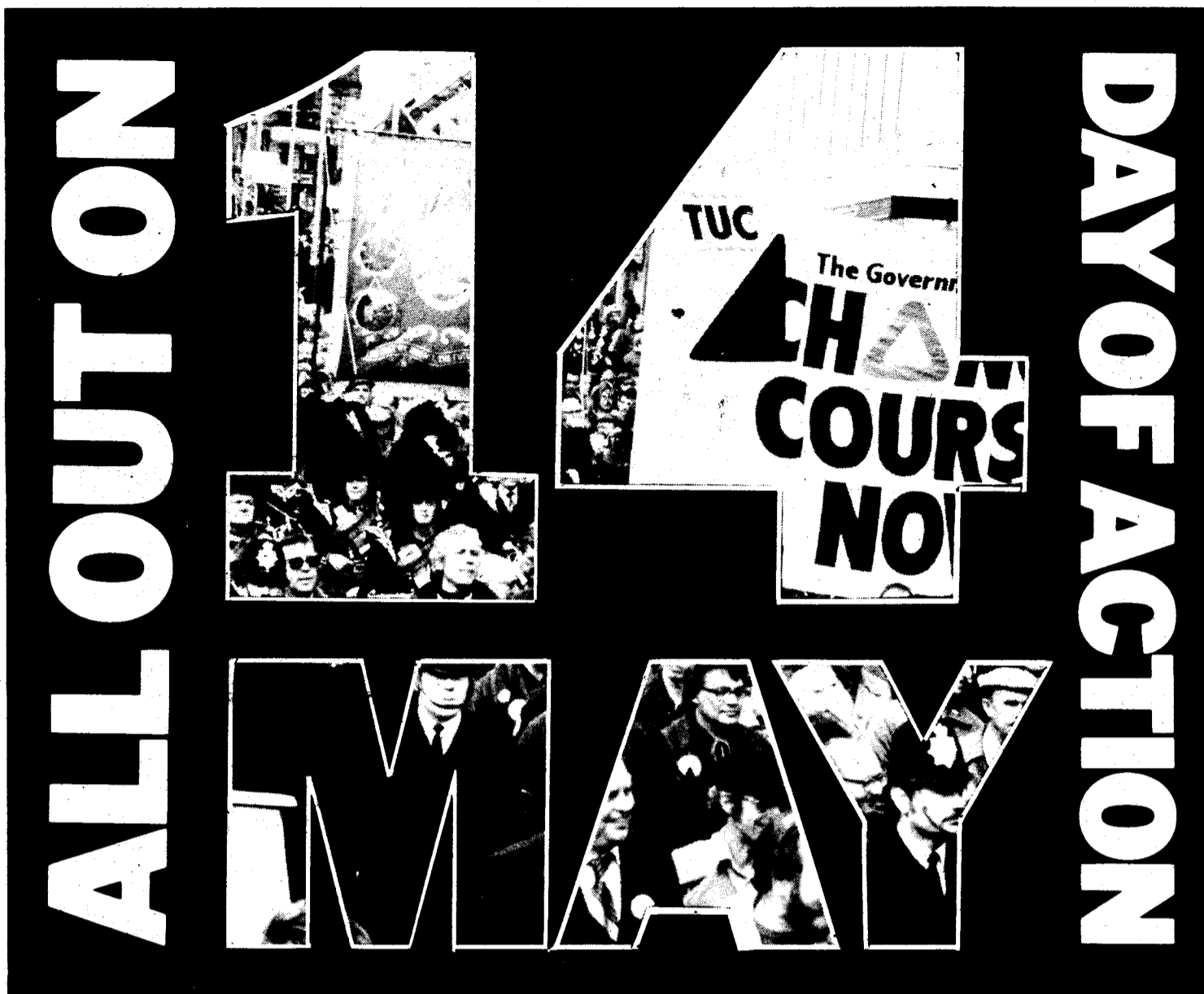
The STUC, through the local trades councils, has organised marches and rallies in Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Dundee and Dumfries.

## Aberdeen youth against the Tories

ABERDEEN Revolution are organising action for 14 May. The local Youth Against the Tories campaign recently brought 40 youth to a picket of the local Tory club, taking over the nearby main road in the process.

Fresh from this success, they are now campaigning for a youth contingent on the Labour movement demonstration on 14 May and organising a Rock Against Thatcher gig with local bands that evening.

Aberdeen Revolution will be filming the whole day's events for a video film they are making about youth in Aberdeen.



## Right wing slams 14 May, but

# WE CAN'T WAIT FIVE YEARS!

### Rundown on local events on 14 May LONDON

Central London Rally — 2.30pm Central Hall, Westminster. Speakers include: Alan Fisher, Bill Keys, Alex Kitson.

#### Other Rallies:

Shepherds Bush Green / Southall / Victoria Park, Hackney / Mayesbrook Park, Goodmayes, nr. Ilford / Clapham Common, Wandsworth / Empire Way nr. Wembley Stadium.

#### Local Demos include:

Barnet — Burnt Oak Broadway 10am /

Brant — Willesden Green Tube 10am / Harrow — Harrow Civic Centre 10am / Southwark — Camberwell Green 10am / Lambeth & Wandsworth from Clapham Common to Imperial War Museum / Lewisham.

What's happening in your area on 14 May? Send us details of the campaign to build action and the local events on the day. Send to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.

## Rail workers want brakes off for 14 May

By A O'Callaghan, ASLEF Queen's Park

**PRESSURE is growing on the executives of the rail unions to make 14 May an official one-day strike.**

Both Sid Weighell of the NUR and Moss Evans of the TGWU say they expect their members to turn out in large numbers for local protest actions. However, neither union has taken the lead in actually calling their members out.

Rank and file workers in the industry see 14 May as an opportunity for a fight against the Tory government. Ted Miles, an executive member of the other main rail union, ASLEF, wrote in the latest issue of *Locomotive* that: 'the TUC must lead the

way and all the labour movement should answer the call. A total strike on 14 May would serve notice on the Tories.'

It is also rumoured that at least two executive members are arguing for ASLEF to close down the railways officially on that day.

One good sign of the build up of pressure was Len Murray's speech at ASLEF's Centenary Celebration dinner last week — it was devoted to explaining why trade unions are not in the business of bringing down democratically-elected governments!

by Ron Thompson, AUEW Sheffield

As the build-up to the TUC Day of Action on 14 May 14 proceeds, debate about it in the labour movement is hotting up.

Predictably, the capitalist press, led by such Tory rags as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, has launched an onslaught against the Day of Action, denouncing the TUC and 'Len' Murray for organising a political strike, 'threatening the basis of parliamentary democracy', 'opening the door to anarchy', and so on.

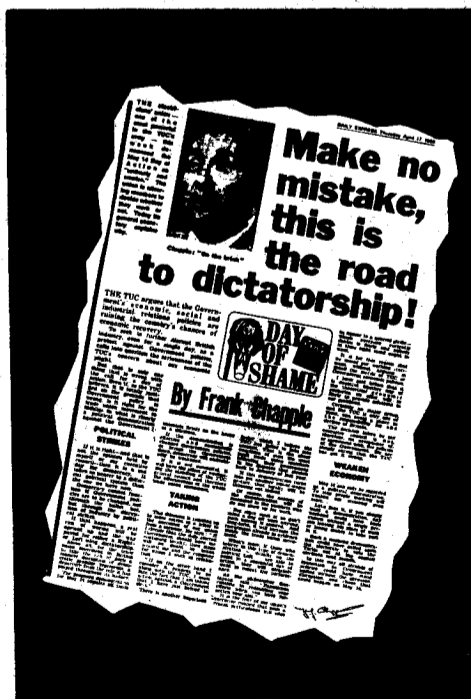
All this should come as little surprise: in the eyes of the defenders of capitalism, any form of organised opposition to the policies of this Tory Government is 'anarchy'.

### Drivel

More dangerous, however, is the support that this sort of drivel is receiving from the right wing within the leadership of the trade union movement — even from those who supposedly support the Day of Action. The most open attack on 14 May comes from Frank Chapple, leader of the EEUPTU. According to him, the working class must accept the result of the election and change the Government through the ballot box.

Even Len Murray, who supports action on 14 May, is bending over backwards to emphasise that the TUC has no intention of attempting to bring down the Government through industrial action. He has made it clear that the TUC will have nothing to do with such 'undemocratic methods' — after all, 'we're British'.

As far as Murray and the rest of the TUC



are concerned, 14 May will be nothing more than a friendly attempt to persuade the government to change its policies.

### Tories

Socialists and militants within the working class movement must condemn this kind of weak-kneed leadership. None the less, if Chapple and Murray are afraid to do anything for the general interests of the working class, they should be replaced.

living standards are being hammered every week by Thatcher and her cronies cannot.

As thousands are thrown out of work, as social services are cut to ribbons and as prices soar, it is clear that the working class has a very simple choice: 'respect parliamentary democracy' (and suffer for the next 4 years) or fight back now to get rid of the Tories by whatever means necessary.

Does this mean that the Day of Action in May is a waste of time? Unfortunately, there is a danger that this conclusion will be drawn by certain sections of the left and even by some working class militants.

### Organise

It is true that if Len Murray and company have their way, 14 May will pass off as a quiet protest action, soon forgotten. This is why the proposal of the NUR to make it an explicit general strike instead of just a day of action was rejected.

But every militant who wants to organise a real fight against this government should see to it that Murray and company do not get their way. 14 May should be used to get the message from every corner to the TUC General Council: 'We do want to bring down the Tories; we do want a General Strike; we cannot afford to wait.'

If every demonstration in every city carried the slogan 'General Strike, Tories Out' then Len Murray might be forced to show a little less respect for parliament and his more concern for the demands of the working class movement.

If there is no working class movement, then the right wing will be able to continue to rule the country.

### Sales Drive

Socialist Challenge is planning a major sales drive for 14 May. We are hoping to top the record figure of branch sales from the 9 March TUC Demo of 6,250. So every IMG branch and Socialist Challenge group is asked now to plan extra sales and send down an increased order to the paper.

# Students take step nearer edge

THE National Union of Students conference at Blackpool last week was a stormy affair.

The far left increased its representation on the national executive from three to five (three members of the Socialist Students Alliance, two members of the Socialist Workers Student Organisation), and a motion condemning the treatment of women Republican prisoners in Armagh jail was passed against the wishes of the outgoing executive.

But on all other policy questions, the Left Alliance — a coalition of members of the Labour Party, Communist Party and the Young Liberals — chalked up one victory after another.

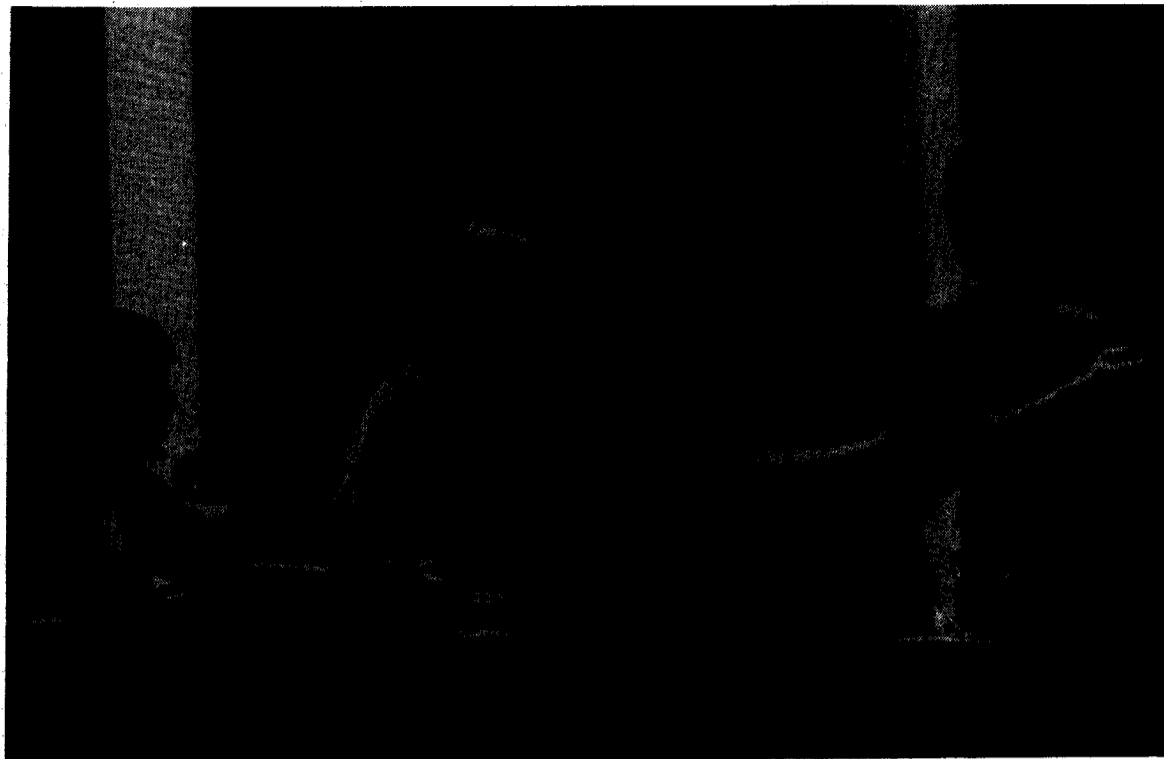
## Left

The 1980 conference takes the NUS one step nearer the sort of union that the Left Alliance would like to see. Although the conference referred back the strategy document of the Alliance, *The Shape of Things to Come*, it passed a resolution containing almost identical proposals.

The Left Alliance want to concentrate union activity on what it calls the 'unique functions' of the NUS, reducing student campaign work on issues like women's oppression, abortion, unemployment, racism and international solidarity.

But the conference decision on Armagh and the election results showed that any attempt by the Left Alliance to carry through the depoliticisation of the NUS in practice will lead to a realignment of forces.

Besides the increase in representation of the far left, independent NOLS (National Organisation of Labour



Liz Legrua, Women in Armagh Campaign, and Ann Marie Loughran, of the Relatives Action Committee, (centre) being applauded at NUS conference.

Students) candidates were elected to the executive and it was clear that NOLS members voted with the far left for the reference back of the strategy document and for the resolution on Armagh.

These developments did not arise spontaneously. They were made possible by the political campaigns that had been waged by the far left over the previous two terms — on abortion, Armagh, and, to a lesser degree, on racist fee increases — but also by the unprecedented degree of unity of the far left itself.

## Agree

For the first time since its inception, the SSA was able to establish joint policy

positions with SWSO on a number of questions and to agree at conference on a series of joint initiatives with SWSO on Ireland.

This development led the SSA to issue a bulletin at a joint fringe meeting of the two organisations reiterating its commitment to unification with SWSO.

## Armagh

Collaboration must be maintained — to fight the leadership of the union and to get real action on the prisoners in Armagh jail. Although SWSO rejected the SSA's unity appeal, hopefully many of its members will realise the benefits of the sort of collaboration we saw last week.

That alone should provide the basis for joint action in the coming months — a prerequisite for defeating the policies of the NUS's leadership and throwing the weight of the student movement behind the struggles of the working class.

\*Correction: In the article 'CP strategy: keep politics out of students unions' (10 April) we stated that the Left Alliance includes the National Organisation of Labour Students. While individual members of NOLS are in the Left Alliance and in fact stood as Left Alliance candidates in the recent NUS elections, NOLS itself took a decision at its conference last December to withdraw from the Left alliance.

# Massey Ferguson workers get official backing

By John Kirby

IT'S official. That's the good news from the engineering union for the Massey Ferguson workers in Knowsley who have been occupying their factory since 3 March against the threat of closures.

Now both main unions — the TGWU and the AUEW have given official support. But the decision of the AUEW is particularly important because it is the main Massey Ferguson union.

Knowsley workers are now stepping up their campaign to win support for their campaign against redundancy. Dave Kirby, AUEW steward at Knowsley explained:

'Our message to other Massey Ferguson workers is "help us, help yourselves". We're out not just to defend Knowsley but the whole of Massey Ferguson in the UK'.

A recent conference representing all Massey Ferguson workers voted unanimously to support the Knowsley workers occupa-

tion.

But management threats of redundancy plus a promise of five years work forced Manchester workers to accept work transferred from Knowsley. But as Knowsley convenor Frank Yates points out, 'There's got to be a mobilisation to defend Knowsley. That's the only real guarantee that Manchester will not be closed'.

Earlier this week Knowsley workers mounted pickets of the Manchester factories. They pointed out that under rule 22 of the AUEW rule book the work of any workers in official dispute is not to be handled by any other union member.

In this way they hope to stop any management moves to prepare for the transfer of work from Knowsley.

Workers at Perkins Diesel, Peterborough, have yet to endorse the call not to shift the components normally destined for Knowsley. On Wednesday a delegation of Knowsley workers leafleted them in an attempt to win their support.

The Massey Ferguson management/union negotiating body — the National Joint Council — met on Monday. The dispute at Knowsley was the only item on the agenda. Knowsley workers have taken a clear stand that there can be no negotiations until the closure threat is lifted.

## Whose energy crisis?

NORTH Sea oil is paying off — for some. Last week Esso declared pre-tax profits of £506.5m, a rise of a mere thousand per cent from £43.2m in 1978.

Dividends of £230m are being paid to the US-parent company, Exxon. Stockbrokers report that the North Sea has turned Esso into one of Exxon's 'brightest jewels'. Esso's investments in the North Sea now total £1,700m, so North Sea profits are now running at 30 per cent on capital invested.

This record profit follows five years of intensive pressure by the oil companies to cajole British governments into reducing taxation levels and selling off licences at bargain prices.

The companies have effectively been left to do what they want in the North Sea, on the basis of the supposed high risk and possible low margins of oil exploration there.

# Bristol — drop the charges

IN Bristol, following the black uprising in the St Paul's area of the city, the police have been hitting back hard.

One youth has been charged with arson and conspiring to cause £20,000 damage to a post office. Many people have been arrested and charged with looting. A young single mother of four has been charged with assault.

One case reported to the Bristol Campaign Against Racist Laws by a Labour councillor involved a young black who had signed a

confession of looting — but only after he had been offered a choice of being charged either with looting or with rape.

On Friday 11 April, nine days after the uprising, representatives from the Community Relations Council met the police who showed them round Trinity police station.

'There are no blacks in the cells' said Carmen Beckford, a Community Relations Officer, ignoring the fact that prisoners may have been in other police stations. The police succeeded in a public relations exercise using the CRO to suggest black fears of police harassment were unfounded.

The following Wednesday, at the normally sleepy Community Relations Council meeting, a motion was passed calling for the dropping of all charges — despite CRC solicitor David Roberts claiming there was no general harassment of blacks, and that an amnesty was impossible under English law.

Roberts was shouted down by young blacks, including some youths who had come into the meeting after having been racially abused by police in the street outside.

The events at the CRC meeting show the division that has been emerging in Bristol between young blacks and older West Indians who have chosen to work through 'pressure groups'. Bristol's youth won't beg for their rights. They intend to stand up and fight for them.

## March against police racism

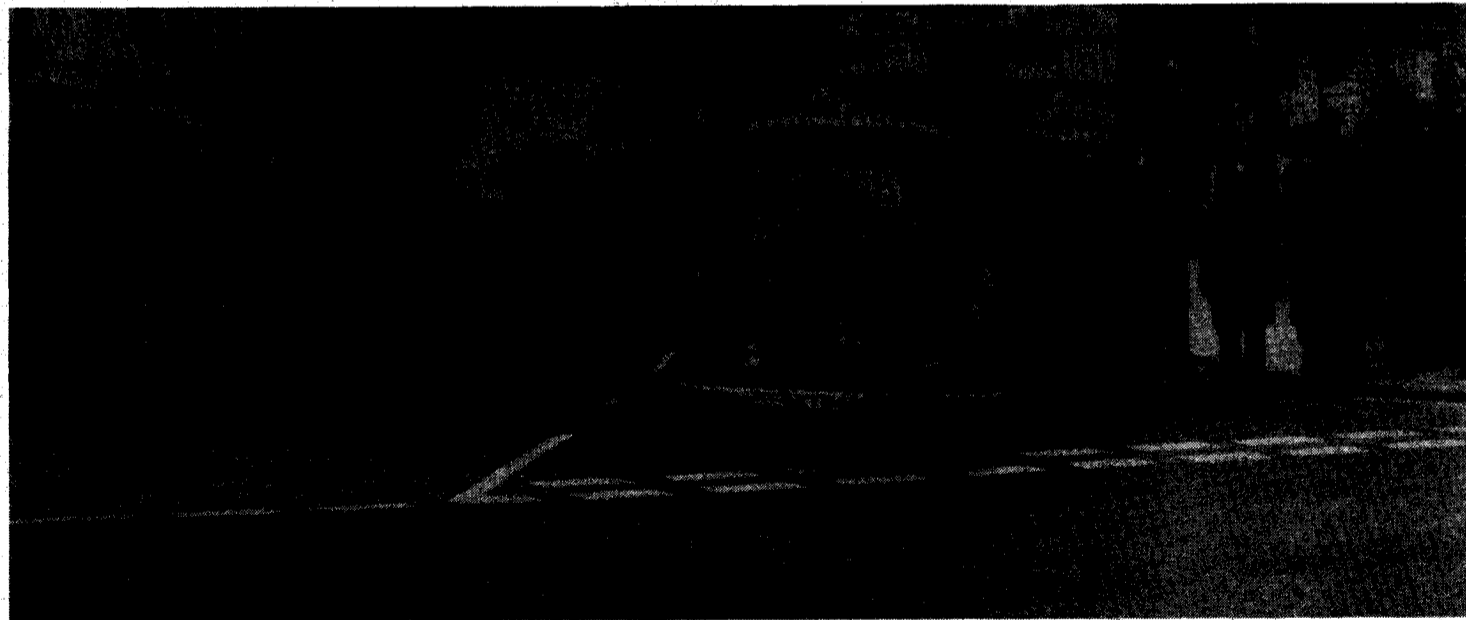
A DEMONSTRATION in support of Junior Archer and the Earlington Family, and against the racist, bully boy tactics employed by the Hornsey (North London) police was attended by about 60 anti-racists in North London last Saturday.

A year ago this month, police invaded the Earlington's home, assaulted them verbally and physically and then arrested five members of the family.

Junior Archer was also beaten up and arrested by Hornsey police and despite the fact that he is on very low pay has been denied legal aid to defend himself at the notorious Highbury Magistrates Court.

Defence funds have been set up around the country to fight back against vicious attacks by the police and courts on black people. They need support and money.

The Earlington Defence Committee's address is 49 Raiton Rd, London SE24 0LN.



4000 police were mobilised to protect the pathetic 400 strong National Front demonstration in Lewisham on 20 April.

# Chix workers gain more support

The strike at the Chix chewing gum factory in Slough is now in its seventh month. The strikers are mainly Asian women, and of the 96 members of the workforce who have joined the GMWU 91 are Asians.

Despite daily picketing, the strikers have been able to cut production by only 70 per cent because the company are using scabs.

The strike is for the most basic right of all: the right to belong to a trade union. The workers were forced out of the gate by the refusal of Chix's managing director, Dennis Rose, to recognise the union.

The Chix workers earn £38 for 40 hours work, and they work in very poor conditions, exposed to constant racist abuse from the all-white supervisory staff.

At a recent rally, shop steward Raseen explained: 'We worked in bad conditions, we were harassed and ill-treated. A pregnant sister of ours, despite a recommendation from her doctor that she be given light work, lost her baby through a miscarriage. Generally if someone gets injured at work we don't get medical care or compensation.'

Another woman worker added: 'We have often been asked to do two people's jobs but never get extra pay for doing so. We were allowed 10 minutes for tea breaks but got shouted at by the supervisor

within eight minutes.'

'We never got any help from our brothers in Slough, and there is pressure from our brothers to give up the fight and take other factory jobs. But we want to win and go back to work in the same factory.'

Support for the strike is growing. Workers at the South London Sugar Refinery, with whom Chix has a contract, have decided to boycott supplies of glucose to Chix until the strike is won. Chix is trying to get glucose from France.

Dockers will be approached to block that move.

Since the defeat at Grunwick there have been a number of strikes by black

workers for unionisation, which have also been defeated; two of these — at Stewart's Engineering and Median Plastics — were also in Slough. That's why it's crucial to reverse the demoralising trend by a victory at Chix.

What can you do? \*Make known the facts of the strike, take a collection of your workplace;

\*Invite a Chix speaker to your local trade union or Labour Party branch and pass a motion of support;

\*Send messages of support and donations to Brother Anwar, 271 Goodmans Park, Slough, Berks;

\*Support the mass picket called for Wednesday 30 April.



Kick out the Tories badge available now from: Relgocrest, PO Box 50, London N1. 20p each or cheaper rates for bulk orders, especially for cash in advance.

# BACK TO THE COLD WAR

By Roy Alexander

LAST week saw fresh sabre-rattling by the White House as President Carter tried to line up the world's capitalist powers in a common front against the Iranian revolution.

As well as sending ships to the Indian Ocean, guns to Zia, and declaring the entire Persian Gulf to be under American control, Carter threatened armed action against the Khomeini regime if the imperialist powers don't agree to an economic boycott of Iran.

The choice of Iran as the target for this 'get tough' stand, even though the Soviet army is still in Afghanistan, strikes some imperialist ideologues — the *Economist* for one — as misguided.

But the explanation is not hard to find. It is election year in America, and while the 'red star over Afghanistan' has stirred up a good deal of reactionary American patriotism, Iran's seizure of American hostages has had even more effect on the electorate. Vietnam and detente have taken some of the cocksureness out of American politics. The attempt, for example, to get American athletes to rally-round-the-flag over Afghanistan was an abysmal failure, and the US Olympic boycott was imposed only by the use of that older and more deep-rooted principle, rally-round-the-dollar. Even an old red-baiter like Ronald Reagan sees that there are more votes in hostages and petrol-pumps than the independence of Afghanistan.

## Oil

Carter's international allies are much like his voters. Apart from the Japanese, who depend heavily on Iran for oil, most imperialist countries would prefer to confront an isolated, underdeveloped country like Iran than to take on the Soviet Union.

By victimizing Iran, Carter hopes both to get back into the White House and repair the 'Western alliance'.

But the problems of Iran and Afghanistan can be separated only with difficulty. American policy-makers are presently in the middle of a difficult operation: to adjust the imperialist system, economically, politically and militarily, to a situation in which the United States no longer occupies the world position it once did, but without giving way on US claims to world 'leadership'.

Thus, for example, they want the European countries to assume more of the costs of NATO's European forces and Japan to finance the defence of imperialist interests in Asia. The dollar is to be eased out of its position as the main means of international exchange in favour of the IMF's 'Special Drawing Right' which all the leading imperialist countries will underwrite. But in everything the White House will still call the shots.

But to imperialist powers like France, Germany and Japan, who are far more powerful in comparison with the United States than they were when the 'Western alliance' was constructed in the '40s and '50s, these arrangements offer little. So Carter must convince them that the United States is as indispensable for the defence of their interests as it was twenty years ago. There is only one thing to do; resurrect the bogey of the Soviet Union.

The sort of world order that the US wants requires at least a partial return to the days of the Cold War, and we must expect US policy to become increasingly aggressive in the years ahead.

## Scapegoat

Margaret Thatcher understood this even before she arrived at Number Ten. Reluctant to see all British ruling class eggs in the basket of the EEC, the Tories have done much to pave the way for Carter's 'new direction', hoping that Britain will benefit once again from a 'special relationship' with the United States.

It would be wrong to see recent events as a piece of great power rivalry of no concern to the international labour movement. Apart from strengthening domestic reactionary forces, cold war revivalism will not seek its first target in the Kremlin but in the anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movements breaking out around the world.

Today the scapegoat is Iran, tomorrow Central America, Southern Africa, Pakistan, or even one of those sunny Mediterranean lands where British tourists crowd the beaches. The real meaning of cold war revivalism is *global counter-revolution*.

The British left has responded in various ways to events in Afghanistan and is still, quite rightly, debating their significance. But imperialists care nothing for nuance. They will oppose anything that smacks of revolution.

We must be equally blunt. Whatever we think of the specifics of the Afghanistan case we must insist that the right to self-determination includes the right to make a revolution *and* the right to seek international aid to carry it through.

Only defence of that principle can immunize the labour movement against the reactionary offensive.



# US ELECTIONS AND T WHAT'S GOOD FOR IS BAD FOR THE

It is now just six months until the American presidential elections take place. Meanwhile US marines have been practising beach landings, a call has gone out for helicopter pilots with Vietnam mine-laying experience and the army has painted its tanks desert-brown instead of jungle-green.

The approaching vote and the war preparations are not unconnected. The 'simple man' image which helped Jimmy Carter win the presidential election last time around has turned out to be rather too simple. The US economy seems to be out of control, with inflation running

at its highest rate for 33 years, while in Iran, Afghanistan and the Middle East US foreign policy has suffered humiliation and failure.

In Afghanistan the US can, and is, attempting all sorts of 'covert' action — some not so covert — against the government and the Soviet presence there. However, at the very most this can offer Carter only limited mileage. It is a comment on the limitations on the possibility of US intervention in Afghanistan that Carter's main strategy is to boycott a sports tournament.

Iran is a different case, where the US is not directly facing the might of the Soviet Union.

## Tweedledee, Tweedledum

By Stuart Paul

'Hamburger.' That's how a New York shopkeeper summed up the reasons for the primary election results in his state last month.

He was talking about the soaring price of mince beef, but he cannily summed up the American presidential race.

For a system where beef can be called 'ham', and the name can stick it, is as good an analogy as any for what passes as democracy in America.

*Time* magazine recently devoted a whole page to proving that an array of statements made by Republican front-runner Ronald Reagan were patently false, (that, for example, Americans could have cheap petrol again by lifting Government restrictions). Concluded *Time*, 'The Big question is: Do the facts, after all, really matter?'

Since late last year there has been a great media hoo-ha about which politicians will emerge with the nominations of the Democratic and Republican parties to

run for US President.

The nomination method, favoured up to as late as 1968, was for machine-picked delegates to select the nominees at the party conventions.

With the decline of American popular confidence in political institutions however, an attempt was made to give the impression of greater mass participation in the selection process.

Thus, the two main bourgeois parties, the Democrats and Republicans have their convention delegates elected, in the majority of states, by 'primaries'.

## Primaries

Everytime there is an election in Britain, TV man Bob McKenzie appears on TV with his swingometer and advocates 'primaries' in Britain.

Ironically it is those very swingometers which are sending US pollsters round the bend. In the recent Democratic party primary in

New York the Harris Poll managed to miss the winning result by 38 percentage points as Kennedy raced past their choice, Carter.

The reason the polls cannot predict accurately is that the real winner in these elections has been abstention. In the 1976 presidential election, Carter was hailed as a tearaway vote catcher.

In Florida, he won great acclaim for winning half the Black vote in the primary. But a closer look at the result, showed that he had won half of the four percent of blacks who voted!

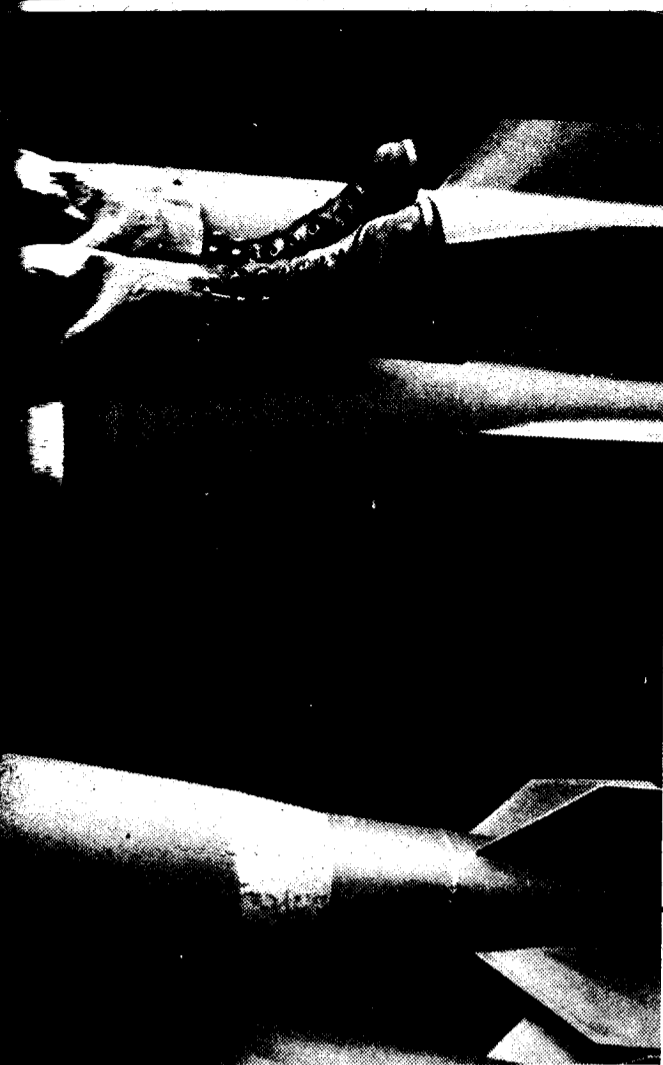
He swept the nomination nationally by taking a grand total of 4.2 per cent of the electorate, 80 percent of whom didn't bother to vote.

This year, top pollster Ruth Clark told *Time* that primary polls couldn't be relied upon because 'those polled represent the entire electorate, not those who actually vote.'

Her own agency Yankelovich, Skelly & White, have just conducted a poll in which the majority believed that they would face a Carter-Reagan choice in November; however 38 per cent wished there was a better alternative.







# THE CRISIS CARTER WORLD

ary intervention is an option there and one Carter seems to be moving towards with haste.

But is the greatest international crisis the world has faced since the Second World War to do with the US election? Or is what lies behind it an attempt by the entire US ruling class to establish its world authority? And what of the presidential election itself, how 'democratic'?

ROY ALEXANDER, STUART PAUL and JOHN LASZLO examine these questions and issues.

## Democrat, Republican

Most press and TV reports suggest there is a great deal of difference between the two Democrats (Kennedy and Carter) and three Republicans (Bush, Anderson and Reagan). You also hear of great differences between Daz and Fairy Snow, but very little of Proctor and Gamble makes all three Democrats and Republicans, both capitalist and bourgeois, are the only ones allowed to run in the primaries.

To appreciate just how similar all five candidates are just consider a real alternative to Kennedy, who currently is painted as the most bourgeois of the candidates. Last year he landed himself in a great deal of trouble for making the patently obvious statement that the Shah was a tyrant. That's all. Andrew Pulley, the candidate of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), on the other hand sent a telegram to Tehran, which appeared on the 17 November front page of the paper *Baamdad* calling for the extradition of the Shah and solidarising with the Iranian people against the US. Bush has been made of Kennedy's anti-communism but nothing is recalled

about Carter making the exact same pledge four years ago when he was running against the Washington bureaucracy. Now arch-reactionary Reagan, who used troops against peaceful anti-war demonstrators while Governor of California, is promising to 'whack away at the fat extravagant Government in Washington.'

### Lesser Evil

Thus as one bourgeois politician falters the two party system in America puts up another. The next is sold as a lesser evil, if, as this time around, no candidate evokes much positive response.

SWP candidate Peter Camejo explained the system in a debate on the eve of the 1976 presidential election: 'The people that run this country can always find somebody that's worse. They want you to stomach Carter, they put up Ford. If they want you to vote for Mussolini, they'll run Hitler.'

In 1964 most American radicals supported the lesser evil Lyndon Johnson. It seems a joke now but they said LBJ would keep the US out of a war. Only the SWP's *Militant* predicted that

he was just as likely as Goldwater to go to war. I heard Corretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King and a respected civil rights leader, promise in 1972 that 'this is the last time I trust the Democratic party.' Today she is still backing the lesser evil party but the evil is now more obvious.



The support Kennedy and liberal Republican John Anderson have received reflects a rejection of the war and austerity promised by Carter and Reagan. But all Democrat or Republican candidates will deliver the same results.

As Camejo said 'The oil industry gets the Secretary of State no matter who wins.' Since the war, regardless of the President, all Secretaries of State have come from the Rockefeller foundation.

### Alternative

In Zavala County in Texas the Raza Unida party has displaced the Democrats as the main party. A party composed of and run by Chicanos, it has taken on the two party system. It is a gain Black and all other American workers sorely need — their own party, and a real choice.



IN ORDER TO PROTECT  
AMERICAN INTERESTS  
IN THE PERSIAN GULF  
WE  REINSTATE THE  
DRAFT REGISTRATION, SO  
IF THE NEED ARISES WE  
CAN QUICKLY MOBILIZE  
OUR TROOPS  
THE SOVIETS MUST KNOW  
WE WILL NEVER EXXONERATE  
OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE  
 STANDARDS OF A SAFE AND FREE...

## The real alternative

By John Laszlo

THE car workers on the second shift at the General Motors plant at Tarrytown in New York were wondering whether Andrew Pulley would be allowed in to the plant, as his supporters had publicised.

But on 17 January at 7pm Pulley, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for President of the United States, walked into the chassis department. He walked along the whole line.

'Hi, I'm running for President of the United States,' Pulley said, introducing himself to a black woman working on the chassis final line. 'Damn right!' she said. Many of the workers came to the 2.30am meeting to talk with Pulley.

### Draft

The SWP's candidate for Vice President is Matilde Zimmerman. While the Democrat and Republican candidates were stumping for votes

in the New Hampshire primary, Matilde Zimmerman joined a march there against the draft, one of the first.

### SWP

With the most popular chant 'Hell, no, we won't go — We won't die for Texaco,' it wasn't surprising that Zimmerman was the only candidate to march or speak. 'Anti draft' Kennedy and Anderson were nowhere in sight.

An SWP campaign statement pointed out that while election year produced a host of 'millionaires and near millionaires claiming to be 'friends of the working people', our candidates are working people.

Pulley and Zimmerman's campaign needs to collect thousands of signatures to get on the ballot. Many in the US accept these ballot restrictions, and follow 'lesser evil' bourgeois candidates.

*Time Out* magazine in London gave a typically false view of the

choice for the left in its 11 April report on the American elections. 'Most groups like the Socialist Workers Party and Workers World can hope to get on the ballot in only a very few states,' the report speculates.

It goes on to practically rule out the possibility of getting on the ballot in Kentucky, where '5,000 signatures are now required'. The SWP, however, was on the ballot in 28 states in the 1976 elections, and on 31 March it was certified for the ballot in ... Kentucky, where it filed 14,000 signatures!

### Cuba

The SWP uses the petition drives to campaign and to expose the injustices of American 'democracy', where the two richest parties have automatic ballot status.

The candidates make no attempts to hide their politics. The US is currently besieged by a propaganda campaign to whip up resentment against Iran, Cuba, and the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan.

Pulley has widely publicised his recent trip to Cuba, and Zimmerman headed a delegation of 12 SWP candidates to Nicaragua in March. Support for these revolutions features strongly in their campaigns.

Pulley was won to socialism in the stockade of the Fort Jackson army base where he was locked up for opposing the Vietnam war.

He was in the army because when he was arrested in the black riots following Martin Luther King's assassination, he was given a choice of the army or jail. He took the army.

### Justice

'The rulers of this country want us to believe that we are being kicked around by the Iranian people,' Pulley said in a speech at the height of the hostage crisis.

'Well, I'm not being kicked around,' he added. 'I own nothing in

Iran. I didn't lose any sugar mills in Cuba ... and I'm sure the overwhelming majority of Americans are like me. No, it's not us that are being kicked around, ... it's the Rockefellers and the Du Ponts.'

'We should join with the Iranians, the Cubans, the Nicaraguans, the Vietnamese, the black Africans and help them kick around some more. The world will be a better place for it.'

Matilde Zimmerman is forthright on nuclear power. She walked around the Three Mile Island area during the recent commemorative activities demanding a shut down of nuclear reactors. She called instead for coal-based power now.

When Carter tried to pawn off a proposal to draft women as 'women's rights', Zimmerman hit back: 'I think the majority of women reject this approach. We are fighting for equal rights for all, not equal oppression.'

She added: 'This has nothing to do with the backward idea that females are unfit for combat.'

'I returned a couple of weeks ago from Nicaragua — a great and nearly by example of how women can fight when justice is on their side. I talked to young women who commanded guerilla fronts and who organised the insurrection against Somoza...'

This is how the socialist alternative is being put across in America.

## Local candidates

The SWP is also running candidates for US Congress and Senate posts, as well as for city mayors and state Governors.

For Governor of Washington (not the city) the candidate is 21-year-old shipfitter Mary Nell Bockman. In St. Paul, SWP candidate for Mayor Libby Moser, a Ford assembly line worker successfully challenged the current mayor to a widely-publicised debate.

In West Virginia, home of the world famous Appalachia coal mine area, the SWP is running coal miner Tom Moriarty against the richest Governor in the state's history — coal, oil and banking owner John D Rockefeller IV. That, when announced, made the front page of several newspapers and was carried on both Associated Press and UPI wire services.

# INTERNATIONAL

## IMG NOTICES

**ABORTION** campaign fraction. Sat 10 May. 10.30am. National centre. Each branch to send one representative. Pooled fare will operate.

**ENGINEERING** national fraction. Sat 26 April. 11.00am. Manchester District Centre. Agenda includes: building the left, national policy conference, elections.

**ASTMS** fraction Sat 10 May. 2.00pm - 5.30pm. National centre.

**NALGO** fraction Sun 11 May. 10.00am - 4.00pm. National centre.

**ANTI-NUCLEAR** fraction. Sat 17 May. 11.00am. National centre.

**RAIL** fraction. Sat 3 May. 12.00 - 4.30pm. National centre.

**NUT** national aggregate. Sat 31 May. More details later.

### London notices

**BLAIR PEACH** demo 27 April. All London branches to support with banners. Assemble 12.30pm.

**NUCLEAR WASTE** in London. One member per branch to meet Rail Fraction at 3pm Sat 3 May National Centre.

**MAY DAY** march and rally. Thur 1 May. Organised by Labour Party, Coop, trade unions. Malet St. WC1. March to Hyde Park. All available IMG members to attend. Meet 12.30pm for Socialist Challenge sales.

## WHAT'S LEFT

**RATES** for ads to appear in Whats Left. 5p per word or £2 per column inch. Deadline: noon Saturday prior to publication.

**PEOPLES** News Service. A fortnightly news report. Available from: Oxford House, Derbyshire St, London E2. Price 35p.

**CAMDEN/ISLINGTON** Troops Out Movement presents Andy de la Tour, comedian: 'Sick' - *Sunday Times*. 'A political comedian' - *Republican News*. Plus Irish and other music. Sat 26 April, Hemingford Arms, Hemingford Rd, NI. From 8.30 onwards. Entrance 50p.

**TONY BENN** on Labour's leadership in the eighties. Public meeting organised by Brentford and Isleworth Labour Party. Tuesday 29 April, 7.30pm. Hounslow Manor School, off Hounslow High St.

**FIGHTING RACISM** and Fascism - What Now? Big Flame public meeting with speakers from Big Flame and Campaign Against Immigration Laws. 7.30pm, 30 April, Hemingford Arms, Hemingford Rd, London NI.

**HOUNSLOW** Socialist Forum: South Africa - Anti-apartheid or socialist revolution. Speaker Robert Peterson, former editor of *Workers Unity*, SACTU - South African Congress of Trade Unions. George IV public house, 185 Chiswick High Rd, London W4. 7pm.

## SCEVENTS

**OLDHAM** SC sold every Saturday outside Yorkshire Bank, High Street. For more information about local activities. Tel. 061-682 5151.

**STOCKPORT** SC sold every Saturday 1pm Mersey Square. Tel. 061-236 4905 for more information.

**OXFORD** SC supporters sell every Fri 12-2pm outside Kings Arms and every Sat 10.30-12.30pm in Cornmarket.

**BRENT** SC supporters sell every Sat Morning at the Brent Collective Bookstall in the Trades Hall, Willesden High Rd NW10.

**CARDIFF** SC sales Newport Town Centre outside Woolworths 11-12.30; Cardiff British Home Stores 11-12.30. Also available from 108 Books, Salisbury Road, Cardiff.

**ABERDEEN**: SC sold Saturdays outside C&As - for more info ring 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 Rd, 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.

**HUDDERSFIELD**: SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peaceworks.

**LAMBETH**: SC now available at kiosk Brixton tube, Oval tube, Herne Hill British Rail and Tetric Books Clapham.

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

**TESSIDE**: SC sales at Newsfars shops in Cleveland Centre and on Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, and at Greens Bookstall, upstairs in Spencer Market, Stockton High Street.

**TOWER HAMLETS**: SC supporters sell papers every Friday 5-6pm Watney Mkt, Sat 11-12.30pm Whitechapel tube, Sunday 10.30-12.00 Brick Lane.

**NEWHAM**: SC sale every Saturday, 11am to noon, Queen's Rd Market, Upton Park.

**FORDS**: SC sale at Gate 25, Body Plant, Dagenham. Weds 9-9.45pm, Thurs. 7-7.45am.

**CAMDEN** SC public meeting: 'Putting the Fragments together'. Speakers Hilary Wainwright and Valerie Coultas (IMG). Thur 24 April. Room B8, North London Polytechnic, Prince of Wales Road, Kentish Town. 7.30pm.

# 200 delegates attend Nicaragua Solidarity Conference

By Alan Freeman

**OVER 200 delegates, representing 180 organisations, came to the founding conference of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign in London two weeks ago. They included eight trades councils, five CLPs, and 38 solidarity organisations, as well as the Labour Party, a sponsor of the conference - an indication of the growing support for the Nicaraguan revolution in the British Labour Movement.**

While recognising the need for urgent financial and material support to Nicaragua, the conference reaffirmed the need to build up solidarity in defence of the revolution and against any US or UK intervention.

Throughout the country, local solidarity committees have already raised support for medical projects and for the literacy crusade - both earmarked as campaign priorities.

Northern region is raising money for a hospital, and the Sheffield committee have been raising up to £300 a week. Money so far sent nationally exceeds £100,000.

The literacy crusade has won support from teachers - a separate literacy crusade was launched on 15 April, and NUT's recent conference gave a good reception to crusade material. Over thirty delegates attended a fringe meeting and

discussed publicising the crusade in schools.

Other areas the NSC is concentrating on include: a campaign in support of the Nicaraguan women's movement; breaking the press blockade on information and exposing imperialist attempts to subvert the revolution; and building contacts with the British labour movement through shop stewards' committees and trade union branches, as well as preparing to raise the issue in the TUC and Labour party autumn conferences. Three pamphlets are being produced - one by the Labour Party itself.

The NSC conference also marked the public launching of an El Salvador Committee, and

a special session was held on the struggle there. A resolution condemning US intervention and welcoming the formation of an El Salvador Committee in Britain, also gave conference support to the National Revolutionary Coordination in El Salvador.

## Sentiment

This sentiment was echoed in a statement from the Labour Party International Committee dated 15 April, which condemned the 'Palm Sunday Massacre' at Archbishop Romero's funeral, and expressed concern that:

'The US appears to be backing the Salvadorean armed forces in an attempt to protect

its own interests in the country.'

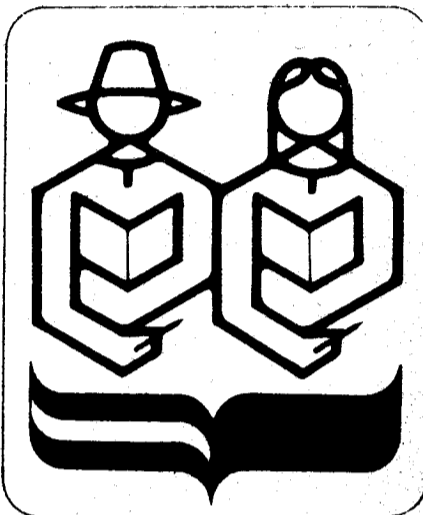
## Evidence

It went on to say that: 'Evidence seems to bear out Archbishop Romero's fear that the land reform is in no sense being carried out in the interests of the El Savadorean people.'

It ends with the words 'the people of El Salvador should be allowed to determine their own future and we deplore any attempt by the United States to influence El Salvador's internal affairs.'

**The El Salvador Committee urgently needs help. Contact via CARILA, 29 Islington Park Street, London N1.**

# FIST ON HIGH OPENED BOOK



By John Smith in Managua

**'PUNO en Alto .. Libro Abierto' - Fist on high ... opened book - is the militant cry of 125,000 young Nicaraguans, organised in the 'Ejercito Popular de Alfabetizacion' (EPA), the fighting army of a 'cultural insurrection' which is sweeping this young revolutionary republic.**

Detachments are being sent to every forgotten corner of this land, to teach the illiterate 52 per cent of Nicaraguans, 2½ million people, how to read and write - a prerequisite for their participation in the revolution.

## Ambitious

This ambitious 'Grand National Crusade' has aroused extraordinary enthusiasm among the mass of the people. It occupies a central place in the present phase of the Nicaraguan Revolution.

The literacy crusade has as its central task the consolidation of the revolution. The mobilisation of youth around this task is the complement of the self-organisation of workers in the struggle to raise production.

In the towns, it has been the CDS (Sandinista Defence Committees) and the Sandinista workers union that has played the principal role in recruiting for the EPA and its complement, the 'Milicias Obreras de Alfabetizadoras'. In the country it is the ATC (Rural Workers Association) that has organised the allocation and reception of the brigades.

Participation in the crusade is completely voluntary and without payment - approximately 50 per cent of the youth considered eligible have enlisted; of the remainder, most have either failed to receive parental permission, or occupy too central a place in the subsistence of the family to be able to take part.

## Practical

In organising around practical tasks in this way, the mass organisations are developing and consolidating their control over all aspects of the revolutionary process; as new social layers are taught how to read and write, so they too will be brought into the mass organisations, increasing their numerical and geographical strength over all the land.

In the words of Ernesto Cardenal, the Minister of Education centrally responsible for the crusade, the task is not so much pedagogical with political implications, but it is a political struggle with



The course content is militant Sandinism pedagogical implications!

The youth of Nicaragua played a central role in the guerilla struggle and urban insurrection that toppled the US-backed tyrant and smashed the bourgeois state apparatus last July. In the heat of the fighting the youth have developed a deep anti-imperialist political consciousness, which the FSLN leadership have carefully cultivated from the very beginning of the revolution.

Classes are held during and at the end of the working day and they centre on the history of Sandinism and the FSLN; the struggle for workers and peasants control through their own mass organisations; the struggle for production and the sweeping agrarian reform; the liberation of women; the anti-imperialist character of the revolution; and the struggle for popular education and health.

The teaching material explains the ever-present threat of counter-revolution, in the forms of manipulation of ignorance, economic dislocation, CIA infiltration, and military aggression. It also explains the necessity of the active participation of all workers in the mass organisations; the need to consolidate the alliance between the workers and

peasants; and the organic unity of the FSLN vanguard with the masses, so as to present a solid united front against the counter-revolution.

In his speech to the assembled brigades at the beginning of the campaign, Sergio Ramirez, member of the government of Reconstruction summarised the message of the crusade as follows:

- \* The course content is militant Sandinism
- \* We are fighting for a democracy from below, not for electoralism
- \* We are going to bury oppression and injustice.

The first stage of the 'cultural insurrection' will take five months, after which time the brigades will return from the countryside and their schools and colleges will be reopened.

During this period, the young teachers will work in the fields with their students, and will be fed and housed by the rural workers. They have other tasks, including the collection of data on animal and plant life; the teaching of elementary first-aid and dietary knowledge; and the organisation of a

vast census of all aspects of the conditions of life of the rural and urban poor.

In recent weeks, bourgeois and reactionary elements have intensified their campaign of disruption and hostile propaganda against the advancing revolution, but each attempt they have made to insert levers into fissures and open up cracks in the revolutionary front have met with total failure.

For example, in the build-up to the crusade, reactionary sectors of the clergy and the bourgeoisie attacked the crusade for 'Marxist bias' and have argued for 'alfabetisation through Christ'. Ivan Garcia, general secretary of the Sandinista workers union, replied in *Barricada* on 21 March:

'... this reaction is because they are stirred by fear, by terror, that our brother workers and peasants will not simply learn how to read and write, but as they become literate they will become converted into active agents in the tasks of reconstruction and deciding their own destiny ... accompanying the 24 letters of the Castilian alphabet there will arrive to our illiterate brothers... the Revolution.'

## IRELAND

STAMPING feet and 'troops out now' slogans followed speeches by Northern Ireland speakers at the National Union of Students conference last week in Blackpool. One of the speakers was from the Relatives Action Committee, the other was protesting about the conditions in Armagh jail.

The student conference was polarised on the issue, the NUS executive suffering a major defeat after an emergency motion taking up the plight of women Republican prisoners in Armagh was passed by 296 delegate votes to 214.

The incoming executive is now mandated to issue a complaint to the Home Office and the United Nations, to support demands for the restoration of normal privileges for the prisoners, and to launch a national petition

## Students back Armagh protest

protesting at the inhuman conditions under which they are held. The petition will also call for Dr Cole, the resident medical officer in Armagh, to be struck off the medical register.

The Socialist Students Alliance, a grouping which includes IMG students, and the Socialist Workers Student Organisation worked together throughout the conference to bring the attention of delegates to the situation in the North of Ireland.

On the opening night of the conference the SSA and SWSO won a motion to have guest speakers from Belfast. To pay their fares a collection was taken on the spot, despite the

hostility of some delegates to this proposal.

The executive was also taken up on its refusal to mount a campaign against the Prevention of Terrorism Act despite having a mandate to do so.

The Left Alliance which dominates the executive did their utmost to stop Ireland being discussed. Andy Permain, a member of the Communist Party, opposed the collection for the Armagh campaign on the grounds that it and the Relatives Action Committee were 'Provisional IRA fronts'.

Alan Christie, the Deputy President of the NUS and a member of the National Organisation of Labour Students, likewise thought that

supporting the Armagh prisoners and publicising their brutal treatment would 'give credence to the Provisional IRA and everything it stands for'.

Pauline Roe, for the SSA and the IMG, replied that if she had wanted the conference to give support to the IRA that's the motion she would have put.

Traditional supporters of the executive among the delegates broke with them to ensure that the emergency resolution was passed.

The decision, said Pauline, marked a 'huge breakthrough'. While in no way committing the NUS to campaign for troop withdrawal it has forced the NUS to break its silence over the Irish issue.

It remains for student militants at the base to make sure that the NUS executive are not allowed to cop out of making its protest about the women of Armagh effective.

## Armagh A wing is women's H block

# 'Our skin has turned dusty grey'

By Valerie Coultas

ARMAGH prison in the North of Ireland is becoming notorious. It is inside these walls that women prisoners, who dare to demand prisoner-of-war status, are being subjected to regular beatings and have been denied washing and toilet facilities.

The harassment goes on non-stop. On Wednesday 26 March four women prisoners were attacked in the prison yard and suffered cuts and bruises. On Sunday 30 March, while the women were at mass, prison warders entered their cells and emptied chamber pots over their beds. Warders switch lights on and off, bang cell doors, and rattle the door shutters back and forward.

The governor has also prevented two women, Dolores O'Neill and Anne Bateson, from getting the regular visits to which they are entitled.

Patricia Craig, another prisoner, has contracted a rash called impetigo. The rash is highly infectious but because of Pauline's refusal to be 'criminalised' she has been denied medical treatment.

## Smuggled

In a note smuggled out on Tuesday 8 April, which was reprinted in *Republican News*, the women describe what it is like to be denied washing and sanitary facilities.

'We have been here in 'A' wing for six weeks now. Our cells are covered in excreta and urine. The dust and dirt are building up to a marked degree. When one walks across the cell floor the dust rises catching at our chests and throats.

'We ourselves are completely filthy. We have not washed nor have we had any change of clothes since 7 February, so we are in a filthy state.

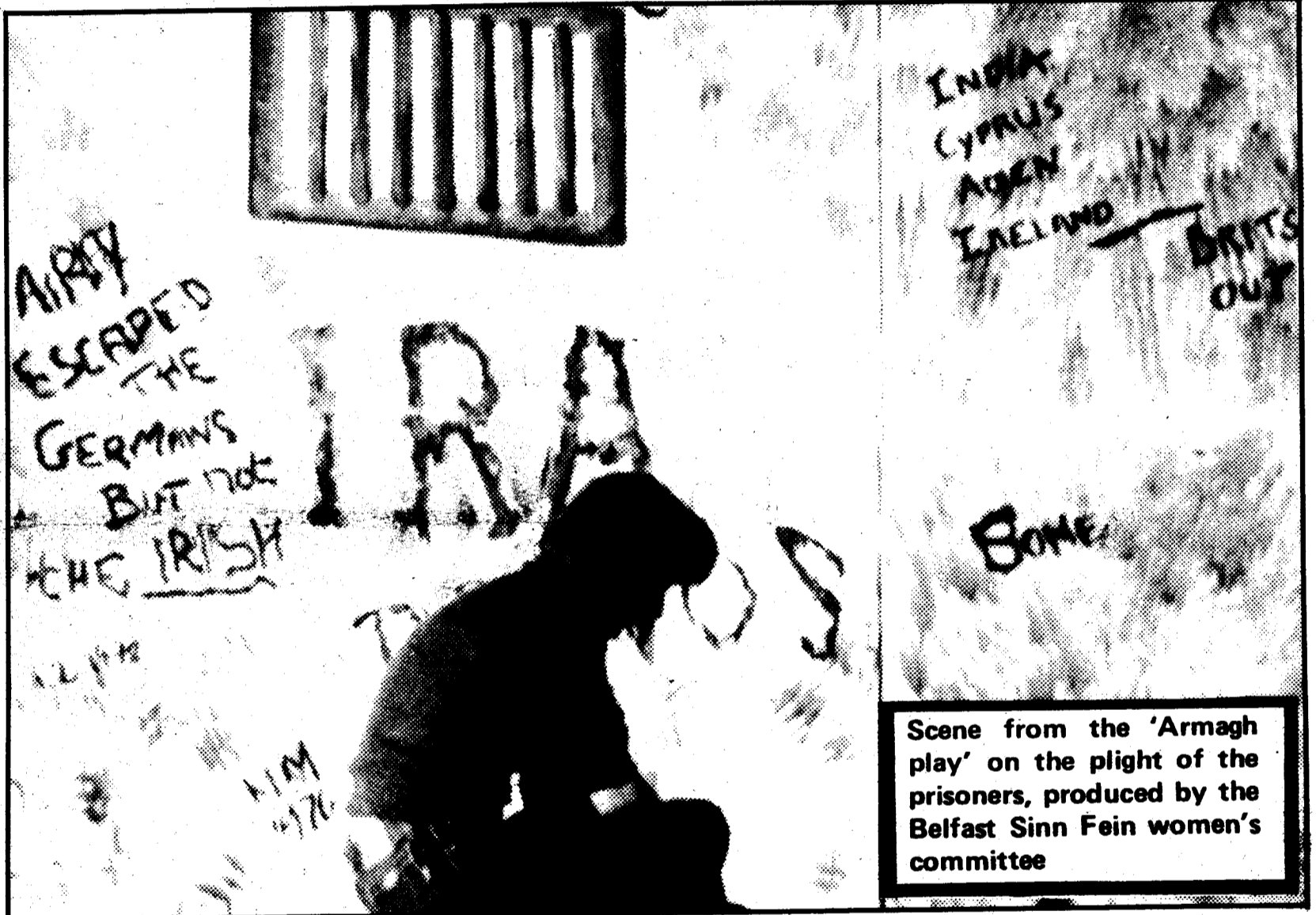
'Many of the girls already have infections which, through time, will only get worse. Since it is six weeks since we were denied toilet and washing facilities all of us have now gone through our menstrual cycle in these filthy conditions. It is a dangerous time, the risk of infection is high. Sanitary towels are just thrown into us without wrappings.

'Although we have combs it is pointless to use them because our hair is thick with dust and dirt, it is impossible to get a comb through it. Our skin has turned a dusty grey, not only because we are locked in our cells twenty three hours per day. The windows of our cells are boarded up with large pieces of wood thus allowing little air or daylight through.

## Food

'As regards the food situation it is a major problem. Breakfast consists of porridge which is so thick and lumpy it is inedible. Bread is rarely seen and if by chance we get some, it is stale. Supper consists of one pancake or one sandwich.

'The quantity and quality of food is totally inadequate. Many girls have lost weight — weight they can ill afford to lose. We are unlocked one at a time to collect our meals and



Scene from the 'Armagh play' on the plight of the prisoners, produced by the Belfast Sinn Fein women's committee

because of this time-consuming method, the majority of the girls' meals are, by the time they receive them, freezing.

'The attitude of the screws is extremely hostile; they are clad in protective clothing, including masks. Quite frequently when a girl is out to collect her meal and the screws think she is talking too long, they drag her back to her cell making sure they get a good few punches and kicks at her. We are constantly subjected to physical and verbal abuse from the screws.'

The inhuman conditions in Armagh are not a product of vindictiveness by the prison wardens, although they are vindictive towards the women. This brutality is authorised and sanctioned by the British government in Westminster. The women in 'A' wing, like the men in H Block, are not 'criminals' as the British press and government would have us believe. They are ordinary people who are fighting for the British army to get out of Ireland and leave the Irish people to live in peace.

The government in Westminster, that protests so loudly about the violation of human rights in Afghanistan, has no qualms about its own record in Ireland.

But it seems as if it will not be long before the European Parliament will be brought onto the scene to prick

Britain's conscience a little.

It is shortly to consider a motion from George Marchais, a leading member of the French Communist Party, calling for the Parliament Legal Committee to: 'conduct an inquiry into the denial of human rights in the Six Counties.'

Women Against Imperialism in Belfast can take a lot of credit for the success of the international campaign to highlight the conditions in Armagh jail. It was the women in this group that decided to organise a demonstration on International Women's Day last year to bring attention to the plight of the women prisoners.

Arrested for their pains, they decided to boycott the court proceedings and concentrate their energies on exposing British brutality.

On 9 April the day they should have been in court, a public tribunal was held in West Belfast. The panel included Frances De La Tour and Vanessa Redgrave, Noel McCafferty (a journalist on the *Irish Times*) Pauline Roe (a member of the executive of the National Union of Students) and Pat Arrowsmith. The tribunal heard evidence from ex-prisoners, relatives and notes smuggled out of the prison detailing conditions inside.

Pat Arrowsmith told Socialist Challenge that 'the Tribunal succeeded in showing that the conditions of the women in Armagh are now

deteriorating to the state of H Block in Long Kesh.'

The women in Armagh are demanding four basic rights:

1. The right to wear their own clothing.
2. Free association with other prisoners.

3. One food parcel, one letter and a visit each week.

4. Educational and recreational activities.

The courts fined the Armagh 11 a total of £290 in their absence.

## A benefit for women in Armagh jail WOMEN IN ENTERTAINMENT

presents a review by women on behalf of women

## BREAKING OUT

with:

Alternative Cabaret  
Bloomers  
Cunning Stunts  
Demolition Decorators  
F.I.G  
Sadista Sisters  
& others from Women In Entertainment  
Sunday 27 April from 2.15-5.00pm

Venue: The Rio, 107 Kingsland High Street, London E8  
Women only: £1.50 waged, £1 unwaged  
Creche available — phone Rio for details (01-254 6677)

Tickets on sale at door and from the following:  
Rio Cinema, Centreprise, Action Space, Sisterwrite, Women's Arts Alliance.  
The money raised will go towards the campaign to help the women in Armagh as well as their children.

By Alix Lee, South London Revolution

**YOUTH** are once again on the move. All over the country we are standing up to say **No to the vicious repression and the empty future that Thatcher is offering. Once again youth are leading the fightback.**

After years of harassment and brutality from the racist state, black youth in Bristol put the police on the run. Their success has inspired many young people.

In South Wales youth were prepared to march their feet off to oppose Tory policies, which offer a life on the dole. In Liverpool punks, skins, and black youth staged spontaneous mass demonstrations against the closure of their club following a police raid.

If anything youth are more political now. It's a big step from turning up at the odd Anti Nazi League carnival to waging a struggle against the forces of the state.

Even the so-called 'Easter riots' at the seaside resorts could be seen as a response to

## Revo: on the march!

Southall and Brick Lane which inspired the anti-racist movement within punk, so if these youth are given a revolutionary perspective from the left the influence of fascist boot-boys can easily be stamped out.

The *Revolution* newspaper was launched in 1978 to draw on the potential that the ANL generated among youth; to begin organising those who saw that capitalism wasn't working and that an alternative is necessary.

### Salutes

The fact that many of the youth gave Seig Heil salutes indicates that they see no way out of the 'No future' offered them by those who claim to lead the working class. So they take up the British Movement or the NF.

Just as it was the struggles of Asian youth in

the events in the St Paul's community a few days earlier. One of the most popular chants when they took on the police was: 'We got you at Bristol.'

We said that this youth organisation had to be independent from any 'parent' party, so that as many youth as possible could be involved in organising and politicising themselves.

It has been quite a long, drawn out process establishing *Revolution* as an independent organisation. Yet we have been able to involve hundreds of youth in struggles and campaigns that we have helped to lead.

We made sure that the demands of youth are not ignored.

In this period we have also laid the groundwork for our founding conference on 17-18

May which will establish us as organisationally and financially independent of the International Marxist Group. We've gained the experience of electing our own leadership, and established the first steps to a regular dues system.

If you want to join an organisation which can involve youth in the fight against the Tories and for youth rights, an organisation that you control, come to Revolution conference.

**Saturday/Sunday 17-18 May**

### REVOLUTION NATIONAL CONFERENCE

at

The University of London Students Union

Malet Street, London WC1

(5 mins from Euston Station)

Guest speakers; discussions; workshops; films; gig and disco; and much more besides.

SOME of the key figures in the Left Opposition group had been active since February 1976. What happened at that time?

Young people, high school, and university students produced leaflets at the time of the 25th Communist Party congress in 1976. The leaflets were pro-communist, calling for communism with a human face.

The KGB arrested Andrei Reznikov, Aleksandr Skobov, and others. Others involved were in the last grade of high school or the first year of institute or university.

Their leaflet ended with the demand 'Long Live Communism! Long Live the New Revolution!' The Group was pro-communist, pro-Marxist, but it also included anarchists and socialists.

How did the group develop after that?

In Leningrad there are many places where artists, political people, and dissidents can meet — in apartments, cafés and communes.

After the leafleting attempt in 1976, Skobov organised a commune in Leningrad. Arkady Tsurkov was then studying at the University of Tartu, where he had many friends.

At Skobov's commune in Leningrad many people came together to talk about art, politics and philosophy. As well as from Leningrad, they came from Moscow, the Baltic republics, and Siberia. If they came to Leningrad, they stayed at the commune.

Tsurkov and Reznikov came to the commune and sometimes lived there. With Sokobov they formed the core of the Leningrad grouping.

Could you describe the commune?

It was on the edge of the city, in Primorsky Prospect, about half an hour by train from the centre of the city. It was on the first floor of an old two-storey wooden home.

The commune had a set of statutes written by Skobov. It defined the commune to be like a small communist society. Everything was for everybody. Skobov repudiated private property. He was opposed to violence.

There was a cash box for whatever the commune needed. Its doors were always open. Everybody knew where the key was kept. From 5 to 10 people lived there at any one time, but a lot of people came in from other cities.

How did the commune become the centre for a political movement?

We had many discussions at the commune. We talked about the internal situation, foreign policy, about the latest cultural news, philosophy, and so on.

We wanted more freedom. Outside the commune we weren't free to express ourselves. We couldn't even listen to the music we wanted to hear.

We didn't like the passport system. We couldn't travel abroad. For example, tourists from Finland could come to Leningrad, but we in Leningrad could not travel to Finland.

## 'We couldn't even listen to the music we wanted to hear' - Soviet youth speak out

IN LATE 1978 there were reports from the Soviet Union that the KGB had broken up a commune in Leningrad and arrested several young activists who belonged to a group known as the Left Opposition.

On 5 December 1978 some two hundred school and university students in Leningrad demonstrated outside the Kazan Cathedral in protest at the arrests.

The left-wing ideas which these young people identify with, including Marxism and anarchism, are for the most part available only in samizdat form.

The Leningrad group had established links

with other left-wing and socialist groups in the USSR, and had decided to hold an 'All-Union conference of the Left Opposition'. It launched a journal called *Perspectives*, to serve as a basis for discussion at the conference.

After the KGB arrested some of the key activists, the secret police moved against other participants in and around the group, expelling a number from the Young Communist League and from their university or school.

The interview published here is with one of the Leningrad activists who was forced to emigrate. Now aged 18, he left the USSR in November 1978.

We felt the system was hypocritical. There are so many lies.

How did you become involved with the commune?

I had a lot of friends in the Academy of Arts in Leningrad. These people — artists and painters — tended to find each other in cafés like the Sphinx or Red Castle in Leningrad. I had friends who came there often, even from Moscow. And they needed a place to spend the night, so we would help them.

Through this I became acquainted with people who knew Skobov and introduced me to him. We became friends.

There were calls to have demonstrations and to speak out. Usually we attempted to expose the fact that the Soviet Union is not communist or Marxist, and that the Communist Party is not Marxist, because in the Soviet Union all the power is in the hands of the state.

Communism should be a free society. We could understand a state being necessary to build communism. But in the USSR the state only serves the interests of the upper class, the bureaucrats.

What were the main political currents in the group?

There were three main political currents. There were the Marxists like Tsurkov and Reznikov and Fedorova. There were anarchists like Khavin and me. Skobov was half Marxist and half anarchist.

There were three left democrats like Victor Pavlenkov, who was from Gorky. His father was a famous dissident and he had many friends in Gorky and Moscow. The left democrats weren't Marxist or anarchists, but simply took part in the democratic movement for human rights from a left-wing point of view.

The Left Opposition group was

planning to hold an 'All Union Conference of the Left Opposition'. How did this plan come about?

Skobov, Tsurkov, Fedorova, Rezkikov and others from Leningrad went to Moscow for a meeting. There were only people from Moscow and Leningrad at the meeting, but they were planning to have a conference in Leningrad that would be on a larger scale.

We began to put out *Perspectives*. We want to distribute it in the universities and high schools to present our views and get supporters.

Although we would make only 10 or 15 carbon copies of each issue of *Perspectives*, many people read it. One person reads the copy and then passes it on to a friend. A lot of people learned about our magazine.

Was the Conference held?

No. On 12 August the militia came and smashed the commune. And after that, it ceased to exist, although some people continued to meet there. But it was dangerous for them. They were followed by the militia.

What happened to the commune's leading figures?

On 14 October 1978, Skobov was arrested. On 16 April 1979, his trial was held, and he was sentenced to compulsory psychiatric treatment for an indefinite period.

Arkady Tsurkov was arrested on 31 October, and in April 1979 he was sentenced to five years in a concentration camp and three years internal exile.

On 16 April, Khavin was arrested. He was sentenced to a six-year term. Reznikov and Fedorova were sent to Altai. Victor Pavlenkov had to emigrate like I did.

A friend of mine from Leningrad has told me that now the school where I went has been changed. My school was one of the best high schools in Leningrad, a school for the privileged, for children of important artists, big party members and so on.

It was a 10-grade school and had a special French school — there were only six such French schools in Leningrad.

After the December demonstration, when the 9th and 10th grade students came to the demonstration, the KGB came to the school and now it is only an eight-grade school, because the 9th and 10th grades were closed. A lot of teachers were dismissed.

So now it is an incomplete school, a poor quality one, like the schools that they have here in the United States for Puerto Ricans and blacks. An eight-grade school is not a good school.

What can socialists abroad do to support the movement of young militants in the Soviet Union?

I think the movement in the Soviet Union is continuing. There should be a defence campaign organised here for Skobov, Tsurkov and Khavin — to run articles, organise demonstrations and committees, and carry out other actions.

If the comrades of the Fourth International would work on this, it would help us.



By Tariq Ali

**SOUTHALL** was a defeat for black people. If the trained thugs of the Special Patrol Group had not gone totally berserk and bludgeoned Blair Peach to death on 23 April 1979, there would have been no great hue and cry, no soul-searching in the liberal press and no real attempt to uncover what really took place.

Yes David McNee and his assistant Helm, 'The Butcher of Southall', who was in charge of operations on that fateful day, almost got away with cold-blooded, premeditated brutality.

How galling it must have been for the Scotland Yard chiefs to see an effective quasi-military operation against Britain's largest black community ruined by an over-zealous SPG Inspector and his gang.

These reflections are prompted by reading the *Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*,\* just published by the National Council for Civil Liberties.

**Report**

The members of the Committee of Enquiry were: Michael Dummett (Wykeham Professor of Philosophy and Logic at Oxford University), Roger Butler (AUEW District Secretary in Southall), Stuart Hall (Professor of Sociology at the Open University), Patricia Hewitt (NCCL), Bill Keys (TUC General Council), Joan Lester (MP for Eton and Slough), Dick North (NUT Executive), Paul O'Higgins (Reader in Law at Cambridge University), Ranjit Sondhi, Rt. Rev. Hewlett Thompson (Bishop of Willesden), and Pauline Webb (Methodist Church).

The report establishes an accurate chronology of what took place in Southall a year ago. It provides a detailed account of the numbers of policemen and SPG units present and describes how they dealt with the demonstrators.

Clearly a lot of work went into the report and its authors deserve to be congratulated for the meticulous attention they have given to detail. The language, too, is carefully chosen, designed clearly to convince those who are loathe to disbelieve Scotland Yard handouts.

**Left**

I did, however, resent the snide reference to the revolutionary left. Paul Holborow is virtually called a liar. The Socialist Unity leaflet calling for a picket outside the Town Hall is criticised for not using the word 'peaceful'.

It is stated that my presence was resented by some who thought that Socialist Unity was using the situation to gain votes. Anything more bizarre could hardly be conceived. Socialist Unity was so thoroughly immersed in the anti-NF mobilisations that it ignored and abandoned its electoral functions.

Virtually no canvassing took place. We threw our entire campaign at the disposal of those wishing to mobilise the community.

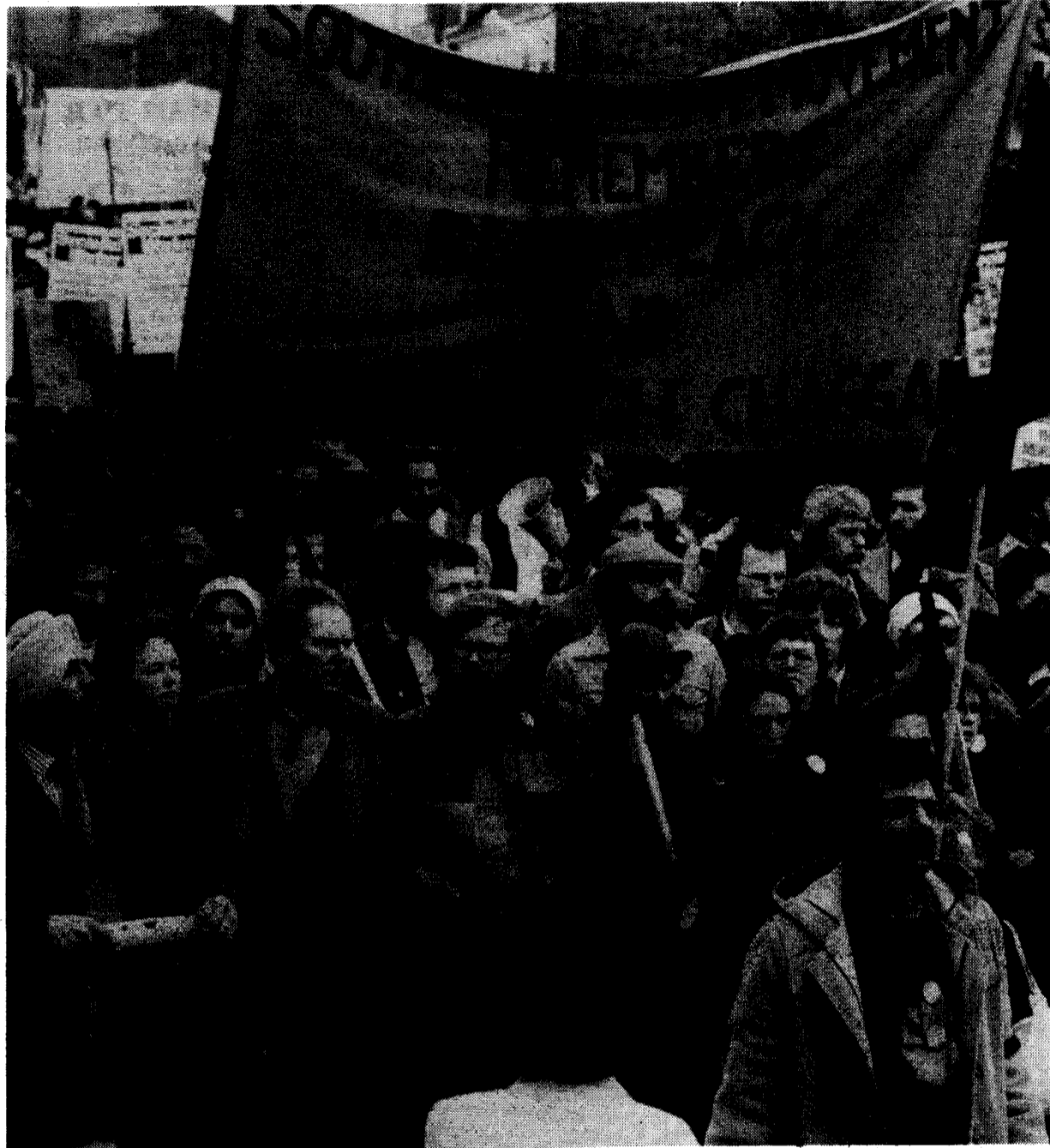
In fact I was prevented physically by the police from canvassing or using our loudspeaker equipment for electoral purposes on 23 April. At the same time the police were allowing the NF to hold an 'electoral meeting'. If the Committee had wished it could have discovered these facts simply by questioning me. They did not do so.

**SPG**

But sideswipes apart, the report confirms everything that was reported in *Socialist Challenge* and *Socialist Worker*. Where it is at its weakest is in its recommendations. Here the composition of the committee is clearly the cause. For though it is 'unofficial' it operates within the same framework as an 'official' committee.

It is caught in a contradiction. On the one hand it accepts the existence of racism, including the police force

# Southall: first anniversary blues



10,000 people marched through Southall to commemorate Blair Peach a few days after his death

and quotes the vile, racist abuse which was showered on innumerable Asians. On the other it still attempts to chart a middle way, a neutral course and implies that the state is somehow impartial. As a result it does not even propose that the SPG is disbanded, a demand which has already been accepted by the TUC and the Labour Party conferences.

However there can be little doubt that the report will be denounced by the police and its backers in the media. It makes it fairly clear that the police, by refusing to tolerate any demonstration against the National Front, provoked a situation which ultimately resulted in the death of Blair Peach and serious injuries to dozens of others.

The report also highlights the judicial frame-ups which were carried out by the magistrates who presided over trials at Barnet Court.

The question we have to ask and attempt to answer is the following: Why were the police able to defeat the community and could this have been averted? We are fully aware that to discuss such matters is not a popular undertaking, but unless they are tackled there is nothing to indicate that a repetition of 23 April 1979 would produce a different result.

The unofficial committee quite correctly dismiss the notion that it was 'outside agitators' who were responsible for what took place. But this canard was not simply the product of fevered imaginations in Fleet Street. It was also the view of the

secretary of the Indian Workers Association, Mr Khabra, who made a series of slanderous and unfounded allegations against the Anti Nazi League and myself. For some reason this fact is not mentioned in the unofficial report.

In fact these attacks by Khabra were widely quoted in the local press and were clearly the basis for the concerted campaign launched by Fleet Street and the BBC. Now Khabra has been elected president of the Indian Workers Association, replacing Vishnu Sharma!

What does this signify? First that the way in which the IWA was run left a great deal to be desired. The IWA is undoubtedly a powerful network in Southall, but its name is somewhat inappropriate. For those who run the IWA are essentially a conglomerate of businessmen, shop-keepers and local notables. The only occasion on which they appeal to their membership is when they are seeking re-election.

**Unity**

The most serious criticism made of Vishnu Sharma by socialists in Southall is that he did not utilise his period in office to try and alter both the structures and mode of functioning of the IWA. Instead he sought to shift it to the left by manipulating its existing structures. This attempt ended in failure.

The IWA failed to mobilise the community after 23 April. It collected funds for the Defence Campaign, but

consciously refused to do anything else.

Its rival in Southall was the Southall Youth Movement, which was formed half a decade ago. The SYM undoubtedly represented a more active layer within the community, but its hostility to the IWA tended to be apolitical.

Incapable of taking up Vishnu

## Steel Pickets: Why we'll be coming to the Blair Peach demonstration

CONTINGENTS of steel workers from South Yorkshire will be coming to the Blair Peach Commemoration demonstration in London on 27 April.

One of the main themes of the march will be the demand that the Special Patrol Group be disbanded. Steve Pilley, Rotherham ISTC, told *Socialist Challenge*: 'At all the mass pickets I was on, there have been lots of arrests, the police just pulling people about. When I was arrested the police carried me round the back of a truck, covered my head with a coat and put the boot in.'

'The Special Patrol Group are what we shouted at them during the steel strike: 'Maggie Thatcher's boot boys'. Thatcher brought out the SPG like she did because it was political and they are political police. The Army's got the SAS and the police have got the SPG — it's all the same.'

'Steel workers should be on the pickets of the police stations because their brothers and sisters have been beaten by these bastards. Every trade unionist should oppose the SPG.'

Bernard Connolly, South Yorkshire Crafts convenor said: 'The Tories used the police, and particularly the SPG, as they said they would in the Ridley Report — against trade unionists and pickets. The SPG should never have been formed in the first place. They are just thugs in uniform. Their boots aren't made for walking, they're just for kicking.'

Sharma politically its leaders often resorted to vulgar abuse and intimidation.

One can appreciate their frustration, but in the medium term a refusal to come to grips with reformist politics was bound to be disastrous. Thus in the IWA elections the SYM opposed Sharma, but backed the forces which were well to the right of the local Labour Party!

Undoubtedly one major reason for the defeat suffered by the community on 23 April 1979 was a combination of the IWA's reformism and the SYM's refusal to understand that only united actions and a collective co-ordination could deliver the goods.

**Target**

In normal times the police sides with reformists in order to isolate, defeat and smash all forces to the left. In Southall last April, the mood was different. Anyone who was on the streets was regarded as a legitimate target. Incapable of maintaining their margin of manoeuvre because of the obduracy of Scotland Yard the reformist project received a severe blow to the head. It is still nursing its wounds.

Meanwhile Southall has moved further to the right and further away from organised politics. Hopefully this is a temporary phase, but socialists cannot afford to ignore present-day realities.

It is ironic that the police suffered their first major defeat at the hands of the black community in the St Paul's district of Bristol. Political organisation of any sort within this community is virtually non-existent. A leading Socialist Challenge supporter in Southall was so elated that she suggested we immediately produce a badge emblazoned with the motto: **Bristol 1, Southall 0**. The idea was vetoed lest it offend some sensibilities, but the thought was not foolish.

**Solution**

The unofficial report says that we must prevent a recurrence of what happened in Southall. One of the measures it recommends is that the election deposit be raised so that small groups cannot put up candidates. This is a joke. The fascists and their racist friends will not feel unduly restricted by a proposal of this sort. Nor, incidentally, will the police force.

As racism continues to exist and unemployment grows so will the hostility directed at the blacks by the police. After all there were no Nazi parades in Bristol a few weeks ago.

The only solution is the self-organisation of the community to resist all attacks. It is worth asking why it is only revolutionary socialists who recommend such a course.

\* *Southall: 23 April 1979. The Report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry*, Published by the National Council for Civil Liberties, £2.20.

**Setting the facts straight, 1**

IT IS quite true that I have not passed the Challinor Board Z-level examinations in the Challinor school of theoretical understanding, but I trust this will not disqualify me from clarifying a few matters of fact about Jim Murray and the Tyneside Socialist Centre. (See letters 10 April.)

Firstly, Jim Murray is not 'a leader of the Socialist Centre'. He is on the Centre's co-ordinating committee as a representative of the Vickers Elswick shop stewards committee.

If Ray Challinor really felt so strongly about the struggles within the Labour Party then the most effective way of removing Murray from the Centre's committee would have been through the shop stewards committee, by leafletting the Vickers workers, the shop stewards quarterly, etc, at the time of the Party conference.

They are the people with the power to remove him and if these stewards have elected a 'first class opportunist' then surely the most important thing is to have the argument with them.

Secondly, the Socialist Centre is not a party or a substitute for the revolutionary groups. All the main socialist parties and groups on Tyneside — with the exception of Militant — are affiliated to the Centre, on the basis of a very general commitment to all struggles against oppression and for a socialist society, a commitment to organise socialist debate and education, and to provide practical resources for local struggles.

Clearly even on this basis there could be occasions when the Centre would have to condemn a member's behaviour or reject his or her membership. But the basis of the alliance is not yet specific enough for the Centre, as a body, to condemn a member's vote over a particular reform of the Labour Party.

Murray's case for voting the way he did on the election of the leadership — while voting with the left on re-selection and the manifesto — was that the proposals put forward for electing a leader would only have increased the power and status of the trade union leaderships. He argues that a leader elected by MPs who would be subject to re-selection would be more democratic, given the present undemocratic structure of the unions.

A bogus argument, I agree, and so did most of the rest of the Centre's membership, but not sufficient grounds for the Centre as a whole to make a public condemnation.

What we did do though, was to organise public debate on the issue both through our monthly

bulletin and through an open report-back meeting of delegates to the Labour Party conference. Jim Murray and a number of other delegates gave their reports.

I and many others at the meeting expressed our strong disagreement with Murray. Challinor did not bother to turn up to the meeting. Neither did Andy Strouthous put his resolution calling for public disassociation by the Centre.

It was not until a Socialist Centre meeting in February five months later that Strouthous decided to put his resolution. Challinor did not bother to turn up to that meeting either.

Finally, though Challinor might well have been too obsessed with Jim Murray to notice, the Centre, far from being a 'squalid mess', has been pretty successful recently within the limited aims it sets itself.

The Centre's bookshop, *Days of Hope*, has overcome a major financial crisis with contributions from over 150 individuals; its bookservice takes socialist literature to a growing number of trade union meetings and schools which would otherwise have only official trade union 'literature' available.

The Centre organised a very successful day school on the Labour left, with the majority of speakers being from the revolutionary left. It has raised money and organised a social for the steelworkers and has had regular monthly forums on Zimbabwe, repression — Soviet-style, repression — British-style, and the crisis in the NHS, with a regular attendance of over 70.

I would be the first to admit that there are tremendous problems in creating a socialist alliance of this sort — we have been working at them for five years now. Socialist Challenge readers will be familiar with such problems in their own areas.

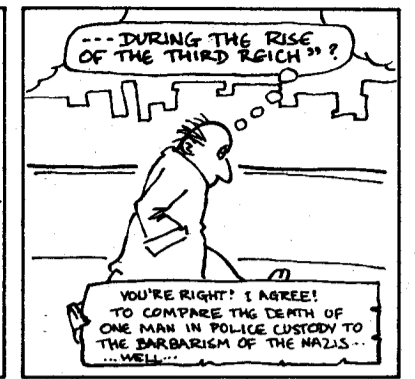
One of them is indeed the one which Challinor touched on of how to go beyond general agreement to a more specific programme and vision of socialist change and the dangers of compromising that process in order to maintain that alliance.

Ray Challinor's suggestions have always been welcome but he has rarely been willing to get practically involved. And comments based mainly on personal abuse rather than political argument are difficult to take seriously.

**HILARY WAINWRIGHT, North Shields**

**Left Back biting**

IT WOULD almost have been ironic, if not yet another depressing illustration of the backbiting stance all too often adopted



within the left, to read Ray Challinor's personalised put-down of particular supporters of the Tyneside Socialist Centre.

I say ironic because if Ray Challinor had recognised and absorbed some of the ideas about the dominant styles of left political practices put forward by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright in *Beyond the Fragments*, then he might have realised that to engage in this form of negative criticism is one way in which left alliances have often reduced their potential, and moreover alienated many women and working class people.

However, it would seem that for Ray Challinor only works by 'Great Men' such as Lenin justify in-depth reading and application to practice.

As a supporter of the Tyneside Socialist Centre, my comments are obviously not objective (I do not apologise for that, although I would point out that neither are Ray Challinor's).

However, I would strongly contest his assertion that it is but a 'squalid mess', for while there may be differences of opinion and practice, and lots of room for development, the continued and strengthening existence of a bookshop, socialist debate forums, day schools, socials etc must be some kind of testimony to its political value here on Tyneside.

**ANNIE HUDSON, Newcastle**

**Setting the facts straight, 2**

SOME inaccuracies appeared in my article (17 April) on the National Union of Teachers conference which I did not include:

1. The executive was not 'defeated' on backing action for 14 May. The executive itself issued a statement on the first day of the conference backing local associations/divisions taking half-day action.

Of course this isn't adequate, but it does reflect the present situation nationally in the trade unions where union leaderships

are forced by the Tory attacks and pressure from below to back action. It is also a logical extension of the NUT's backing for the 9 March demonstration.

2. The executive is not uniformly 'right wing' in the same sense as, say, the EEPTU. It has backed action in many areas against the cuts; it has shifted towards closer links with the trade unions than a few years ago. Such actions are small but not insignificant.

3. Executive members argued for (not against) the strike fund being dissipated into financing general propaganda. This move was overwhelmingly defeated.

4. John Perry is not 'an ex-Militant supporter'. I said that he was an 'ex-Trotskyist' and 'ex-militant' — he has been a member of both the SWP and the IMG. (Incidentally, he also opposed a motion on a woman's right to choose.)

5. The headline *Teachers' leaders get a kick up the backside* was extremely regressive. The bourgeois media constantly uses images of corporal punishment to describe any actions of teachers. This is particularly offensive given that the Communist Party and all forces to the left of it are strongly opposed to corporal punishment.

Such alterations gave the article a predominantly executive-bashing tone. I was also attempting to show that the middle ground of the conference had shifted and that it was vital for the left to organise and consolidate these gains over the next months.

**HILDA KEEN, London N16**

**Setting the facts straight, 3**

I AM reported in your issue of 10 April as saying, regarding the NF march in Oldham on 12 April, that 'the NF have the right to march if they so wish, it's not up to me to comment on that; although the police should ban it on the day if it becomes a racist march'.

I wish to make clear, what the

article does not anywhere reveal, that the purpose of the NF march as advertised was to protest against me personally for my so-called campaign against the police and also against Jim Lamond, the other Oldham MP, because of his views on the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

Clearly I would not seek to censor anybody making public their objection to my views, and I felt it would be doubly inappropriate to try to get the police to call off a march whilst it was directed against what are supposed to be my views and motives in regard to the police themselves.

However, I am of course aware that there have been some savage and unprovoked attacks against members of the Asian community in my constituency on several occasions over the last few weeks and months, and for that reason, because it was all too clear that the march might be used in fact for racist propaganda purposes, I did write to the Chief Superintendent of the Oldham police drawing his attention to these violent attacks on Asians and asking him to ban the march if he had any evidence or reason to believe that the march would be used for other than the publicly stated purpose.

As to the events at Southall last year, let me make it absolutely clear that I am on record several times as supporting that demonstration and calling for the total disbandment of the SPG, and indeed I shall be saying exactly that again next Sunday when I speak at the invitation of the Friends of Blair Peach Committee at the rally they have called in Trafalgar Square.

**MICHAEL MEACHER MP, House of Commons**

**Lies about 'Real Steel News'?**

I WISH to take issue with Brian Grogan when he says (10 April) that *Real Steel News* failed and that, in consequence, the SWP launched the Steelworkers Charter.

Firstly, its a peculiar concoction of failure. To take Scunthorpe as an example (since I know something of what went on there), the *Real Steel News* began in 1978 as a monthly bulletin. It was produced for a long time by an SWP steelworker and another SWP member.

Towards the end of last year a number of Labour Party members as well as non-aligned steelworkers joined the RSN 'group', so at the beginning of the strike there were about 8 steelworkers producing the weekly bulletin. During the course of the strike *Real Steel News* attracted many supporters — about 50, which is quite good for an area with no tradition of militancy. Incidentally, the SWP branch grew from 4 members to about 14.

The Steelworkers Charter is an RSN initiative which has won the support of the Sheffield and Stocksbridge strike committees as well as other militants in several areas. It is intended as a focus around which a fight can be launched on closures, job losses and for the democratisation of the ISTC.

What will the IMG do now — keep calling for a national strike committee or support the charter?

To conclude, the SWP launched *Real Steel News* two years before the strike and one would have to 'bend a stick' beyond breaking point to say that it has failed. The argument about our not calling for a national strike committee can be made as a political point (although I don't agree with it), but it isn't helped by lying about the success of *Real Steel News* and the Socialist Workers Party.

**GEOFF COLLIER, Hull**

LETTERS exceeding 400 words will normally be cut to ensure that the maximum number of readers can express their views. Anonymous letters will only be published in exceptional circumstances, but real names will be withheld from publication on request.

**Politics and fun at Summer School**

By Davy Jones

**POLITICS and fun** — that's the agenda of the IMG Summer School from 12 to 18 July. It will be a chance for comrades from all over the country to meet in a relaxed atmosphere to discuss vital questions of Marxist theory and strategy. It can mark an important step in building a revolutionary organisation confident in fighting for its programme.

The school aims to look at important revolutionary upheavals in Europe and the Third World during the 20th century.

Ernest Mandel will speak on *Revolutionary Strategy in the Third World and Stalinist Global Policy* from Yalta to Afghanistan. Charles Udry, another well-known leader of the Fourth International, will lead off a discussion on the Portuguese revolution of 1974. Robin Blackburn will speak on the Cuban Revolution.

A series of debates will take place on themes such as Afghanistan, State Capitalism and Cuba Today. Optional courses will include Marxism and the Family, the British Labour Movement, and an Introduction to Marxist Economics.

The summer school won't all be 'heavy



politics'. The conference centre is in the countryside some 30 miles from London. There'll be plenty of time for relaxing in the sun, watching films or joining in the sporting activities in the conference facilities.

Attendance at the school is open to

members or sympathisers of the IMG and Revolution. But hurry, there are only 150 places in all.

Branches of IMG and Revolution should discuss the school as soon as possible. A deposit of £10 will secure your place but the full £47.50

has to be paid in advance. This will cover your accommodation, meals, reading lists and the school courses themselves.

Send cheques or postal orders to 'The Week', PO Box 50, London N1.

**IMG SUMMER SCHOOL 12-18 JULY**

I am interested in coming to the summer school. I am a member of the IMG/Revolution /I am a sympathiser of IMG/Revolution from

.....(Town)

Name/Address.....

I enclose a cheque/PO for..... towards the £47.50 cost of the school.

# UNDER REVIEW

By Skip Laszlo

**THE Art Ensemble of Chicago doesn't sound like a typical jazz-band name. But then the members of the band don't play what most conventional critics call jazz.**

At London's Queen Elizabeth Hall earlier this month, a packed house heard them play with equal precision music ranging from African drum music and free jazz to smooth melodies and Big Band swing.

The only analogy that seems appropriate for their music is Jimi Hendrix's 'It's like the waves of the ocean. It's constantly moving all the time.'

A blues solo on Malachi Favors' bass rises with a swell of African percussion and flute from the other musicians. A hurricane of im-

## The Art Ensemble of Chicago

provoked sound, with no one instrument discernible, settles into a calm and moving saxophone or trumpet solo.

Don Moye's drum and percussion solo continually varies speed and sounds.

While noted for their influential role in the most free and improvised jazz — the new music — the Art Ensemble's repertoire contains tributes to all strands of Afro-American music.

The band emerged ten years ago from the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music, an organisation established by young black jazz musicians in Chicago in 1965. The association, which still exists, drew together musicians interested in playing the more free-

form, improvisational, new music, and at the same time promoted black pride in Afro-American culture and music.

The Art Ensemble call their work 'Great Black Music', which they told Val Wilmer refers not only 'to the music previously designated as jazz, but to the Church music of singers like Mahalia Jackson and the drum-choirs of Africa.'

Using a stage packed with an array of percussion instruments, many of them African, and traditional jazz instruments, the five Ensemble members gave a powerful visual and musical demonstration of this claim.

Not only does the Ensemble reflect the Chicago blend of new music inspired by the advancement association, but the heritage of the city as the capital of urban blues gives the group a strong blues anchor.

There is no period of 'Great Black Music' which is not skilfully honoured by the Ensemble. And just as the link with Africa shows just how old their 'new' music is, many of their new techniques are old memories they have revived.

Trumpeter Lester Bowie is known for his low-register (almost saxophone-like) playing. But he is said to have learned it from an old-timer who took his trumpet off him and demonstrated a method of playing that had died in the 1920s.

Attracted to the new music by the advancement association, Bowie began his career as a blues musician.

# Women in India behind the love songs

By Lesley O'Keefe and Jenny Flintoft

**THE most prolific film industry in the world is in India; its films are widely viewed throughout the subcontinent and the Middle East, and are avidly seen by the Indian community in Britain.**

Indian films are escapist, either romances laced with song and dance, and drowning in sentiment, or wildly absurd melodramas full of suspense and wicked villains. Even more popular is a mixture of the two.

## Chums

Like Hollywood, the Indian film industry endlessly churns out films which avoid the real issues; for India, the problems of land and food shortage, illiteracy and, for many, actual survival. Few films break with this pattern but a notable exception is Benegal's *Bhumika* (The Role), which was recently screened in London.

Like Mizoguchi's films about feudal Japan, Benegal's work shows a compassionate understanding of the plight of Asian women who are oppressed in a far more complete way than women in modern Western society.

In fact one of Benegal's stated aims in making *Bhumika* was to show 'the problems of women in our society, the search for their own identity, their desire to achieve independence'.

## Flashbacks

The film is also remarkable for its exposé, through flashbacks, of the superficiality of Indian films, and in particular of the shallow roles assigned to women — all beautiful faces, gorgeous saris, and endless

songs of love.

Smita Patil brilliantly portrays Usha, a talented actress whose real life contrasts sharply with the simple romantic roles she plays. The film is loosely based on the life of Hansa Wadkar, misleadingly described in the London Film Festival brochure as the 'Joan Crawford of the Marathi scene, getting through men by the dozen and bottles by the thousand'.

## Alcoholic

Daughter of an alcoholic father and a bullying mother, Usha's childhood is dominated by conflict. But while still a small child, her musical talent is discovered and she is freed from the traditional role of fetching and carrying for men and launched on a career as an adored film star.

But her career does not liberate her; she marries an older man, Keshav, while still very young, and he exploits her, tightly controlling her income and career, even withholding the news of the death of her dearly-loved grandmother to avoid interrupting her filming.

## Trendy

Other men prove to be no alternative as she finds in her affairs with weak self-centred Rajen, a film idol like herself, and trendy Westernised Sunil, an egotistic film director who exploits her sexually and gives nothing in return.

She leaves Keshav several times, but returns because she needs respectability and security — and that means a man — only leaving for good when he forces her to abort her second child.

She then flees the emptiness of the Bombay film world to find refuge

with rich businessman Vinayak, on his country estate. There Usha finds solace in her role as mistress of the household, generously caring for the needs of 'husband', his affectionate small son and his suffering bed-ridden wife.

But Usha's dreams of finding happiness in domesticity are shattered by discovering she is literally a prisoner. The businessman's 'high principles' include a ruling that no woman can set foot outside the estate.

The sick wife advises her to accept her fate, saying bitterly, 'Only the face of the man changes, the bedrooms and kitchens remain the same.'

Having written secretly to Keshav, Usha waits passively for him to rescue her. Thoroughly defeated and humiliated in her attempts to find a satisfying life, she returns to Bombay.

## Daughter

Now, there are few roles left for her to play; no longer a sought-after actress, no longer a daughter (her mother died while she was away), Usha rejects both reconciliation with Keshav and the role of grandmother in the household of her newly-married, pregnant daughter. She faces utter loneliness with fatalistic acceptance.

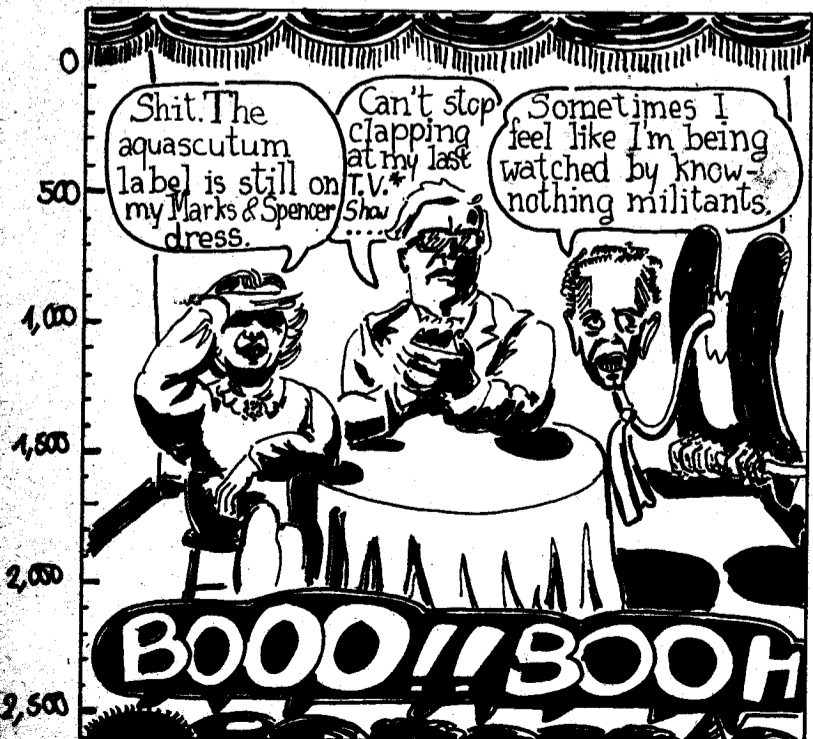
Left activists can use this film to provoke understanding and discussion of Indian women's oppression, attracting both British and Indian audiences.

Another useful film is an earlier one of Benegal's, *Ankur*, which deals with the oppression of women and the masses, including caste oppression.

'*Bhumika*' can be obtained on 16 mm from Contemporary Films, 55 Greek St., London W1 (01-734 4901).



Most Indian films are all beautiful faces and gorgeous saris.



**BRING the Curtain Down on the Tories** — that's the theme of our fund drive appeal from now to the end of June.

We need another £2,500 this quarter from our readers so we can keep up our coverage on the major events in the class struggle, so we can send journalists to Bristol and to the major steel areas, so we can produce exclusive pictures of the fighting in El Salvador.

Last time we made our target thanks to the Fiver to Fight the Tories campaign amongst our supporters. This time we will be dependent on local supporters groups and IMG branches organising fundraising events for us. What we can promise is that the

## SUBSCRIBE NOW

Britain: 12 months £12.50; 6 months £ 6.50  
Abroad: 12 months — Surface Mail £12.50  
— Airmail £18.00

Multi-reader institutions: Double the above rate

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of \_\_\_\_\_

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.  
Complete and return to: Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

curtain will fall further on Thatcher and her cronies the more money you send in to us!

Our thanks this week to:-  
Haringey IMG £25.00  
J Irwin 2.00  
Ros & Tina 2.00  
G Sullivan 3.50

D Fowler 2.00  
S Hughes 1.00  
L Austin 30.00  
Lambeth IMG 100.00  
Total £165.50

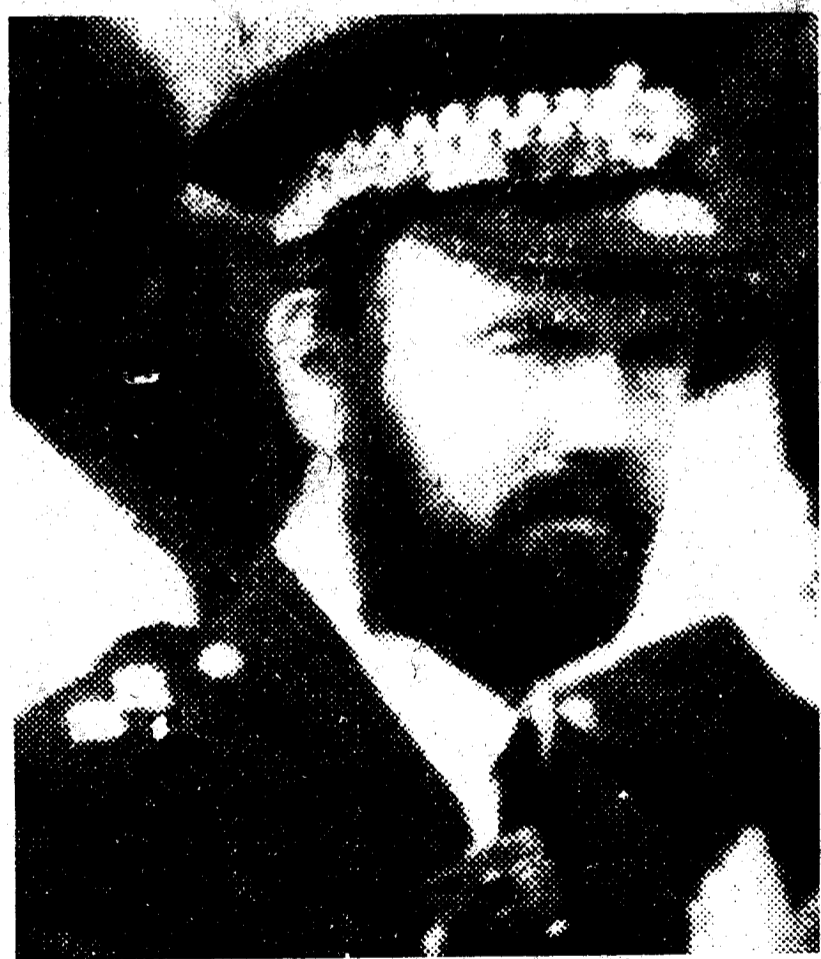
Cumulative total so far:- £366.47

# Socialist Challenge

REMEMBER BLAIR PEACH

DISBAND

THE SPG



MURRAY  
OF THE  
MURDER  
SQUAD

PICTURED above is Inspector Alan Murray, former head of the six-man Number One Unit of the Special Patrol Group, named by Scotland

Yard is being present at the death of Blair Peach. He has now left the SPG and is stationed at Chelsea.

**PICKET OF BLAIR PEACH INQUEST MONDAY 28 APRIL**  
**9am BATTERSEA CORONERS COURT, SHEEPCOTE LANE**  
**OFF LATCHMERE Rd SW11 (BRITISH RAIL CLAPHAM JUNCTION)**