

For Martin

# Socialist Challenge

## The Nazis unfurl their colours

**WE  
WILL  
FIGHT  
THEM  
EVERY  
INCH  
OF  
THE  
WAY**



John Tyndall on the anti-fascists who picketed the NF's meeting in Brixton on 15 April:

'When the National Front is victorious, and forms a Government — as it will — these people are going to be swept off the streets...

'We will deal with them without mercy!'

**CARNIVAL!!! AGAINST THE NAZIS  
SUNDAY APRIL 30/EVE OF MAYDAY\*11a.m. RALLY/TRAFALGAR SQUARE  
MARCH TO VICTORIA PARK\* TOM ROBINSON BAND AND STEEL PULSE**

ORGANISED BY ANTI NAZI LEAGUE, 42 LITTLE NEWPORT STREET, LONDON WC2, TOGETHER WITH ROCK AGAINST RACISM, HACKNEY CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACISM, HACKNEY CBC, AND TOWER HAMLETS MOVEMENT AGAINST RACISM & FASCISM



# EDITORIAL

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# Labour and Socialist Unity

WHY DO we stand candidates against Labour? Are we an alternative? What is our central slogan for the General Election? These and many other questions have been asked of us in recent weeks as the Socialist Unity campaign has got into gear. Let us therefore reply to them.

We stand candidates against Labour because we believe that it is essential to project a socialist alternative in local and national elections; to try and catalyse a current which is sympathetic to socialist politics. More than that, they offer militants who are fighting for class struggle policies to show through their campaigns and struggles how their policies are the ones which can take the fight back forward. Elections also help us to have a dialogue with the masses: a beneficial experience for most socialists in this country.

Now it is true that because of the small size of the revolutionary socialist left its impact will be minimal compared to that of the large parties. But given the present political climate we have to recognise that a polarisation is taking place in many cities. The fascists are offering their solutions and winning support. It is simply not sufficient for revolutionaries to combat them with timeless truths and advice to vote Labour.

Nonetheless we can only do this in a limited number of localities and constituencies. This is a reflection of our weakness. On a mass level, the only alternative to the Tories is Labour. The Labour Party remains linked to the trade unions. It is the organised workers who constitute Labour's social base. It would, of course, be nicer if there were a revolutionary party which had such a base. But there isn't. So we are for the return of a Labour Government at the elections.

We cannot posture as a serious alternative on that level. Our strength continues to lie in our ideas. What is important is that the existence of an important layer of activists in the unions and elsewhere enables us to test out some of these ideas in practice. Socialist Unity is one such vehicle. There are other avenues and these have to be explored as well.

What we utterly reject is any idea that Labour has been detached from its working class base because of its reactionary social and economic policies. As long as it still has that support, revolutionaries will be left with little alternative but to call for the return of a Labour government. To advocate abstention would be a sign of political bankruptcy.

# This issue

WE HAVE already explained the character of this issue of the paper. Substantial sections of it had to be laid out in advance in order to enable the editorial staff and designers to attend the conference of the International Marxist Group last weekend. We are sure that most of our readers will not take it amiss (in fact some of you might actually prefer it). The Editorial Board.

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:

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# HOME NEWS

# Class struggle in the localities Socialist Unity hits the road

AS THE local elections draw near, the Socialist Unity candidates are stepping up their campaigns. Hundreds of thousands of manifestos have been produced, many local meetings have taken place and, in a number of areas, door-to-door canvassing has met with positive results.

In Liverpool, Birmingham, Bolton, Bradford and London, to mention but a few areas, SU candidates are on the march. Most of them will be attending the Anti-Nazi Carnival on 30

April with their supporters. In Bradford, a well-known anti-fascist militant, Reuben Goldberg, is the SU candidate. He is being supported by a wing of the local Indian Workers

Association. At a meeting of 600 Kashmiri workers in Bradford last week, Tariq Ali appealed for support for Goldberg.

In London, one of the candidates in Hammersmith is Charlie van Gelderen. A veteran socialist, Charlie was a Labour councillor in the Fifties. He is now over 60 years old, but still going strong. The campaigns have been a modest success.

The Socialist Workers Party, which was previously opposed to participating in local elections, has a candidate in the Spitalfield ward of East London, where Hilda Kean beat the NF and the Tories towards the end of last year. Hilda is standing again this year. In Islington the SU has six candidates; its most ambitious intervention to date. Here are some of the candidates.

**VOTE SOCIALIST UNITY**



**VOTE KEN CROCKWELL**

**FIGHT BACK AGAINST:**  
UNEMPLOYMENT  
RACISM  
FALLING LIVING STANDARDS  
SEX DISCRIMINATION  
POOR HOUSING & HIGH RENTS

**VOTE IAN HEYES**

SOCIALIST UNITY  
on May 4th



**VOTE socialist unity**



**HILDA KEAN**



**DAVE LAWRENCE**

Tollington Ward  
Thursday 4th May

**VOTE socialist unity**



**DIANA UDALL**



**ADRIAN YEELES**

**KEN CROCKWELL** is fighting in Basingstoke. He is a local AUEW shop-steward and says: 'If I'm elected I will be the only voice of opposition on the council...'

**IAN HEYES** is a building worker and shop-steward in the Manchester direct works department. He is also a delegate to the Bolton Trades Council. Ian has been an active fighter against racism and fascism and led the fight on the Trades Council against Labour's decision to let the NF use the local town hall for a recent meeting.

**HILDA KEAN** and **DAVE LAWRENCE** are both local teachers in the East End. In addition to the SU platform they are calling on supporters to fight to save the Robert Montefiore School and the Bethnal Green Hospital.

**DIANA UDALL** and **ADRIAN YEELES** are only two of SU's six candidates in Islington. They will be standing in the Tollington ward. They stand for a council that fights back. Their model council is that of Clay Cross. Diana told us: 'Islington needs a few Councillors who are angry.'

# Brixton Never the same again

THE LEFT in Brixton won't be the same after the Lambeth by-election campaign.

When you read this you will probably know how Socialist Unity and all the other candidates did in the polls. We don't.

A good vote for Socialist Unity's John Chase will be a bonus—an index of the impact the campaign has made.

But the important gains have already been made and can be developed until long after the voting has been forgotten.

In the last week or so the campaign has dramatically hit the streets of Brixton: street

meetings, a series of posters, leaflets on various aspects of the campaign's platform, and, perhaps most importantly, individual canvassing on the doorsteps and in the shopping centres.

The pre-election rally on Sunday had a disappointing turn-out, but it was nevertheless a big advance for the campaign.

In an informal atmosphere people from local campaigns, the anti-racist committee, ALARM, the socialist-feminist groups, school students, and others who had never been involved in political activity

were able to discuss how the campaign related to the struggles they were involved in and how it could better take up these issues.

All seemed to agree on two things. The open, democratic structure of the campaign made it accessible to many people who would not otherwise have been prepared to get actively involved in elections.

And secondly, that Socialist Unity's alternative policies to those of the Labour Government helped in all aspects of the fightback against Labour's attacks.

The most obvious area is the anti-racist struggle. Both in its backing for Anti-Nazi League-ALARM actions against the National Front and its work in the black community Socialist Unity had introduced a new, fighting type of election campaign. And individual conversations even revealed the extent to which these alternative policies helped Labour Party members disgusted with the positions of their party leaders and candidate.

On this basis, Brixton Socialist Unity must be judged a success.

# OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trades 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:

1. 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 militantly holding a wide range of political views.

2. 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 to thousands of workers engaged in struggles.

Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

2 Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The socialist 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 Euro-communist nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and seeing internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.





Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

FRONT leaders Martin Webster and Derek Day welcoming the police protection against 1,500 pickets in Brixton on Saturday

## Webster's stormtroopers attack Brixton anti-fascists

**EIGHTEEN** people were assaulted by National Front thugs and thrown out by the police from a meeting when Martin Webster addressed an audience of 200 of his supporters last Saturday on behalf of the NF candidate in the Lambeth by-election. **DAVE BAILEY** reports.

The Inner London Teachers Association first called for a picket when the Inner London Education Authority allowed the NF to go ahead with the meeting in an infants school in Brixton.

Local residents were furious that for the second time in 18 months, the NF was to spread their racist poison in this multi-racial area.

1,500 joined the picket. Organisations supporting it included the Anti Nazi League, the Socialist Workers Party, All Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement, and Brixton Socialist Unity.

The Workers Revolutionary Party and the Labour Party, including the LPYS — both of which have candidates in the by-election — were not present.

The 18 anti-fascists assaulted were among those who volunteered to go into the meeting after Dick North, executive member of the National Union of Teachers, pointed out to police that under the Representation of the People's Act, schools can only be used for election meetings if they are open to members of the public.

Martin Webster personally ejected those going in. 'You're SWP' he claimed, turning some of the anti-fascists away.

Several blacks were among the 18 who finally got in. Within minutes, however the 18 were attacked by supporters of the NF.

TV cameras showed the fighting erupt when a black woman insisted that she had every right to be in this country and was not going to allow anybody to deport her. At this, the NF rank and file couldn't contain themselves any longer.



MANY young blacks joined the anti-fascist picket

Earlier last week, the Anti Nazi League had taken out an injunction claiming that under the Act, at least 50 non-NF members should be allowed in. They hoped that Webster would refuse, so forcing the education authority to cancel the meeting. ILEA has been using this clause of the Act as an excuse for accommodating the NF in their schools. Webster, however, agreed in Court that the meeting would be an 'open' one.

Twenty-four anti-fascists, including Dick North, were arrested. Nobody was arrested on the picket itself, which dispersed soon afterwards.

However, as people were quietly making their way back to central Brixton — some to picket the police station where it was believed North was being held — police snatch squads began making arrests. Several black youths were jumped on by police and bundled into coaches.

Meanwhile, 10 fascists, including Martin Webster himself, were arrested. The NF furiously declared that police were trying to curry favour with the blacks. John Tyndall, NF chairperson, declared that one day the NF would 'sweep these people (blacks and socialists) off the streets' and 'deal with them without mercy'.

Anybody who witnessed the arrests of the anti-fascists should contact the Defence Committee on 01-733 4245.



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

A YOUNG thug with the NF's symbol of a jack boot Britain — the Union Jack



# IRELAND

## THE STORY OF CAPTAIN NERVEWRECK

A recent editorial in the Guardian commented on Captain Nairac, the undercover British Army agent assassinated in South Armagh: 'His exact duties have never been revealed. The Provisional IRA has persistently mocked his unusual status. The current issue of their mouthpiece Republican News, has a cartoon strip called Captain Nervewreck which pokes fun at the dead man'.

For a cartoon strip to be mentioned in an editorial in the Guardian must give it some kind of value. Judge for yourself as we reprint it in its entirety, from Republican News...



## CAPTAIN NERVEWRECK BY CORMAC







## APEX Conference More law than militancy

THE ASSOCIATION of Professional and Executive Staffs, commonly known as APEX, holds its annual conference on 29 April to 1 May.

Through its involvement in the Grunwick strike APEX has become one of the best known unions, and Grunwick will figure prominently at the conference. **JENNY MACONDALE reports.**

How is it that a politically 'moderate' union like APEX, which provides several Government Ministers including Healey, Williams and Mulley, became involved in one of the most militant struggles of the last couple of years?

It is true that APEX's involvement in Grunwick was somewhat accidental. But this does not explain the level of material support given by the union to the strikers.

Official recognition came quickly, as did strike pay which was increased as the strike proceeded. The union's strategy both in Grunwick and other disputes is summed up by the leadership as 'militancy within the law'.

The emphasis is placed on official negotiating machinery,

behaving responsibly, and on the virtues of arbitration. Yet when this has failed, APEX has become involved in several militant disputes, particularly in the fight for equal pay.

But the 'militancy within the law' approach came unstuck at Grunwick. George Ward didn't share APEX's respect for the processes of arbitration and compromise, and he used the law only insofar as it supported him.

He could and can only be defeated by militant struggle, and as the Grunwick strike progressed it became apparent that it was leading to confrontations with the law and the Government. The APEX leadership called a halt to such tactics.

On the other hand, it needed

to back the struggle and to do so in such a way as to prove the value of its strategy of relying on the Government's arbitration service. So while the executive suspended the strike leaders for their hunger strike outside the TUC, it promised victory at the end of the ACAS rainbow.

Such actions came as no surprise to those who knew the history of the APEX leadership. The executive's report for the 1974 conference urged support for 'the spirit and intent of the Social Contract', and at the 1977 conference the same stand was taken.

Tied with this, the executive rejected pleas from the Labour Party for financial help because of 'the failure to deal with the report on the infiltration into the Labour Party of groups

who do not support its democratic principles and the anti-Government and anti-trade union propaganda contained in the journal of the Labour Party Young Socialists.'

Within APEX, the executive operates its own 'democratic principles'. Talk of 'infiltration', 'outsiders', and 'splitters' is common. In 1973 a group called 'APEX Action' was banned as being an 'outside body', even though all its participants were members of APEX.

There are rules to stop members from communicating except through official machinery, and a number of both left and right-wing organisations are proscribed.

These moves have not stifled opposition and there are five conference motions critical of the union's policy on Grunwick. But for such criticism to have a real effect, the opposition needs organising.

This means fighting for democracy within APEX, both for the sake of the Grunwick strikers, and for the sake of their counterparts in the future who find 'militancy within the law' to mean more law and less militancy.

## The case of Noreen Winchester

The Belfast Appeal Court two weeks ago confirmed the seven year jail sentence on 21 year old Noreen Winchester. She had been sentenced for the manslaughter of her father, who had continually raped her from the age of 11.

There is now a 'Free Noreen Winchester' campaign which has established links with English feminists. **GEOFF BELL reports.**

The Winchester family came from the Protestant working class heartland of Sandy Row in Belfast. Noreen's mother, Annie married at 16 when she was pregnant. By the time she was taken into a mental hospital she had given birth to 16 children, eight of whom died in the first few years of life.

Annie also worked as a stitcher, but her husband Norman took all the money, leaving Annie only £2 a week for food.

Not surprisingly she had a number of convictions for shoplifting food.

Noreen was the eldest daughter, and journalist Sarah Nelson who has researched the entire case has described how: 'Noreen's ordeal began when she was 11 and continued under constant threats of violence until her father's death. He would steal into her bedroom at night, attack her in the kitchen...and drive her into the country on his motorcycle. Violence, degradation and sexual deviations were frequent features of the attacks.'

Annie Winchester was also frequently raped and beaten up by her husband. When Noreen was 17 her mother could take no more and left home. But her husband made her drop divorce proceedings and from that time onwards Annie was never allowed into the house.

Her father made Noreen leave her job on the pretext that she had to care for the children. She was only allowed out of the house on Saturdays to do the shopping.

The father sent the rest of the children out of the house all day on Sundays, and would then rape Noreen. Every Sunday was torture for Noreen; the night she killed her father was a Saturday.

She stabbed him 21 times while he slept and with her younger brother and sister dragged the body onto the road. She was eventually arrested and charged with murder.

Little of this came out at the trial. The defence lawyer did a deal with the prosecution — the dropping of the murder charge in return for a guilty plea to

manslaughter. Neither Noreen, her mother nor her aunt who knew the family history best was called to testify, although both Noreen's social workers and her lawyers knew the background to the case.

The psychiatrist's report maintained 'to escape from his influence she killed him but (this) cannot explain why she took this method of escape'.

A social worker and Noreen's main defence lawyer were both to later say that prison would 'help' Noreen, but despite her ordeal she is a lively, intelligent woman.

Noreen Winchester's case is not simply a story of gross miscarriage of justice. Above all it is an illustration of attitudes and prejudices.

The lawyers, judges, police and social workers were horrified at the manner of the stabbing.

That Noreen had done it at night when the father was asleep, was somehow felt reprehensible. Apparently she should have had a stand up fight with this violent and brutal man.

Noreen's lawyers and social workers never explained the legal options open to Noreen who, like many working class people, was mystified by the legal proceedings.

There were hints that Noreen had really 'loved' her father, because she had never tried to escape from the house; what would have happened to the other children had she done so was probably never asked.

Sexual assault in the family was apparently quite common where Noreen lived, so it was not seen as such a terrible thing.

Such thinking means that Noreen Winchester will now spend seven years in prison.

That she should be freed immediately is so obvious it is hardly worth saying. But say it all the same and in saying it, beware of a search for scapegoats.

No one person, or group of people are to blame; there was no conspiracy other than that of a society who chose Noreen Winchester as a sacrifice for its brutal twisted values.



Grunwick press conference

Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)



# SEXUAL POLITICS

## Heated arguments, long laughs and hard work

# 3,000 women get together

WOMEN living on the estates in Digbeth, Birmingham, wanted to leave their children in the creche at the eighth national women's liberation conference in a nearby school.

These women weren't attending the conference; they just urgently needed a place to leave their children while they shopped, cooked and worked, or got a bit of time to themselves.

The Women's Liberation Movement has a demand for 24 hour nurseries provided freely by the state. This highlights the importance to all women of the discussions in the school down the road, where over 3000 women had gathered to share ideas and discuss how to take forward the fight for women's liberation. JUDE WOODWARD gives a personal view of the conference.

I WAS immediately struck by the diversity of women at the conference — of all ages, backgrounds and political opinion.

They were milling around in the hallways and corridors of Ladywood school, or already settled into the workshops where they would spend

the rest of the day.

### SATURDAY MORNING: REGISTRATION AND 'BLOCK' WORKSHOPS.

Even for those of us that had registered in advance the queues

stretched down the corridor. In the first half hour I had already seen at least half a dozen long lost friends, many of whom I only see at annual conferences of the women's movement.

It is cheering to realise that they are all still active in the movement. We compared experiences and exchanged useful information about events in our local areas.

Oxford women talked about the nursery occupation there; Liverpool women described the women clothing workers who are occupying their factory against closure, others talked of anti-racist activity, socialist feminist groups and regional conferences.

Even in that first half hour I got the impression that the movement is growing by leaps and bounds and that the women involved grow more politically confident year by year.

After registration we were supposed to go to 'block' workshops for the bulk of the day. The discussions were meant to be on three questions: how we oppress each other within the movement; the movement's campaigns and how to advance them; and alternative forms of action.

Some weren't happy with this structure and wanted to move straight on to a discussion of the activities of the movement. They feared that an unconstructive debate would ensue from talking about how we oppress each other.

Despite this disagreement there were useful discussions. In my workshop we had a lively and interesting exchange about problems of having or not having children. We were fortunate in having several women with children and at least one pregnant woman in the workshop.

We talked about the constant ambiguity in making a decision not to have children, the pressure that women were under to feel that that decision can always be changed, to feel that someday they may regret it or that they are falsely separating themselves from the mass of women that do have children.

The problem of childcare was raised and the importance of fighting for nursery provision.

### SPECIAL INTEREST WORKSHOPS: SATURDAY 4pm-6pm / SUNDAY 9.30-11.30

After the block workshops had broken up for women to grab a cup of coffee or a sandwich, we returned to the fray.

There were workshops on subjects as diverse as Voice Production and Socialist Feminism. Most were well attended with a wide ranging discussion. Women reported back to the plenary session on Sunday afternoon to say what had gone on in their workshops.

Black sisters raised the importance of the women's movement taking up the struggle against racism and fascism, the need to be sensitive to the particular problems of black women and to involve them in the movement.

One woman implicitly criticised some women for lacking this sensitivity when she said, 'You may think you know who your enemies are, but when you march against rape through black areas, how do I know that you are not in the National Front?'

Another woman spoke of the repression of women in Northern Ireland. The conference agreed to send a telegram to Roy Mason, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, supporting the call for clemency for Noreen Winchester. She is serving seven years in prison for the manslaughter of her father who had repeatedly raped her since she was 11.

Women from one workshop called for support for the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland.

Others from the International workshop suggested trying to build next year's International Women's Day rally as a united event to celebrate



Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

ten years of the women's movement, around the theme of repression of women worldwide.

Other women reported on the progress of the National Abortion Campaign, on the situation of women in Iran and many more.

### THE PLENARY, SUNDAY 11.30 onwards.

Perhaps the major lesson that socialist feminists must learn from this conference is that they must no longer be afraid of putting forward their ideas about the structuring of the larger decision making meetings in the women's movement.

Comparisons between the conduct of the plenary session at the Socialist Feminist conference in Manchester in January and the plenary on Sunday afternoon in Birmingham showed the former up in a positive light.

Some socialist feminists want to challenge the 'tyranny of structurelessness' and are preparing to develop their views in the women's movement as a whole.

By arguing for clear chairing and developing and understanding the reasons behind democratic procedures in meetings, the socialist feminist current can help the women's movement find ways to settle its differences.

Unfortunately a minority of women do not agree with these ideas. A relatively small group of revolutionary feminists harried women throughout the plenary on Sunday. Occasionally they made it quite impossible for women to speak!

Such behaviour has no place in the movement. Sisters have to show self discipline when they hear speeches that they don't agree with. Otherwise other women will not overcome their own lack of self confidence about speaking.

Political intimidation — nay thuggery — is quite definitely a male political stereotype that we should not aspire to!

### DECISIONS

Despite the attempted domination of the plenary by this vocal minority some important decisions were made. The women's movement now has a seventh demand on rape and violence to add to the other six on, equal pay and education, nurseries, abortion and contraception, financial independence, lesbian rights and sexuality.

The new demand reads, 'For the freedom of all women to live free from the threat or use of violence of sexual coercion regardless of marital status. An end to all the laws, assumptions and institutions which perpetuate male domination and men's aggression to women.'

Some women argued that the demand should be preceded by a statement saying that male violence to women was an expression of 'male supremacy and male political control.'

Socialist feminists, among others,

objected to this — mainly because it embodied an analysis of women's oppression that not all women agreed with. For example as socialist feminists we see that capitalism and class society play a major role in the oppression of women.

To adopt any one analysis of women's oppression would exclude a large number of women who don't agree with it. Our aim must be to build the broadest movement to fight our oppression.

It was accepted that the next national WLM conference should take a full discussion of the demands and principles of the movement. The last socialist feminist conference also suggested that its next conference should discuss this.

Various questions remain unanswered around what we mean by the 'demands' of the women's movement; about the nature of the demands, the difference between demands and principles and policies, their relationship to demands raised in the campaigns of the movement and others.

That such a discussion is long overdue was revealed by the somewhat confused debate on the sixth demand near the end of the plenary. The sixth demand reads, 'against discrimination of lesbians; for the right of all women to define our own sexuality'.

### LESBIAN RIGHTS

A woman proposed that the demand should be split in half and that it should only deal with lesbian rights, while the second half of the demand should precede all the other demands as a 'principle' of the WLM.

This was for three reasons; firstly, because women felt that the issue of lesbian rights had not been treated seriously enough by the movement; secondly, because the 'right to define our own sexuality' is not really a demand as it is not demanded of anybody; thirdly, because the demand implied that lesbianism was simply a matter of sexual preference, rather than involving material, social and cultural discrimination.

Although this motion was carried there was considerable confusion expressed by women in the hall.

My feeling is that it is a pity that the question of the sixth demand had to be raised in such a rushed fashion at the end of the conference rather than waiting for a full discussion of the role of this demand along with the others.

Not everything at the conference was just hard work. Throughout the conference there were films, music, theatre and on Saturday night, a social with bands and disco to keep us all cheerful.

And despite high emotions, disagreement and some distress, most women felt that they had gained from the conference, and that they left full of ideas about the work that needs to be done before the conference next year.

And it's what we all go away and do that it is really all about.



Photo: ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)



The British labour movement has, since the advent of this century, prided itself on its 'lack of dogmatism'. When translated this simply means a contempt for ideas. Successive leaders of the Labour Party and the trade unions have spoken with contempt of the 'heavy debates' which characterised the German workers' movement in the Twenties and Thirties. The lively exchanges which led to debates within French social democracy were regarded here as a lot of 'hot air'. As for Italy, we all know how 'excitable' the Latin temperament can be.

No, none of this continental nonsense was to be allowed to infect British workers after the defeat of the great Chartist rebellion. True a strange group of people always existed, men like John MacLean on the Clyde, who tried to change this state of affairs, but Labourism proved too powerful for them.

Political ideas which explained the past, analysed the present and look forward to the future were to remain the preserve of a minority of workers. Marxism never penetrated the British working class. We are still suffering from the consequences.

## NO PRETENCE

The resistance of British labour to the 'continental disease' was not extended to the cancer which held British society in its grip. The Labour Party has always been subservient to ruling class ideology. It has eagerly taken up imperialist themes and defended them consistently within the labour movement of this country. It has not even bothered to maintain a pretence of an ideological independence from the bourgeoisie.

The largest social democratic party in Europe has never had a daily paper. The TUC did have the *Daily Herald* but it died a natural death in the mid-Sixties.

During elections the Labour Party relies on the *Daily Mirror* to conduct its campaign. Provided that this happens there is little tension with the rest of the Tory press. This unwritten agreement is strictly adhered to by the ruling class. When the *Mirror's* boss Cecil King started an eccentric and one-person campaign to get rid of Wilson as Prime Minister, it was his own head that was finally severed via a well-orchestrated palace coup!

True, the two weeklies of the Labour Party, *Tribune* and *Labour Weekly* do enjoy a certain readership — though *Tribune* is now read largely by addicts — but their influence is almost negligible outside Transport House. They are not even taken seriously within the Parliamentary Labour Party.

In this situation it has been the daily newspaper of the Communist Party which has for the last 48 years been the only daily paper of the workers' movement. It has of course been heavily compromised by its Stalinist loyalties and practice.

The faithful echoing of Stalinism's twists and turns prevented the *Daily Worker* and the *Morning Star* from becoming popular, mass socialist papers, reflecting the needs of the most advanced sections of the working class. But despite this crippling defect, the CP's dailies

# As CP continues to flounder A plan to save the ★ Morning Star

AT THE LAST conference of the British Communist Party an emergency resolution was passed on the *Morning Star*, reflecting the growing discontent in the party on this question. It was agreed that a public debate on the content, style and circulation of the paper should take place till May 1978.

This discussion is now reaching its climax, but what will have been gained at the end of it? A few useful ideas are not enough to stem the rot. In any case they can always be rejected. At the moment many CP members are speculating as to whether a daily paper can be sustained in the present period.

TARIQ ALI argues that a demise of the *Morning Star* would represent a setback for the working class. He suggests a series of drastic and radical measures to transform and save the paper.

supported most strikes (except during the war and where they conflicted with the CP line), contained the only real information regarding industrial struggles and were, for a whole period, indispensable reading even for their enemies and political opponents.

This situation has now come to an end. The *Morning Star* confronts a declining circulation. Communist Party members are faced with the possibility that they might have to cease publication of a daily. This would leave us without a single daily working class paper. True there is always *Newsline*, but it reflects the bizarre politics of the Workers Revolutionary Party.

Its central campaigns over the last few years have been, and in this order: a) to slander its political opponents and spend tens of thousands of pounds to 'prove' that they are 'accomplices' of the KGB, CIA, etc; b) to campaign to bring down the Labour Government, and c) to paint the non-existent virtues of regimes such as those of Gaddafi in Libya and the butchers who rule Iraq.

So, in effect, the death of the *Star* would leave us without a paper in which one can occasionally read the views of shop-stewards engaged in struggles and their calls for national solidarity. Should the paper be saved? Or should we welcome its demise as a big victory for the far left? The latter would reflect a crazed sectarianism towards tens of thousands of working class militants. Our answer to the former must be a qualified 'yes'. But a number of points need to be made.

The reason for the crisis of the *Morning Star* is not related to the weak journalistic formulae employed on 75 Farringdon Road. It is a fundamental and deep-rooted political weakness. It is a combination of two interrelated factors. On the one hand the Party has cautiously moved away from the worst excesses of Stalinism. There has, as a result, been a certain drying up of material support (in the shape of ads, 'rising' circulation, and so on) from the USSR and Eastern Europe.

At the same time the pathetically slow pace at which a distance is being taken has not won it any new support. The paper has yet to wage a campaign for Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia or for the release of Rudolf Bahro in East Germany. True this would mean being blacklisted by the bureaucracy, but it would lead to a rise in circulation in this country.

Secondly the virtual collapse of the CP's political perspective in the post-1974 period has been faithfully reflected in the *Star*. How can the wages policy be effectively opposed without an open and vigorous confrontation with Jones and Scanlon? How can a real campaign be mounted against the Callaghan government without indicting Benn and Foot? How can racism be fought without analysing the politics of Mr Sydney Bidwell?

It is not a question of the CP accepting our views on these matters. The point is that they are never discussed openly. There is no debate on central issues. A more recent example is the role of Sue Slipman and the CP in the National Union of

Students. How many *Morning Star* readers know that without CP votes the Tories would not even have won a single place on the NUS executive?

Thus the paper lacks credibility. If facts do not accord with the political projections of King Street, they can be safely omitted. Or if they are included it should need a very sharp reading between the lines to get to them. Objective truth is more often than not missing from the paper.

A number of readers have also pointed out the logic of this policy. Letters which are critical of the CP line on fundamental questions of strategy and tactics in Britain or world political developments are simply not published. Or if they are, there can be no comeback. No debate.

The overwhelming majority of letters published in *Comment* and the *Morning Star* have concentrated on stylistic and journalistic improvements. Dave Cook, the National Organiser of the Communist Party, probably made the most useful 'suggestions in this regard, though these would imply a change in the political formula as well. Cook recommends the following measures:

- \* The paper must be thrown much more open.
- \* By bringing in more party contributors outside the leadership, recognising that their viewpoints will sometimes be 'off the line'.
- \* By reflecting more of the disagreements within the left.
- \* By interviewing more 'controversial' figures, eg Hain, Sillars.
- \* By raising 'difficult' questions on which we have no cut-and-dried answers, eg trade union democracy, 'workers control'.
- \* By articles on political developments within the socialist countries, instead of either 'anniversary commemorations', and small, isolated news items. Without these in-depth articles we can neither adequately praise nor criticise.
- \* Expand correspondence. The British Road to Socialism discussion was a model for the open argument of politics. (*Comment*, 18 February 1978)

Now these are all useful suggestions. But how could they be implemented without changing the character of the paper as it exists at the moment? Dave Cook does not suggest a way forward. Yet he and others like him must realise that something needs to be done to transform the paper and thus ensure its survival.

The British working class needs a daily paper more today than at other periods in its history. It is confronted with a chronic crisis of the capitalist economic system with all its effects: unemployment, declining living standards, cuts in welfare spending, crisis in education, etc. The most class-conscious militants are aware that militancy on its own is not enough. For isolated militancy can sometimes lead to further redundancies.

What is increasingly being seen as vitally important is an alternative plan to beat the crisis. A discussion on such a plan is now long overdue. A socialist daily has to point the way forward, but it has to do much more. It has to be an educating force, which liberates and enlarges the consciousness of

working people. The lack of a daily paper dedicated to serving the needs of all class-struggle militants is a serious and cruel handicap.

What is needed is a socialist paper which develops new journalistic forms which bridge the cultural gap between the 'popular' and 'quality' press, so carefully cultivated and maintained by the ruling classes in Britain.

What this means is that the Communist Party should relinquish its organisational hold over the paper. After all the *Morning Star* is, formally speaking, not owned by the CP. It is the property of the People's Printing Society Ltd. In 1977 the PPPS had 29,552 shareholders of which 28,599 were individuals, 406 trade unions, 39 co-operatives and 508 miscellaneous groups.

A Committee of Management exists with 16 members, but participation from the ranks is virtually nil. Why? Because everyone knows that it is a complete waste of time. Real control is exercised by the King Street gerontocracy.

The situation is now so serious that the CP needs to reconsider its basic approach to the *Star*. It needs to convene a conference of shareholders and trade unionists to transform it into a campaigning socialist paper and ensuring a genuine independence from King Street. This would not, we hasten to add, mean that it would be taken over by the dreaded 'ultra-left', but it would impart some life into the paper. Naturally the columns of the paper would be open to discussions and debates on socialist strategy, encompassing all positions within the labour movement.

## FADING LOYALTY

Coverage of world politics would not be hamstrung by a fading loyalty to the bureaucrats in Moscow or to the tactical prescriptions of the Communist Parties of France or Italy. While British Communists would argue for these positions they would do so from within a much broader political framework. This would necessitate non-CP members on the Editorial Board and staff of the paper. It would mean retaining correspondents abroad, who were not necessarily tied to the line of the local Communist Party, whether they were based in Moscow and Prague or in Madrid and Rome.

It would be utterly sectarian of the CP leadership to adopt a formula based on the principle that the best way to save the *Morning Star* is to either kill it as a daily paper or to let it die a slow and agonising death. That would be to put the narrow interests of a particular organisation before the needs of the working class. The mindless virulence of Left sectarianism which has characterised the far left for a long time has had disastrous repercussions for revolutionary marxism in this country. They are typified by the daily *Newsline*.

If the oppressive impotence of left reformism were now to result in a display of right-sectarianism by the CP, the consequences would be with us for some time. How the crisis of the *Morning Star* is resolved will be an important indication as to the likely evolution of the CP itself.

## What's Left

**REGGAE AGAINST RACISM:** Benefit for All Latham Anti-Racist Movement. With Micky (rock reggae), Meritown (disco sound), Pleasure Zone (Brixton sound), St Mary's Hall, St Agnes Rd, London SW4. Clapham Common Tube. 22 April, 8pm. Adm: £1, claimants 50p. Bar.

**CARF** (Campaign Against Racism and Fascism) 4 page SPECIAL — For mass distribution by anti-racist groups to counter the racist and fascist propaganda. The newspaper format makes it a vitally important propaganda weapon in the fight against racism. Order Now. Bulk orders 1p per copy (plus postage). Cash with orders to: Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Co-ordinating Committee (ARAFCCI), Box 35, 152 Upper Street, London N1.

**CARF No. 4 NOW OUT.** Price 15p (bulk orders 12.5p + p&pt). Feature articles, news, exposure, and reviews on Racism and Fascism and the fight back. Address as above and all progressive bookshops.

**OXFORD** and surrounding areas: ex-151SWP comrades interested in left recruitment work/discussion in line with the recent ex-3 conference in London. Phone Oxford 43641.

**WSL SPLIT-SPARTACIST** League founded. Spartacist League public meeting. Speakers: Joe Quigley, Central Committee Spartacist League, ex-member WSL National Committee; Alastair Green, Central Committee Spartacist League, ex-member Socialist Press editorial board. 7.30pm. Fri. 21 April, Caxton Settlement House, 128 St John's Way, London N19. Archway tube.

**THE MIDLANDS United Troops Out Movement** is planning a regional conference to be held in late Summer/early Autumn. For such a conference to be a success it needs the active support of UTOM supporters and sympathetic groups and individuals throughout the Midlands. Therefore come along to the preliminary planning meeting, Midlands Regional Planning Meeting, Sun 23 April, 12 Noon, Venue: SC Centre, (above Syleira Hardware) 70B Digbeth, nr Birmingham city centre. Tel: 8439208.

**GLASGOW Socialist Challenge** May Day Disco. Sun 29 April. Bar 8pm-1pm. Disco 8pm-2pm. Food on sale. Saints and Sinners, St Vincent St, Glasgow. Adm: 60p, claimants 30p. (Available from Socialist Challenge Books, 64 Queens St, Tel: 221 7481).

**FLAT SHARE** in Camden Town. Phone 01-267 6059.

**SOCIALIST UNITY** Benefit with 'The Resistors', plus disco. Bust Hotel, Shepherd's Bush Green. Friday 21 April. 8pm. 80p (claimants 40p).

## the other cinema

**DESPITE** having to close our London cinema, we are pleased to be able to announce The Other Cinema. Distribution is still alive and well! We are now showing at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Cinema, Nash House, The Mall, London SW1. Take it Like A Man, Ma'am.

A feminist feature film in colour from the Red Sisters' Collective of Copenhagen, includes the famous sex-role reversal sequence. A truly excellent film about women, by women. *Spare Rib*, 4.30pm each night (except Mondays). Finishes Sun Apr 30.

Available for 16mm hire from May onwards at £35.00. Discounts negotiable. Show it at your women's group or Socialist Challenge group meeting. The Other Cinema, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London WGH 7JJ. Tel: 01-734-85019.

**WOMEN'S DAY** School: 'Socialist feminism and the revolutionary party'. Organised by women from the Coordinating Committee for an International Socialist Alliance, 13 May, N London Poly, Holloway Road, London N7. Creche available. Further details from Leni Solinger, 142 Hunter House Road, Sheffield 11.

**CAMPAIGN** Against Racism in the Media public meeting: Jouranists, Race, Elections. Speakers will include black journalist, Mike Phillips and Marina Osman, worker at Tottenham Law Centre. Mon 24 April, 7pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (Holborn tube).

**PRISONERS AID** Committee public meeting Demand Political Status for Irish political prisoners in accordance with the Geneva Convention, demand amnesty for Irish political prisoners within the context of British Withdrawal from Ireland. NUFOT Hall, Jockey Fields, London WC1. Fri 5 May, 7pm.

**THE CRISIS INTENSIFIES:** What Way Forward for the Working Class? Revolutionary Communist day-school. Sat 5 May, 10am to 5pm, social in evening. Details from: Dayschool, RCG Publications Ltd (S), 48 Weston Rd, London SE24 6LN. Registration £1 (50p students and unemployed).

**BENEFIT** for 'Save the EGA' Campaign and Hounslow Hospital Occupation Committee. Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre present the cut show 'Now you see it. Now you don't!'. Also appearing — Clapperclaw, women's music and theatre. Friday 21 April, 7.30pm. TGWU District Office, 250 1289 N. Gower St., (off Euston Rd), London WC1. Followed by discussion. Refreshments. Admission 50p.

**FOUR SOCIALISTS** looking for 4 roomed flat/house in North or East London. Phone Mick 01-359 8361.

**LIVERPOOL MAY DAY FESTIVAL** Stanley House, Upper Parliament St, Liverpool 8. 1 May, 10.30am-5.30pm and 7.30pm-midnight.

**DAYTIME:** Leon Rosselson; Unity Theatre; Films; [Attica, Reggae etc]; discussions, music, printing, and photography workshops; poetry; songs; food, drink; bar; exhibitions; bookstall; kids games; creche and lots more.

**EVENING:** Clapperclaw (Feminist folk band); Goodtime Charlie (Jazz); Bluebells (Steel band); films, dancing and late bar. Tickets (day 50p, evening £1) and further info from News From Nowhere, 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool 1. 051-708 7270.

**MARX'S CAPITAL** and Today's (UFA), Conway Hall, Club Room, Red Lion Square, London, Sat 22 April, 7.30pm. Connelly from News and Letters.

# WINDSCALE DEMONSTRATION

SATURDAY 29 APRIL TRAFALGAR SQUARE 3.00

Assemble Speaker Corner 12.00 for March to Rally, Trafalgar Square 3.00



## What the judges said

This short story was selected by feminist writer Fay Weldon as her first choice among the entries submitted for our Xmas short story competition. These were her comments:

A simple story, written out of a real and not a received experience, properly shaped, and (most difficult to achieve) moving without being sentimental. Stephen Chalke is the kind of a natural writer (and there are few enough of them about) who can find meaning in ordinary experience. He could afford to throw out a few adjectives and be more precise in his use of language, but never mind (what is a distracted look?)

**John Fowles, whose novels include The French Lieutenant's Woman, placed the story second in his selection. He commented:**

A nicely shaded study of the multiple alienations, both personal and social, underlying the friendship between two young men, all done in the context of a West Ham home match. With one or two very small revisions, this would be well worth publishing.

**Following these comments, Stephen Chalke revised Pretty Bubbles in the Air. We present the revised version.**

**A**t the centre of the back row of the Royal British Legion Band stood the bass drummer and the cymbalist. The one was a tall, ruddy-complexioned man with a vacant expression on his face; he was beating at the drum strapped to his chest and looking away towards the stands. The other was an older, much shorter man with a grey moustache and a nervous grin. Most of the time he held the cymbals by his side, but when he did clash them it was with an awkward deliberateness. They seemed an incongruous pair, standing at the heart of the band, with so little feeling for music.

Andy smiled to himself: he liked the spectacle of the band, even if he did not like the noise it made. He remembered the time when somebody had lobbed a hot dog into the tuba; they had stood further out on the pitch since then.

'And now, ladies and gentlemen, the moment you've all been waiting for,' a distorted voice enthused over the loudspeaker system. 'It's Bubbles time.'

A quiet spread around the ground, even the chants of 'West Ham' behind the goals becoming subdued. The conductor raised his baton high, his glasses glinting in the sun. Andy felt the hair at the back of his head bristle a little; moments like this brought out a sentimental streak in him. The band lingered flamboyantly over the notes of the intro.

'I'm forever blowing bubbles, pretty bubbles in the air.'

The singing had begun. All round the terraces, arms were linked and bodies swayed from side to side.

Dave stood alongside Andy in the middle of the West Enclosure. He detested scenes like this, grown-up men behaving like little boys. To his right, a man with spots all over his face and a claret-and-blue scarf neatly tied round his neck — probably an office worker, still living with his mother — tried to catch hold of his arm. He pulled back from him, thrusting his hands into the pockets of his long maroon overcoat. He felt like grabbing the man's shoulders and shaking him senseless, throttling him with his stupid scarf, but he restrained himself. It was one thing to watch football on a Saturday afternoon; it was quite another to be dragged into adolescent rituals, swaying about arm-in-arm just for a football team.

'They fly so high, nearly reach the sky,

Then like my dreams they fade and die.'

Each time the line swayed to the right, Andy was buffeted by the man next to him. Each time it swayed to the left, Dave drew himself up taller to avoid the spotty faced office worker. He turned to Andy.

'Have you read the Larkin poem about this song?' he asked in a loud voice that jarred deliberately with the singing.

'Which one?' Andy replied awkwardly.

'It's in that volume before .. er .. "Whitsun Weddings". Dave always hesitated a lot while he was talking as if the words were blowing around his head and he found it hard to hold on to them. "Called something like "Dry Point". I think it is called "Dry Point", actually.'

Andy often went to football by himself: when he did, he joined in the singing. He always sang softly because he felt his accent was out of place, but he enjoyed it. With Dave, though, he felt inhibited. He wondered what the men in front of them were thinking about their conversation.

'Fortune's always hiding, I've looked everywhere.'

Dave was only a little taller than Andy but he stood more upright and, when he talked, he looked up at the air in front of him. It made him seem somehow above the plane of all the swaying bodies around him.

'There's an awful proletarian resignation about this song, really appalling,' he said. Andy had to agree: usually he liked it that the West Ham crowd was so good humoured about losing but Dave was right really. There would never be a revolution if people sang songs like this.

'I'm forever blowing bubbles, pretty bubbles in the air.'

The singing ended with a welling crescendo. A man in front of them, with Brylcreemed black hair and long sideburns, turned his head and looked briefly at them. He turned back and murmured into his companion's ear. Andy felt Dave's anger rising to danger point. He kept up the conversation in an attempt to pacify him.

'It's the sort of song you'd expect Philip Larkin to like, I suppose,' he said.

'The eternal virgin,' Dave replied scornfully, ignoring the 'excuse me' of somebody trying to get past him. A cheer went up as the West Ham team ran out and they fell into silence.

Dave hated Philip Larkin, his self-satisfied sadness, his defeatism, his acceptance of sterility and impotence. At times in his life he had slipped into that mentality and it frightened him horribly to realise it. To have only 70 years to live and to spend so many of them in a pointless petit-bourgeois routine with no sex and no ambition, waiving himself into his dotage: it was obscene. There would be nothing to stop him becoming like his father with his suburban sub-post office and his narrow-minded racism, dropping jam all over the table and whining about the permissive society. But he had set his face against that now.

**A**ndy felt edgy. There was a tension between them and that made him withdraw, he had such difficulty being

# 'PRETTY BUBBLES IN THE AIR' by Stephen Chalke



relaxed with Dave that he wondered why he kept on seeing him. All the answers seemed to be in the past.

He remembered Dave on the train out of Charing Cross the first day of teaching practice, looking so composed with his briefcase and his flowery tie. The train had gone so fast and his stomach was twisting and turning inside him. He had spent days looking for lessons and had nothing remotely suitable. Larkin's 'Arundel Tomb' for the third form. 'It's a difficult poem,' Dave had said with his eyes enlarging with amazement, his mouth showing the hint of a laugh.

And he had sat there, petrified: past Hither Green and his mind a blank. Dave had known more than him in those days, and he had held on to him like to an older brother.

And, coming out of the tutorial on the very first day, they had said a rather stiff goodbye in the street and he had left for the tube, feeling lost and alone. And Dave had come hurrying after him, looking very embarrassed, saying: 'Say, Alan, do you feel like going to a film tonight?' he smiled now at the way Dave had called him so many different names at first: Alan and Anthony and even

Henry. And they had both felt awkward, each scared the other might think him homosexual, but they had gone, pleased to have each other's company. They had seen an American film about a truck driver going berserk in a hippy commune and talked about it all the way back to the Tube.

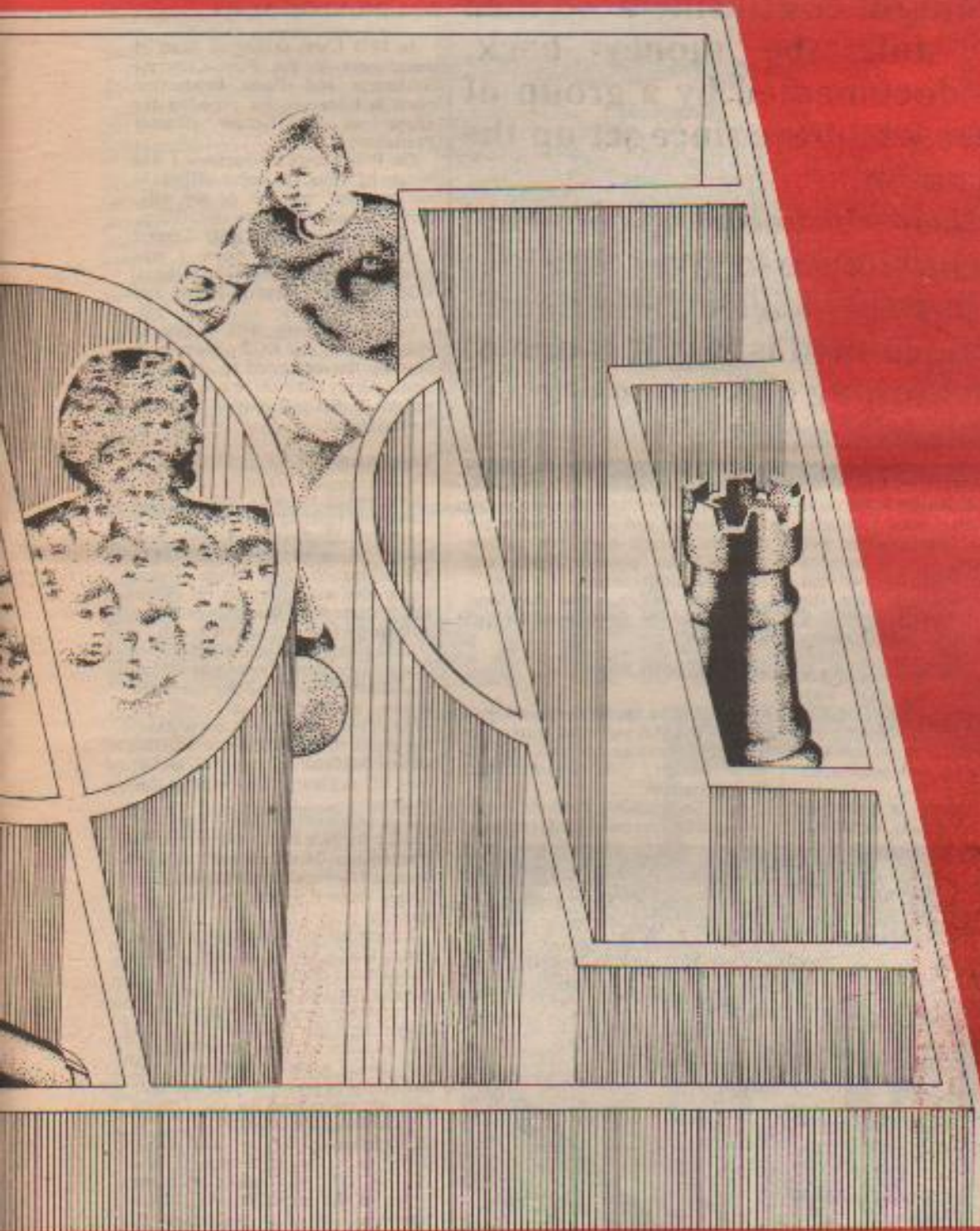
Seven years. It was a long time to know somebody.

The referee blew his whistle for the kick-off and the players started to run into positions. It was a moment Andy always liked. You could feel the keen anticipation of the crowd, coming



# LES IN THE AIR'

## en Chalke



alive after the long wait. Everything was fresh and new and full of possibilities. The colours were clean and bright: the claret and blue of West Ham, the red and white of Middlesbrough, the green of the goalies' jerseys, the fleshy pink of the players' legs. They were running into open spaces all over the pitch, full of energy and purpose. It made you forget how squashed up you were in the crowd, everybody in their drab overcoats and anoraks, smoking and smelling of fish and chips.

Dave applied himself to studying the game. You only had to look closely at

the first two or three movements out of each defence to work out the team's plans. He had seen this years before and now he could do it to perfection. You looked for the skillful players and then watched how the other team was marking them. He soon knew what the pattern of this game would be.

The crowd gasped with excitement as a West Ham player hit the ball into the side netting. Dave had already spotted the full-back covering the shot.

'Bad play, that; he should have centred,' he said, in defiance of the

crowd's reaction. Andy was looking at his programme, trying to memorise the Middlesbrough forward line.

Dave leathed football really. It was such a waste of time. He thought of the hours he had spent reading about it in the papers and watching it on television, working out how many points each team needed to avoid relegation and holding forth in the pub about the England side. And what had all those hours contributed to his life? Nothing but a head full of junk. He could have been out fucking women, building the revolution, earning money. One day soon he

would cut football right out of his life.

He had done it with chess. Third he had come in the National Under-Eighteen Championship and he had never played seriously since. He would have made the England team by now, but what did he care? He saw them about occasionally, emotional cripples, every one of them, walking round with knights and bishops dancing round their heads, still living at home with their mothers. He had left all that behind. He gave Andy a game occasionally, that was enough for him. He had improved a lot, Andy, but he was nowhere near his standard.

Andy was following the game anxiously. He wanted West Ham to win, but, because he was with Dave, he tried to look at it more objectively. He had learnt how to do this from Dave. It made him feel quite powerful, being so detached, somehow superior to the spectators shouting at the referee and only seeing their own team's virtues.

'Jesus, it's cold,' Dave suddenly exclaimed and started to stamp his feet up and down. Andy sensed that the man behind was having his view obstructed by this movement but he did not dare look round. At least there was not going to be a repeat of the time at Chelsea when Dave had refused to take his umbrella down.

The game lapsed into a ragged predictability with little prospect of a goal and precious little good football either. Andy's thoughts turned increasingly to Dave. He wanted to understand their friendship: why did he so often feel a victim of it?

Dave wanted a woman, he often talked about that. He and Andy were usually alone when they met, so Andy had very little idea how he behaved with women. Only little incidents. Like the girl brushing past him in the pub and saying 'Sorry' and him replying, 'That's alright, it was rather nice'. And the evening in the Old Vic when he had said so loudly, 'Crikey, there's some smashing attractive women here.' What would it be like to be pursued by Dave? Andy winced at the thought.

She stood in the corner of the room by the bottles of wine, looking nervously at the other guests. The couple in the middle jiving, the group to the right laughing and calling each other names in mock abuse, the man by the gramophone choosing records. And then, over the other side of the room, standing half outside a serious conversation, an upright man — maybe thirty — with close-cropped, fair hair and a rather old-fashioned jacket. Looking across at her with a fixed expression, very still and impenetrable, yet definitely looking at her. She poured herself a drink, unnerved by the stare.

And then he was by her side, asking her name and seeming so strong, pushing out his chest a little and fixing his eyes on her breasts. What job did she do? And what did she earn? And what did she think about ambition? She tried to be vivacious but she felt awkward about the crucifix around her neck. He told her he was a journalist and talked about puritanism. Or was he talking about the two of them? It was hard to tell. His voice was so clipped and distant, his words so abstract.

And then they were lying on her bed, he gripping hold of her buttocks with a raw excitement, she with her jersey up round her neck and her skirt on the floor, he coming up into her hard and ejaculating quickly, she crying out and then taking it. Yes, taking it — because she was frightened, because she had not had sex for a while and was tense, and because she did not know but she might want to keep him. He had spilt a cup of coffee over her drawing of a cat.

Andy returned his attention to the game: there was something brutal and insensitive about Dave that he did not like to think about. He would not like any woman he knew to get involved with him. He put his hand in his trouser pocket and adjusted the lie of his penis.

The half-time whistle blew and the players ran off the field, socks round their ankles and mud on their shorts. There was very little applause. Sometimes a game was dull; it was a chance you had to take. The man next

to Dave tuned into the half-time scores on a small transistor. Andy could hear the metallic voice rising and falling with a theatrical excitement but he could not distinguish the words. The men in front of them sat down on the stone steps and opened a flask of soup. Dave offered Andy one end of his Mars bar.

Out on the pitch 12 or 15 officials were walking around near one of the goals, staring down at their feet. They were all wearing heavy mags or overcoats and most of them had their hands in their pockets. Andy started to laugh. They were circling round and round, slowly spreading out across half the pitch.

'What are they doing?' he exclaimed, enchanted by the absurdity of it.

'Looking for a contact lens, I should imagine,' Dave replied, tossing his Mars bar wrapper towards the men sitting down. There was something naive about the way Andy was always asking questions; he thought of him sometimes as a village boy lost in a big city. Nearly thirty and he was still drifting from job to job, never earning decent money. He had been like Andy once: living in dingy rooms, going to late night films at Hampstead cinemas, sitting around all day talking about feelings. It had never got him anywhere. Indigestible vegetarian meals and not one decent fuck. Calling themselves revolutionaries: what had it got to do with the working class?

And it had worried his mother sick, too, especially getting scabies, which meant having to bath twice a day and wash his sheets all the time. She'd had enough to contend with with his father. Anyway, why should he not get married? Nobody was offering anything better. If the revolution came, well, it would be different — but he was not going to waste his life, waiting for it.

He liked to see Andy, though. They had a lot in common. Andy understood him a bit — not like the others. They were like brothers, really — always there for each other.

The second half was as inconsequential as the first. Middlesbrough scored but, as Dave said, it was a soft goal. Towards the end, people started to drift away, making gloomy jokes about relegation. There was a fight behind one of the goals and Andy watched that for awhile. The players had become tired and their movements repetitive.

At the final whistle, before the players had left the field, everybody in the West Enclosure turned and hurried for the exit. It was a narrow opening under a dark ceiling at the top of some steps. People were pushing towards it faster than they could get through. You could take your feet off the ground and be carried along by the bodies around you, you were that tightly packed. Dave felt a button on his coat being torn off and turned to Andy in anguish.

'All this for a fucking game of football,' he said.

Out in the street, people were hurrying past each other, zig-zagging across the road between the traffic, half-running to get to the tube station quickly. Dave walked deliberately slowly, taking up as much of the pavement as he could. Andy tagged along beside him, conscious of the frustration building up behind. They were an odd couple.

Andy had long black hair and was wearing a blue donkey jacket. He hunched his shoulders a lot and had a permanent cringe about him. Dave had very short, fair hair and was wearing a long maroon overcoat. He held himself very erect and rarely moved the muscles of his face. They both looked about thirty although Dave was slightly older. Andy was still very thin, his cheeks hollowed and his arms without muscles. Dave was becoming thicker, his face fattening out and his shoulders quite broad. They had once been much more alike in build.

At the tube station they queued for 20 minutes, talking about Namibia. And then they caught their separate trains, each looking forward to getting away from the jostling crowds, still stuffing themselves with chips and chattering about the football results.

'See you anon then, comrade.'

'Cheerio, Dave.'

It was dark when they each got home and their rooms were cold and empty.



DURING the last ten years, with the aim of strengthening international authority and of erasing from people's memories the bloody consequences of the cult of Stalin and Khrushchev, important events have taken place inside the Soviet Union, on both an ideological and political level.

These events were of great significance for workers inside the country and occurred as much for propaganda as for the maintenance of the prestige of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the world.

Thus there has been a renewal of party cards, following the example of Vladimir Ilyich and a renewal of passports as a step to raising the status of the 'Citizen'.

On 9 September 1977, Politburo member of the Central Committee of the CPSU and Chairman of the KGB Yuri Andropov stated: 'We proceed from the principle that a person enjoys real freedom if his activities are in harmony with the general flow of social progress...'

...As for those comrades whose criticisms are just and who aim to help matters, we treat them as conscientious critics and thank them...

...those who criticise mistakenly we treat as misguided people...

'And finally... Certain people in the West throw at us what they think is a 'clever' question: how is it that, on the 60th anniversary of the Soviet Union, there are still so-called 'dissidents'? As has already been said, those who are mistaken we try to help. We try to change their minds and correct their errors.'

...However we get to a situation where some of these so-called 'dissidents' began by their activities to break the law — when some people at the fringe of our society take the path of anti-Soviet activities, break the law, supply the West with slanderous information, spread false rumours and start organising anti-social attacks. For these renegades there is not and cannot be any base inside the country...'

We are Soviet people from different strata of society who were previously unknown to each other but who have come together in the process of an ordeal in the full sense of the word. We are people of various nationalities and from different parts of the country who are compelled to appeal to the so-called 'bourgeois press'.

We, the honest workers of a socialist society, the producers of material wealth, are ignored by our leaders, our press, our party and Soviet organs. Though it is their function and duty to hear us and help us resolve our problems.

#### How many are we?

We think we number tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands.

We do not intend to produce high flown words. We will simply describe our ordinary, inhuman misfortunes and sufferings. Today we are suffering — tomorrow any Soviet citizen may become a member of our group and think as we do.

Quite simply — the ruling elite is doing everything it can to break us up and suppress us morally and physically.

With whatever problem a Soviet citizen appeals — to the Procurators' offices, the people's courts, the ministries, the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet, the press, the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions, right on up to the Central Committee of the CPSU — they always proceed, not from the law, but from the personal motivations of this or that custodian of the law.

We are middle aged people who have behind us no less than ten years work experience in various enterprises. We were leading workers and quite naturally we have a real right to think and speak on our own behalf and on behalf of our fellow workers.

Any worker will join our ranks immediately if he so much as criticises wasters of socialist property, poor work conditions, low pay, high rates of injury at work, increased work loads and norms of output, leading to wastage and low quality products, the continual rise in the price of basic necessities and foodstuffs and all that they describe in our country as 'shortages' and 'the difficulties of life'.

We consider ourselves obliged

## Letter from worker dissidents

# 'That great army of Soviet unemployed'

**VLADIMIR KLEBANOV** was sacked from his job in a coal mine for defending his colleagues' interests and put in a psychiatric hospital. Later he received compensation for this wrongful confinement — then the KGB arrived and stole the money back.

This is one of the cases documented by a group of unemployed Soviet workers who have since set up the first independent workers union.

We reprint this appeal to world public opinion and delegates to the Belgrade conference to give some idea of what life is really like in the 'socialist fatherland'.

The importance of this document is that it is one of the first times the voice of working class opposition in the Soviet Union has been heard.

publicly to inform the world of the real situation with regard to our right to freedom and protection of our rights; how the Constitution is observed in reality and what happens when we complain to persons in authority.

We are that great army of Soviet unemployed, thrown out of the factory gates for exercising our right to complain and criticise, our right to free speech. Our press, radio and television loudly denounce despotism and violence in the rest of the world but no-one cares to defend us and publicise the hunger and destitution suffered by us and our children.

Any reasonable person knows it is impossible to talk about hundreds and thousands of human beings. But by describing some tens of cases of ordinary human suffering, we can demonstrate convincingly that the same fate that has already befallen tens of thousands of people awaits every Soviet citizen.

They complain to the same bodies and organisations and deal with precisely the same people, whose motives, methods and practices are habitual. The cases of despotism and violence are legion and possess no accidental character.

Wherever a worker or employee works, lives or complains, in the last

analysis all roads lead to the same functionaries and to those repressive measures which they use against citizens who possess rights and protection under the law.

We will describe and document cases based on documentation and relevant events.

#### VLADIMIR KLEBANOV

I worked in the Bazhanova mine, part of the Makyeev-coal enterprise, as a coal combine operator, skilled mine worker, shift foreman and design engineer.

In September 1968 I was wrongfully repressed and put in a

Ministry of Internal Affairs Special Psychiatric Hospital in Dnepropetrovsk for defending workers and employees victimised by the administration.

In 1973, since I wouldn't submit to tyranny and lawlessness I was again repressed at the request of the administration of the Bazhanova mine. I was declared mentally unfit.

In 1974 I was rehabilitated but since 1973 I have been refused work because in my labour book is written: 'Dismissed in connection with arrest'. I cannot work anywhere. This sordid lie was never removed.

However eventually I received compensation for my wrongful confinement in the Ministry of Internal Affairs Special Psychiatric Hospital in Dnepropetrovsk.

On 10 February 1977 I was arrested by officers of the Moscow KGB who tried to accuse me of an explosion in the Metro. For two months I was wrongfully confined in a Special Psychiatric Hospital. An investigation was refused.

In the ensuing searches money to the sum of 2,100 roubles, part of the compensation for my wrongful dismissal in Dnepropetrovsk, disappeared.

#### VALENTIN POPLAVSKY

In 1975 I was sacked as head of department in the Ferro-Concrete Structures and Parts Production plant in Klimovsk for exposing the abuses of the factory director Polstanov.

On Polstanov's instructions I was beaten by Klimovsk police officers in my own flat in front of my wife, children and 100 year old father.

On appeal to the CPSU Central Committee for no reason I was arrested by officers from the Moscow KGB and Police Station No 46 and sentenced to 15 days in jail.

On 10 February 1976 a District Police Officer and KGB officer burst into my flat and tried to arrest me again. All my attempts to complain to various bodies met only with empty formal replies.

#### VARVARA KUCHERENKO

I worked as a points operator at a curing and pickling plant in Makhach — Kala, Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. The Administration and Trade Union Committee wanted to get rid of me and sack me from work for exposing misappropriation of products.

So thinking that I would leave work of my own accord they reassigned me to another job with less pay although, in law, a supervisor can't do this without the agreement of the worker. I appealed to the Procurator's Office and to the Court of the DASSR but they left my statements without due process.

The administration saw that they could only sack me on the pretext of absenteeism. But that was not true because I had never refused work, but simply wasn't willing to work for nothing!

I appealed to the Reception of the Procurator's Office of the USSR. Procurator Budersky refused to register me for reception and used force to take me to jail where, under duress, on 8 July 1977, I had to give a written undertaking to leave Moscow.

I have never committed any anti-social or hooligan acts but only sent my documents to the Central Committee of the CPSU.

A complaint against any illegal detention by the police on 8, 12, and 22 July 1977 was lodged with the editor of the paper Pravda. It was signed by five of six witnesses. To this day I have received no reply.

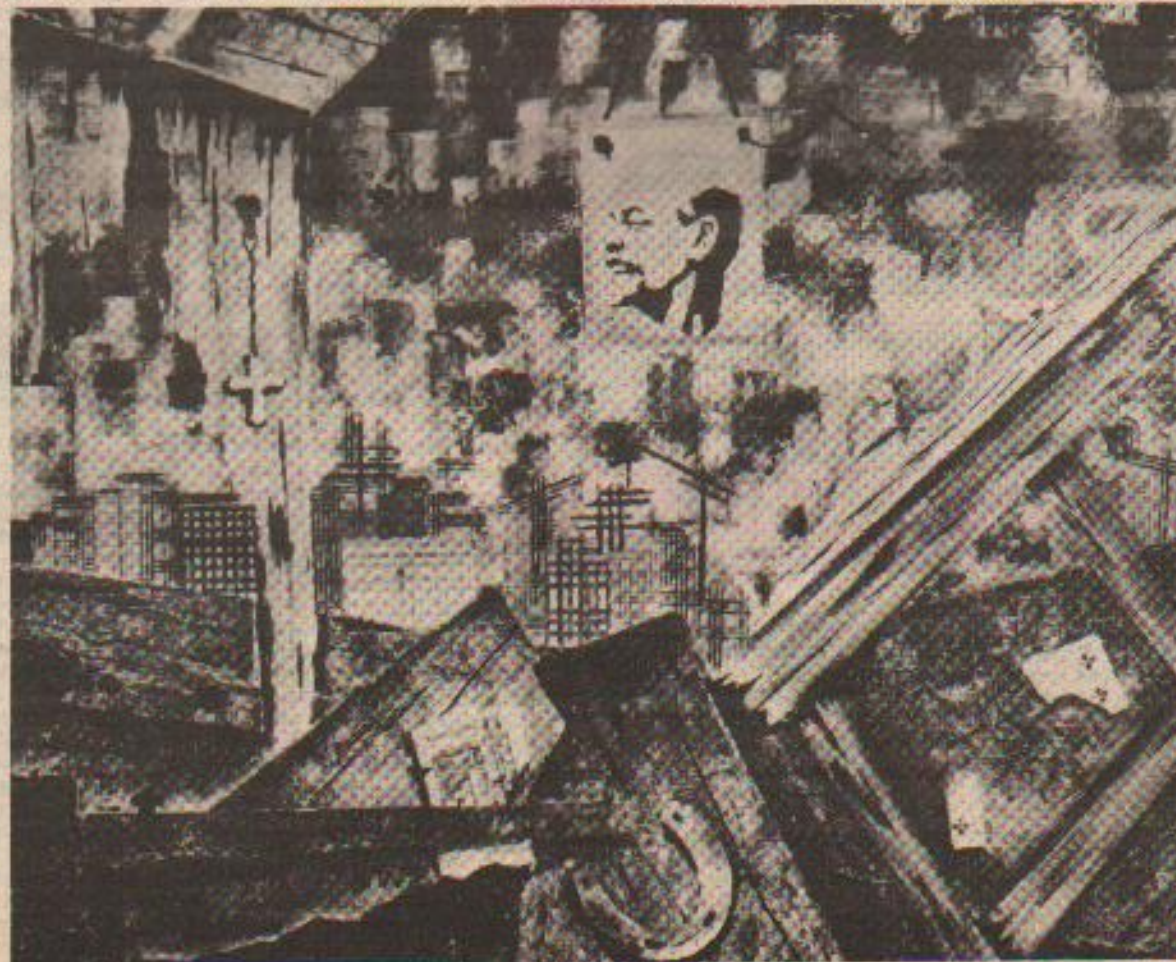
#### GAVRIL YANKOV

I worked in the Moskabel enterprise in Moscow in shop No 14 as a freight handler with the right to drive a truck. I was sacked for complaining to the factory administration in November 1975.

At first they assigned me to heavier work but that meant less pay. I complained that this was unjust. So they took savage reprisals against me. They sacked me for work refusal.

On 21 February 1977 three KGB officers and Divisional Police Officer Shatrov burst into my flat and made a thorough search of it.

On 23 May 1977 in my absence they again burst into my flat and threw out my belongings. They took my documents — passport and labour



HE CITY IN RUINS by dissident painter Alexander Rabin



book. On 27 May they returned my passport and ordered me to go wherever I liked but out of Moscow. I only got my labour book back on 1 June.

Since 27 May 1977 I have been sleeping on stations. They took to arresting me and taking me to Moscow Kursk Station branch of the police. At first they would keep me for an hour or two.

At Moscow Police Station No. 46 they would hold me for more than a day in a cell with thieves and hoodlums. There they took a set of police photographs of me. They arranged a 'chat' with a psychiatrist.

Nobody bothers the criminals and drunkards who roam Moscow's streets but I, an honest man who has lived in Moscow for many years, has to leave.

[There follows an outline of 22 similar cases]

We consider the statements of KGB Chairman Yuri Adropov false — namely that in our country they try to help people.

Perhaps putting complainants in Psychiatric Hospitals and Special Detention Centres in Moscow is what they call 'changing their minds' and 'correcting' their errors. Then it's a barbaric and inhuman method.

The names of the honest Soviet Citizens whom they have tried to 'correct and re-educate' must be made known to all Soviet citizens and to world public opinion.

[There follows a list and brief details of 50 people, mainly industrial workers, who have been held in psychiatric hospitals or detention centres]

As a sign of protest against the denial of human rights, the following citizens, independently of each other, notified their intention to emigrate from the Soviet Union to the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet.

[There follows a list of 21 people, again mainly industrial workers]

All the above-mentioned people are not renegades and have committed no

anti-social attacks. Moreover they have not supplied the West with slanderous information or spread false rumours.

Yet some of them were put in Special Psychiatric Hospitals and turned out of Moscow, simply because they came to Moscow with complaints about wrongful dismissals or demands for better living conditions.

Wherever a Soviet citizen appeals in search of justice, no-one wants to hear. Their sole concern is how to get rid of the complainant.

To this purpose the police and KGB spare no effort in support of the bureaucratic apparatus. They arrest

you singly and in groups. Mikhail Guriev, Mikhaila Melentjeva, Nikolai Ivanov and Varvara Kucherenko were arrested in the Reception of the Central Committee CPSU and held in Moscow Police Station No. 46 where they were asked to give a written undertaking never to show up at the Central Committee CPSU again.

In Moscow there are a series of Board of Internal Affairs Special Detention Centres for ridding Moscow of complainants. At first to frighten complainants they imprison them and subject them to humiliating searches.

For example, at block 4 No. 46

Novoslobodsky Street you can find the Moscow City Executive Committee Board of Internal Affairs Special Detention Centre No. 2.

Its chief is the police lieutenant P. Efimov. There are printed sheets of orders, of which a particularly large number issue from the Reception of the All Union Central Council of Trade Unions.

Officers of the Administrative Organs Department of the Central Committee CPSU receive complainants that they have run out of money and they go off home.

For example, Deputy Head of Department V. Gladishev, Head of Sector S. Shishkov, Executive

Officers Smirnov, Pesukhov, Titov, Shukin and others; Head of Reception of the Central Committee CPSU V. Filatov; Head of Reception of the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet M. Skmyarov; Head of Reception of the Procurator's office of the Soviet Union A. Rekunkov, Deputy Procurator General of the USSR A. Pankratov; Heads of Department Zamyatin, Cherminsky, Kudryavtsev and others.

Making use of the lack of control exercised by the leaders of the Party and Government, they have created a closely-knit mutual protection society, giving empty formal replies, using repressive measures, putting people in Special Psychiatric Hospitals and so on.

The editors of the central newspapers Pravda, Trud, Izvestia, Interturnaya Gazeta etc are completely dominated and controlled from the Central Committee of the CPSU.

We are not afraid to stand up for ourselves in open court. If we are wrong, let us be judged, but openly with the participation of the workers.

And we are convinced that the workers will judge not us but the Gladishevs, the Shishkovs, the Filatovs, Pankratovs and Rekunkovs — and put them in the dock instead.

We do not consider that giving wide publicity to the facts of repression and illegality, bringing them to the attention of world public opinion constitutes interference in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union.

We earnestly beg to present our statement to world public opinion so that the participants of the Belgrade-Helsinki conference, signatories of the Helsinki agreement may know exactly where, above all, human rights are being infringed.

We ask your assistance in the resolution of our complaints in accordance with the law and constitution of the Soviet Union and to put an end to repression and harassment of citizens.

[There follows a list of 25 signatories to the document]

Moscow, 18 September 1977  
Translation by Val Graham.



VIOLIN AND CEMETERY by dissident painter Oscar Rabin

## Exclusive!

# Behind closed doors

The case for Western firms withdrawing — or at least reviewing — their South African investments has got backing from the most unlikely source: the US ambassador in Pretoria.

A long telegram from the then ambassador to the Department of State, which outlines black attitudes to foreign investment, has been made available to us by Counter Information Services. RICHARD CARVER reports.

'With radicalization of black attitudes, tendency to call for disinvestment grows stronger. Added to heightened expectations from new US administration on South African issues, must be expected that role of American firms here will become increasingly controversial and rationale for continued presence will seem less and less persuasive to growing number of blacks.'

This is Ambassador Bowdler's startling conclusion, for 'limited official use' only. Since Bowdler is now head of the State Department International Research and Development Division he is presumably more than an individual maverick.

He would seem to represent the strong 'Africanist' current within the administration, which favours the maximum reliance on a neo-colonial policy in Africa. Significantly one government agency which did not receive the telegram was the Central Intelligence Agency.

Bowdler's report is apparently based on an extensive and intelligent survey of black opinion. A number of passages indicate thorough interviews and discussion with black shop floor workers and young people.

The telegram breaks black opinion on investment into three categories: those who uncritically favour investment; those who want selective investment; and those who favour total disinvestment.

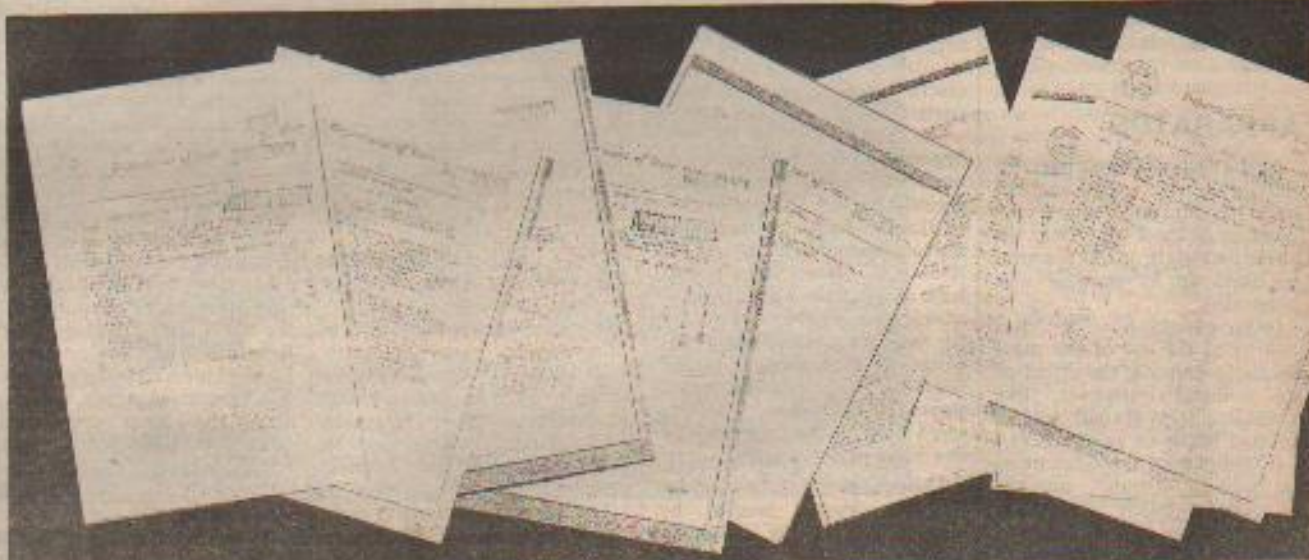
The first group — apparently declining — is described as mainly older black workers and black businesspeople. No distinction is made between Africans, Asians and Coloured (mixed race), so it is hard to identify the latter group.

### BUSINESSMEN

'Some black businessmen, mindful of their own interest in an expanding economy, see foreign capital as helping to generate sales revenue. Some prominent figures in black trade unions like Lucy Mabele, general secretary of National Union of Clothing Workers, and most homeland leaders are strong investment proponents.'

'Well-publicised efforts of Chief Sobe to attract prominent US firms to the Ciskei reveal his idea of what constitutes good politics in his homeland.'

The policy of black 'homelands' is central to separate development — that is, apartheid. So it is hardly surprising that the regime's stooges should favour the



maximum investment in those areas.

But the second group, those who favour partial disinvestment, seem clear that foreign firms must pull out of the homelands.

'A prominent black in newspaper industry recently called homeland investment "morally indefensible".'

Bowdler also points out that: 'Qualified supporters of foreign capital would reject products or processes which seem to perpetuate or strengthen elements of state apparatus associated with their own subjugation, such as equipment for police, Bantu administration officials and armed forces.'

Into this category would fall much government-backed British investment, such as the supply of Leyland Land Rovers

to the police or the sale of a military communications system by Marconi under government license.

The Labour Government's argument that these sales are not connected with the repression of the black population is clearly rejected even by this fairly moderate section.

Bowdler devotes most space to the rapidly growing group of opponents of all foreign investment, whom he sees as young urban blacks, a section of manual workers, and some black businesspeople.

'The disinvestment rationale sees foreign investment as propping up South African economy and thus its social system, perpetuating apartheid in all its aspects. Foreign capital is viewed as an insurance policy

for South Africa's survival, protecting against meaningful international sanctions, despite repeated censures by international bodies.'

'When white SA leaders boast over West's dependence on South Africa's minerals, this confirms feeling of blacks that other countries pay only lip service to their plight and are in reality bending their actions to serve underlying economic and strategic interests...'

'This anti-capitalist reasoning contends that even if foreign firms offer minor reforms, it is only to create a comfortable black middle class which will perpetuate exploitation of African masses.'

The Carter administration and its faithful shadows in Whitehall have not exactly been falling over themselves to disinvest from South Africa.

But this doesn't mean they've failed to note Bowdler's conclusion.

What they understand is that selective, 'political' investment will not stabilise capitalist interests in South Africa. Like it or not — and perhaps some of them occasionally feel a moral twinge — the apartheid system is capitalism's only guarantor.

With that in mind imperialist firms and governments 'pay only lip service to their plight and are in reality bending their actions to serve underlying economic and strategic interests.'

The words are not ours — they come from this prominent representative of US imperialism.

\*More details from CIS, 9 Poland Street, London W1.



**PSOE aims for two party system**

# Spanish section of the Second International

Even a year ago no-one really believed that democracy could come to Spain without a massive working class surge or even a revolution.

But now there is democracy — of a sort — and our confident predictions have been shown to be over-optimistic.

So how was Spain saved for capitalism — at least temporarily? A large part of the answer lies with the socialist party (PSOE).

**FRED FAIRBAIRN** in Bilbao looks at the party which came from nowhere to be the largest working class party.

OF THE major parties, the PSOE has probably the clearest project.

General secretary Felipe González says that the PSOE sees the possibility of coming to power with an absolute parliamentary majority, or something near it, and everything is geared to this.

It even has a provisional timetable for this: trade union and local elections and approval of the Constitution for 1978, and dissolution of the Cortes (parliament) and new legislative elections for spring 1979.

After Portugal it was little surprise to see a Socialist Party come in from the political wilderness with a bright new image and heavy outside backing and pick up over a third of the votes in the first semi-democratic elections for 40 years.

The PSOE was under little pressure on its left because of the rightist policies of the Communist Party (PCE). The PSOE votes mostly represented a working class desire for change.

## APPARATUS

As the second largest party in the Cortes, with more than three times the votes and five times the deputies of the PCE, it has set about cashing in on this position to build up its prestige and apparatus.

Image-conscious, it has cultivated the use of the mass media to enhance the effect of its political initiatives, like González' trips abroad to meet foreign heads of government.

It has not been above resorting to political 'stunts', such as González' much publicised intervention to secure the release of Spanish fishermen held by Saharan nationalists.

The PSOE has used its parliamentary weight to lever itself into a favourable position in the 'pre-autonomy' bodies in the regions and nationalities.

Instead of mobilising in the streets — except in the most strictly controlled fashion — it has used negotiation and behind-the-scenes wheel-dealing by parliamentary representatives.

## TWO-PARTY

The June 1977 elections revealed the possibility of moving towards a two-party system, albeit an 'imperfect' one. In different ways and for different reasons both major parties — PSOE and the bourgeois UCD — are attempting to help this trend.

This means marginalising the PCE — a source of much chagrin and self-righteous protests by the latter — and other 'lesser' political formations.

So it was that the PSOE supported a law for the municipal elections which discriminates against smaller parties.

The PSOE's plan to win hegemony on the left involves 'mopping up' the smaller socialist parties. Some members of the Federation of Socialist Parties and the bulk of the 'Historic' sector of the PSOE have already been absorbed.

Negotiations are under way for the incorporation of the two wings of the strong Catalan Socialist Party, though some opposition has been encountered over the degree of the party in Catalonia.

The next target is the Popular Socialist Party, headed by Professor Tierno Galván, which got nearly 800,000 votes in June. The PSP demanded to

enter as a constituted tendency.

Tendencies are banned in the PSOE and many oppositionists have been bureaucratically silenced or expelled. As in all other cases the PSOE has yielded next to nothing to the smaller party.

Faced with dissension in his own ranks, Tierno put an embargo on meetings of the PSP rank and file.

The sticking point for many members was the PSOE's insistence that all trade unionists should pass over to the PSOE-backed UGT. In the event of the PSP's entry into the PSOE some sections may join the PCE.

One of the main lessons the PSOE has drawn from other West European countries, above all Portugal, is that a powerful union 'identified' with it is 'an indispensable condition for the Socialist Party to be able to govern as such...socialists can't hope to govern without trade union backing.'

Votes at elections are not enough, but a tightly run union could do the trick. 'There is a relation of cause and effect between a strong PSOE and a strong UGT, and vice versa', says González.

## TRADITION

Two years ago — even one year ago — the UGT was very weak. The new wave of workers' struggles starting in the 1960s had passed through the Workers' Commissions.

But under the new conditions of bourgeois democracy several things were in the UGT's favour. Its historical tradition for one thing, and the failure of the PCE leadership of the Workers' Commissions to campaign resolutely for trade union unity.

The number of UGT members has grown hugely over the past year or so.

It was increased by a bureaucratic smash-and-grab raid on USO (Workers Union), an independent 'self-management' union. A sizeable part of the leadership was captured, though only a small portion of the rank and file.

The current workplace elections show UGT firmly in second place, if at some distance, behind the Workers'

Commissions. In some working class strongholds with a UGT tradition, notably Vizcaya, it even has a narrow lead.

Although it is a member of the Socialist (Second) International, the PSOE is prepared on occasion, opportunistically and demagogically, to take its distance from traditional social democracy.

In a polemic with Norberto Bobbio of the Italian Socialist Party, Alfonso Guerra, one of the party's leading lights, criticised the headlong rush of social democracy into class-collaborationist administrators of capitalism. He re-affirmed that the PSOE 'has been, since its very inception, a Marxist party in the purest sense of the word'.

In a recent interview Guerra dismissed the PCE and the Italian Communist Party as 'ridiculously social-democratic'. He even claimed the PSOE could do with 'a few drops of Castroist populism' though he quickly qualified this: 'only a few drops, mind, because it also contains serious dangers'.

Within a party which bandies about such rhetoric one might expect to find oppositional groupings pressing to see this radical phraseology put into practice.

But such currents are hampered by the ruthlessness of the bureaucracy. When the 6th Congress of the Socialist Youth in 1975 approved a programme containing transitional and revolutionary demands the PSOE soon replaced the leadership elected there with a 'provisional' one which lasted until the next congress just a couple of months ago.

In the PSOE and the UGT whole sections 'under the influence of Trotskyists' have been threatened with expulsion or actually expelled on the flimsiest of pretexts. This was the fate of the strong PSOE group in Valdecas, a working class suburb of Madrid.

Attempts have been made to suspend a local committee of the UGT in Asturias where Revolutionary Communist League members were active, and sections in Alava, Navarre and Madrid have been warned when they have not toed the PSOE line.

The old UGT statutes which provided for the formation of tendencies have just been revised to exclude this possibility.



FELIPE GONZALEZ caught in typical pose.

## Egyptian dissidents 'The question can't be put in mothballs'

Details are beginning to emerge from Egypt of the treatment meted out to those — both Egyptians and Palestinians — who are opposed to President Sadat's peace initiative.

After the fiasco of Sadat's attempt to emulate Entebbe in Cyprus, repression of dissident voices is likely to increase. The Egyptian government has already announced its intention to withdraw the special privileges enjoyed by Palestinians living in Egypt.

The most famous of Egypt's opposition voices are Ahmed Foad Negm (a colloquial poet), and Ezra Balbaa and Sheikh Imam Eissa (both singers). They have been in and out of prison for years.

Their works are banned from Egyptian radio and television as they describe the lives of ordinary workers and peasants, the struggle of the Palestinians, and anti-imperialist struggles around the world. Their songs are distributed samizdat-style on cassettes handed from person to person.

The three's latest involvement with the Egyptian police followed a recital at the University of Ain Shams in Cairo. The security police tried to stop them entering the university, but failed.

The recital took place and was followed by a discussion on Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. Negm was arrested after the meeting, and all three were charged with forced entry into the university.

Sheikh Imam is an unlikely candidate for leader of a violent assault. He is sixty years old and blind.

Their case was transferred by Presidential decree from a civilian to a military court. They refused to address the court, insisting theirs was a civilian case.

Negm went on hunger strike and was released from prison at the end of December. The latest information is that they have been summoned to appear before a military court again.

In the atmosphere prevailing after the Larnaca fiasco it is likely that they will return to prison yet again.

Ordinary Egyptians and Palestinians have also been victims of Sadat's police. Palestinians taking taxi rides and expressing opposition to Sadat's visit to Israel have found the taxi driver taking them direct to the nearest police station.

In one case at the end of December an Egyptian travelling to work by bus was heard to oppose Sadat's peace initiative. Suddenly, a secret policeman appeared and hauled him off to the police station.

But the Sadat regime has not been able to suppress all dissident views. A play called *The question can't be put in a closet with mothballs* has been playing to student-worker groups in Cairo.

It describes the problems an Egyptian professor has with the authorities after they discover he has been teaching that 'King Abdullah of Jordan was assassinated because he was a traitor and wanted to make a deal with the Zionist enemy.'

The parallel with Sadat is clear. The professor defends himself by saying he is teaching exactly what is written in the government's history textbooks.



TIERNO: the PSP leader is next in the PSOE bomb-sights



## REVIEW

WITH AROUND 10 million inhabitants, Cuba has a population one fifth the size of Britain's. Yet annual cinema admissions in this country, at 119m, are a few million less than in Cuba. In other words, it seems that people in Cuba see films five times more frequently than we do.

This may not seem so much if you compare it with British cinema attendance when it was at its peak, at the end of the Second World War. Then the British went to the cinema more than twice as much as Cubans do now. Attendance amounted to 35m a week — probably the highest rate of cinema-going anywhere at any time for the size of the population.

But when you learn that in Havana today, with a population of about 2m, an important new Cuban film may be seen by half that number within a few weeks, you realise that cinema in Cuba is still the most powerful cultural means of social cohesion, as it was for us before television — the Cubans also have TV, but it hasn't killed their cinema.

We have to speak here of more than cohesion. Cinema in Cuba today is animated, just as it was everywhere around the turn of the century, when the excitement of invention and discovery was fresh. It is also animated in the same way as cinema in Soviet Russia in the first decade of the revolution when, for example, an audience of workers watching Joris Ivens' rather abstract experimental film *Rain* said to him afterwards: 'Why are you afraid of faces? If you could look at a face with the same frankness with which you look at a raindrop you would be wonderful.'

Historically Cuban cinema therefore stands in the same development which also includes French cinema around the Popular Front of the mid-1930s; Italy following the Liberation of 1944; Poland, briefly, during the '50s; Czechoslovakia in the period leading up to the Prague Spring; France again in the movement to which May '68 belonged; Popular Unity in Chile; Britain only almost once or twice, but one day surely in the future if cinema manages to survive.

Under the kinds of conditions which produce this animation, cinema operates as an unparalleled critical instrument which both expresses and develops a popular vision of the world. And in taking up the most rigorous intellectual and imaginative imperatives, it overrides the division which bourgeois society discovers and sustains between popular culture and elite Art.

### INSTRUMENT

The knowledge that film could be an instrument of this kind was present at the very beginning of the Cuban revolution. ICAIC (Instituto Cubano del Arte y Industria Cinematográfica — Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry) dates back to the law of 24 March 1959, three months after Fidel's entry into Havana.

As Alfredo Guevara said in his report on Cuban cinema to the first meeting of Latin American Film Makers in 1967, the new cinema in Cuba and the climate of artistic freedom which it has enjoyed were the natural results, not of some kind of theoretical concern for the purity of cinema as Art, but rather of the film activities carried on in conditions of clandestinity during the war of the guerrillas. Coupled with this were the experiences of the film clubs and other cultural associations as centres for the dissemination of revolutionary ideas and resistance to cultural and political oppression by the imperialists.

Cuban cinema accepted that it had to perform revolutionary tasks and it set out to create the necessary conditions. But it was never, even at the beginning, merely propagandistic. It knew how to benefit from the visionary chance it had been given to create a new film culture which was not subordinate to a pre-existing culture of mass literacy, but could grow in harness with the campaign for mass literacy which was one of the revolution's primary aims.

The visual medium of cinema and the medium of written language are not the same; they do not lead to the same kind of awareness of the world. The commercial cinema of the capitalist world developed amid a

# After the Revolution Cuba's liberated cinema

by Michael Chanan



'CUBAN cinema accepted it had to perform revolutionary tasks and it set out to create the necessary conditions.'

mass commercial popular literature which colonised it and reduced its ways of telling stories and presenting reality to certain kinds of formulae — like Hollywood gems. Hollywood cinema doesn't so much distort reality but consists, on the one hand, of something very much like fairy tales, and on the other, renders most of our actual experience invisible.

A paradoxical effect, no doubt, for a visual medium to exercise. As Leo Huberman pointed out in *Man's Worldly Goods*:

'The directors of the earliest movies often did queer things. One of the most curious was their habit of showing you people riding about in a taxi, then piling out and walking away without paying the driver. They'd ride all over town, have fun, or go to a place of business, and that was the end of that. No payment necessary.'

'It was very much like most of those books on the Middle Ages that go on

for pages and pages about knights and ladies all decked out in shining armour and gay dresses, at tournaments and games. They always live in splendid castles and have plenty to eat and drink. You get very little hint that someone had to provide all these things, that armour doesn't grow on trees, and that food does grow, has to be planted and looked after and worked over. But it does.' So the task which Cuban cinema took upon itself was, as Alfredo Guevara put it, to discover 'the reality within the reality'.

### LITERARY

There is also another kind of hegemony which highly developed literary cultures exercise over cinema, and the Colombian film-maker Marta Rodríguez Silva has recently explained how Cuban cinema also served as an example which showed

how it was possible to attack this effect as well. It was through Cuban cinema, she wrote, that she first learnt that the film-maker did not have 'to carry on being a simple impartial observer of reality' — according to the bourgeois ideology of knowledge — in which the documentary film maker is supposed to be like an anthropologist engaged on an investigation, with the film camera as an empirical recording device.

That Cuban cinema continues to provide revolutionary examples was clear from the selection of new films of the last two or three years which were shown in London during the recent Cuban Film Week at the National Film Theatre.

These films were by no means all of a piece. There is no ruling aesthetic orthodoxy in Cuba, socialist realist, experimentalist or otherwise. There is a considerable variety of themes and treatments even in Cuba's small

feature film output. At the same time it is possible to observe certain types of film emerging which could almost be called revolutionary genres.

Sergio Giral's *Ranchero* (The Rancher) is a historical 'epic' about black slavery in Cuba. *Río Negro* directed by Manuel Pérez is a film about the strug of the revolution itself, dealing with conflict which comes to a head at the moment of the Bay of Pigs, between two men in the Escambray region. One of them is a revolutionary former peasant; the other a counter-revolutionary who leads a pro-Batista bandit group.

A third kind of film can be found in *De Cierta Manera* (In a Certain Way) by the late Cuban woman director, Sara Gómez Yera. Here, in a story of growing consciousness in an urban slum housing area in the process of being rebuilt, fiction and documentary are mixed. But what makes this a particularly powerful film is that it is not done simply through juxtaposing fiction and documentary sequences. Rather the film is constructed by creating a narrative involving both fictional and real characters in a real location in a historically specific moment.

### EXPERIMENTAL

Humberto Solas, the director of another experimental film included in the programme, *Cantata de Chile*, was one of a delegation of four who came with the films. *Cantata de Chile* employs an eclectic range of myths, poems, historical reconstructions and other stylised elements. Solas regards the whole of Cuban cinema today as experimental. He calls it a laboratory for the creation of a socialist culture.

There is no longer any force left in bourgeois culture, he said. And the bourgeois models which still had some influence on us in the '60s have been discarded. But there has never yet been a true socialist culture. It is not something that can appear overnight. And it isn't a matter of theory either. In any case there hasn't been a real Marxist theory of art from this point of view. We are therefore in a laboratory stage. We have to experiment in practice to discover the new forms.

It is precisely this laboratory spirit which makes Cuban cinema accessible to us. Culturally we have a very fundamental shared experience with the Cubans: the death of bourgeois culture. We are used to a powerful avant garde (or better, series of avant gardes) which is also a laboratory for new forms.

Apart from the very important functions of solidarity and of showing us what the Cuban revolution is like, Cuban cinema also presents us with a critique of avant garde practice. It is a practical critique of a positive kind, which puts to shame the theoretical dogmas which often appear in our own speechifying. It does not dismiss avant gardism as a flag-end mutation of artistic traditions, the result of the artist's alienation, loss of audience and primitive apolitical sense of rebellion. Nor does it make a fetish of avant gardism for its own sake, or because of some necessarily revolutionary core which all experimental art is sometimes supposed to possess.

It has the truly open attitude of the creative scientific researcher; the attitude of the experimenter for whom an experiment is not an attempt to confirm foregone conclusions, but literally a trying-out of an idea — a possibility.

But this demands a different mode of consumption for the aesthetic object; the film. It is no longer to be judged either in the habit of bourgeois critics, as a potential masterpiece; nor as a fleeting object of leisure-time consumption, as in the dominant cinema of the Hollywood tradition; cinema which diverts and fleeces the audience at the same time. Instead the film has to be judged as openly as it was made.

This is a vital example to us if we, too, are to break with old habits and move towards the creation of a useful cinema. In a word, we can learn this way to stop regarding films as illustrations of rival theoretical positions over what kind of cinema we ought to have. Then we could regard each and every film as simply an experiment on the way towards our own. This way we would be able to make films more useful to us now, as instruments in the current moment of struggle.



# COMMENT

## BOB PURDIE AND THE GUARDIAN

BOB PURDIE (*Socialist Challenge* 6 April) seeks once again to justify his call to the Provisionals to lay down their weapons. However, his argument is undermined by his failure to examine recent events.

A serious error concerns his assessment of the present military campaign. Comparing the scale of operations that characterised an earlier phase of the campaign (spectacular car bombs etc.) with that of the present, he arrives at the conclusion that because there has been a 'de-escalation' in the scale of these operations there has also been a decrease in their effectiveness.

Yet the effectiveness of guerrilla wars is not to be judged by the size of scale of military operations, but by their success in heightening social and political contradictions. In this respect, the recent campaign has been very effective.

We remind readers that before Christmas there was a £3m fire-bomb blitz, and that between 1 January and late February when La Mon occurred more than 40 British Army, UDR and RUC men had been injured and three UDR men had been killed. In the same period there were over 100 bomb blasts, many on out-of-Belfast hotels etc. This campaign has prevented the British Government from stabilising the Northern statelet. It has led to the public humiliation of Roy Mason who had boasted that the IRA were defeated, and has indirectly had positive effects on political developments in the South.

In relation to the South, Bob Purdie errs in his claim that Fianna Fail and Fine Gael are simply 'holding the line on behalf of the SDLP' because Westminster is again capitulating to Unionism. The recent pro-unity statements of Irish bourgeois parties are chiefly a response to two factors: (1) the re-emergence of nationalism at grass-roots level in Ireland, and (2) the fact that the economy and politics of the South are adversely affected by the continuing instability in the North; and the demise of 'power-sharing', plus the continuing IRA campaign have demonstrated that this cannot be resolved in the British context.

Bob Purdie asserts that 'the military campaign... constantly throws up obstacles to the re-building of mass resistance'. But the IRA would be foolish to give up its campaign on the basis of a prophecy that this might allow a mass mobilisation to take place.

The concept that a military campaign and a mass movement are mutually exclusive is a totally mechanical one. What in fact occurs is a process in which the failure of the imperialist power to meet the demands put forward by peaceful mass protest drives people to the logical conclusion that they must take up arms. And every liberation struggle has shown that the organisations that win mass support are those that show themselves able not only to defend the people against their oppressors but embark on a military offensive in pursuit of the popular interest.

In the Irish context, the Official Republicans followed Bob Purdie's logic and gave up the war against Britain. The result has been not only the degeneration of their organisat-

ion into a position where it effectively supports British imperialism, but a drastic dwindling of their base. An Official demo is lucky to muster a few hundred people, whereas thousands continue to turn out for the Provisionals as the recent demonstration for political status, the attendance at Volunteer Paul Duffy's funeral and the Easter Commemoration have shown.

It is unfortunate for Bob Purdie's argument that what he describes as an 'episodic rise in Catholic militancy' has actually taken place in the wake of the La Mon bombing. Even the *Guardian* conceded that La Mon had had no ill-effects on Provisional support, giving the lie to his claims that it caused widespread demoralisation.

Bob Purdie reminds us of our responsibility to be logical and honest. We would remind him that we also have a responsibility not only to make an accurate analysis of the situation in the North, but to address ourselves to building a powerful solidarity movement in this country.

JOHN LLOYD, ALASTAIR RENWICK, LIZ CURTIS [W. London]

## CARL GARDNER AND POWER

OK, OK, OK...I give in. After receiving the biggest battering in print since the publication of the 'British Road', I admit that I was utterly and completely wrong in my assessment of nuclear power and revolutionaries' attitudes to it [2 February].

Comrades Pitts, Talbot, Lang, Williams and Luden made many correct points which are impossible to oppose by simplistic, timeless first principles, as I originally attempted to do (though I am doubtful about Colin Talbot's contention that we should even be opposed to the Soviet Union having nuclear arms). In particular, I was wrong to imagine that nuclear technology is somehow, in and of itself 'neutral' — a position implying a form of 'essentialism' which is totally at odds with positions I hold on other issues.

However, what clearly emerges out of the debate — and Alan Luden touched on this point most clearly — is that correct positions on scientific/industrial developments cannot be arrived at outside of an assessment of the scientific data underlying them.

For example, how can we adopt a policy on different forms of energy production without the mass of people having a clear grasp of the merits and demerits of those opposing systems in social and economic terms? This is a task which the left press has yet to address itself to, leaving it instead to the supposed 'fringe' ecology groups — comrade Luden's suggestion of an article explaining how a fast breeder reactor works would be a useful beginning.

Such a vital course would also require a reassessment of the orthodox 'Leninist' view that a revolutionary organisation cannot take positions on scientific questions. It is difficult to see how we can take a position on the nuclear power 'debate' without choosing between different technological policies and the scientific data and hypotheses on which they are based.

CARL GARDNER [London NW6]

## RICHARD CARVER AND THE MAFIA

WHAT A carve up! That was my reaction to Richard Carver's article on the Red Brigades. There's a great difference between criticising the actions of the Red Brigades, and slandering them in Stalinist fashion.

The Communist Party in Italy has issued a call to root out all 'terrorist' sympathisers from the workplace and the community. We all know that this means every revolutionary faces a witch-hunt led by the PCI.

The Mafia has issued a death threat to all 'Red Brigade prisoners' to be implemented by their own members in jail. We know that all imprisoned left wingers face being murdered a la Baader-Meinhof.

*Socialist Challenge* tail ends the PCI in its reporting of recent events. You claim that the Red Brigades have little support in Italy. How come they can issue a mass bulletin simultaneously in 12 different cities? How come even the Italian bourgeoisie admits they have support on the shopfloor?

Your reports on Italy have tended to be inaccurate and to reflect the bourgeois media's coverage of the revolutionary left as 'Mickey Mouse groups'. (see *Red Notes* criticisms in its new pamphlet on Italy).

Instead of attempting to learn from the experiences of the mass movement, *Socialist Challenge* has used the crisis of the left organisations to score points against Big Flame, pointing to the ructions that took place in Lotta Continua.

Unfortunately you fail to apply the same criticisms to your own sister organisation, the GCR in Italy, whose membership has dropped from 2,700 to below 300.

I have deep criticisms to make of the Red Brigades — their 'kamikaze' tactics, macho posturing, and failure to grasp the need for mass action. These criticisms do not, however, stoop to calumny.

I put this 'socialist challenge' to *Socialist Challenge*: either provide detailed evidence of neo-fascist infiltration of the Red Brigades, NAP, and GRAPO, or withdraw your allegations and issue an apology.

NICK HEATH (London E3)

## FASCISTS IN THE UNIONS

THE ISSUE of fascists in the unions has recently come into the limelight. The bureaucracies of unions like the National Union of Railwaymen are calling for the expulsion of all fascists, and this call has been recently backed by the comrades from the Socialist Workers Party and the International Communist League.

After all, why should we accept fascists in the unions? They stand for the destruction of all working class organisation, and in any case they are an affront to all socialist, black people, and so on, having to work with them.

Yet we would argue that the comrades of the SWP and the ICL are making a serious mistake. They key is



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not the presence of fascists on themselves, but the political question of whether they are organising and politically active — holding a union position, fighting for their poisonous filth etc.

The position would be different if there were hundreds of thousands of fascists on the streets outside, if they were becoming a big threat to the workers' movement. Then even the presence of a fascist would be an intimidation to the union and the struggle of the workers. But the threat of the NF is not like that at this stage.

Of course, we should allow for specific situations. What if black workers were forced to work with a fascist in an area where the NF had been attacking blacks and whipping up racial hatred? Even if a fascist is not politically active, there should be

the right not to have to work with him or her. In certain specific cases that might have to mean booting the fascist out. But we should be careful, as this can give a lot of ammunition to the right wing. Even more, there is a problem when left-wing activists who make such demands are in the minority. It could mean you get booted out.

It also lets the trade union bureaucracy off the hook. We want them to take part in organising a political campaign against racism and fascism. That would take up also such questions as their complicity with the racism of the Government. By simply allowing them to get rid of a few fascists, they can sidestep problems of racism and fascism in their union.

J ADAMS, S BELL, (Cardiff)

## Socialist Challenge EVENTS

### NORTH WEST

WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-235 2352.

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

PRESTON Socialist Challenge supporters can be contacted by ringing Preston 54616.

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

SOUTH MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge group meets every other Thursday at the Albert Inn off Wilmslow Rd. Help sell Socialist Challenge between 11.30am and 1pm at Moss Side shopping centre or Longsight Market, Dickenson Rd. Further information from 061-236 2352.

### YORKSHIRE

Huddersfield Socialist Challenge group meets next on 20 April and fortnightly thereafter. 7.30pm. Friendly and Trades Club, Northumberland Street (opp station).

### NORTH EAST

DURHAM Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly at Big Jug Pub, Graypath, Durham City. Details from J. Fox, 41 The Avenue.

DARLINGTON Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside northern book on High Row, 11am-1pm.

MIDDLESBOROUGH Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Boots at Cleveland Centre, 11am-1pm. Socialist Challenge is

also available from Harrison's newsagents in Linthorpe Street.

### WALES

SWANSEA Socialist Challenge group meets every other Wednesday at 7.30pm in St Helens Inn, Victoria Street. All supporters welcome. Next meeting 25 April, and fortnightly thereafter.

### SOUTH WEST

SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday from 10am-1pm outside Uoove Bar Post Office, Bargate.

### SOUTH EAST

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper every Saturday outside Osters from 10.45am-1pm. Further information of local activities from Mike, 11 Angelsea Rd, Wivenhoe.

BRIGHTON Socialist Challenge Forum: The Labour Party Spring-Field Pub, near London Road BR station. 8pm - Tuesday 25 April.

BRIGHTON Socialist Challenge sales regularly on Saturdays at the Open Market, London Road. 10am-11am-1pm.

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. Details from Steve, 1 Abigail Street.

### SCOTLAND

For information about the paper or its supporters' activities throughout Scotland contact Socialist Challenge Books, 64 Queen St., Glasgow. Open Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoons. Phone for alternative arrangements (221-7481). Wide range of Fourth International publications.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly. Phone George at 031-246 0486 for details.

GLASGOW Socialist Challenge May Day disco, Saturday 29 April. Bar from 10pm-1am. Disco 11.2am. Food on sale. Saint and Sinners, Vincent St., Glasgow. Tickets 90p, donations 30p. Available from Socialist Challenge Books, 64 Queen St. Phone 221-7481.

DUNDEE Information about Socialist Challenge activities from 54 Queen St., Glasgow. Join in SC sales outside Boots (corner of Reform Street) each Saturday, 11am-2pm.

### MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters contact the Socialist Challenge Centre, 78b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham. (021-643 9209).

LEICESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet fortnightly at the Highfields Community Centre. For details ring 0533 25854.

BIRMINGHAM Socialist Challenge Forum, 20 April - 7.30pm. Racism and the Strike. Julian Atkinson and Anita Bhaia, Australian Bar, Hurst Street, Birmingham.

### LONDON

HACKNEY Socialist Challenge group meets next on 18 April at Britania Pub, Mare Street, next to Town Hall. Meetings are fortnightly at 7.30pm. HAMMERSMITH Socialist Challenge groups fortnightly — details from PO Box 50, London N12PX.



## 'Daughter of Earth' by Agnes Smedley

# Love is an enemy of women

AGNES SMEDLEY's autobiographical novel *Daughter of Earth* is set in America between the early 1890s and the twenties. This era saw the disappearance of frontier life. It saw the subsistence-level self-sufficiency of the settlers turning into the dehumanised labour of the industrial working class. And huge numbers of women entered the labour market as typists and clerks.

Suffrage for women was established, and the first birth control clinics set up. Agnes Smedley was one of the many proletarian women of the time in revolt against the conditions of her existence.

Her commitment to socialism and internationalism was angry and passionate. Her political involvement (she was active in the Indian nationalist movement, and spent many years in China fighting with the revolutionary army) sprang from the feelings and ideas of her childhood experiences.

### CHARACTER

Marie Rogers, the central character of the book, was born in a two room farm house in northern Missouri. She describes her father, dreaming of making his fortune as he stumbled barefoot behind the plough over stony fields, and her mother, already exhausted by work and childbirth.

This is the 'old' west, complete with calico dresses, corn cob pipes, log cabins, tiny small-holdings separated by vast stretches of prairie. The isolation and monotonous toil of the rural settlers' lives is broken only at harvest time, when the farming families for miles around joined in the communal labour and celebrated with feasting and music.

Marie's family leave the farm, disillusioned by the back breaking work that yields nothing but bare survival. In the mining towns of Colorado and New Mexico, Marie's father does haulage work for the Company owned by the Rockefellers.

This is the era of the great syndicalist strikes, and Marie describes the occupation by the

by SUSAN WATKINS

state militia of towns where the mines, the bars, the school, the church, the houses are Company-owned. Company goods were paid for with Company money at the Company store; to be black-listed meant starvation.

Miners' wives fought the troops to open the air vents to the mines after one underground explosion. Closing the vents meant suffocating the miners, but saving the coal.

Marie's family is supported by her aunt Helen, a prostitute. Helen's value as a wage earner appears to put her on an equal footing with men. Her active independent life is a strong contrast to that of married women, reliant for their survival on the whim of their husbands.

Marie fiercely rejects the position of women in marriage. In her determination to be financially independent she leaves home at sixteen for 'a life of semi-vagabondage that was to last for years'.

She lies her way into college courses and teaching jobs. In New York she gets work typing for a newspaper, and then works as a journalist.

In rejecting the traditional dependent role of women, Marie is also forced to reject all emotional involvement: 'weeping, nagging wives and husbands who cursed them. Women begging for clothes, shamelessly. I would never marry...I would never be so weak as to love!'

The price of her independence is isolation and bitterness. She can afford to respond neither to the claims of her family nor to the solidarity



The early 1900s in the United States saw women's integration into the dehumanising processes of industrial society. Many women became clerks and typists — or, like the two above, signed on with the telephone company.

of other women.

Her struggle to liberate herself from her experience as a woman is one of pain and confusion. Marie has no basis from which to understand the double standards that are applied to her, the threat of being owned, the reification of women.

She reacts with blind, incomprehending anger to the

injustice in her relations with men. Comradeship too proves a murky, contradictory affair. Her relationship with Anand Manvekar, with whom she works in the Indian nationalist movement in New York, is destroyed when Marie's sex life is used by other men in the movement as a tool to discredit Anand politically.

Her sexual relationships are

all disastrous in one way or another. The objective position of women does not allow her to realise her own sexual needs and her aim of independence: 'Love is an enemy of woman!'

### CRISIS

The book ends at a crisis in Marie's life, with her final inability to resolve the

contradictions in her relationship with Anand and her decision to leave America. For Agnes Smedley herself, the book was 'a desperate attempt to reorient my life'. It was to prove successful, and she later found direction in her work for the Chinese revolution. But *Daughter of Earth* remains a cry of pain and confusion, and of revolt.

## 'The Awakening' by Kate Chopin

# Sad and mad and bad

THE AWAKENING, appropriately enough, takes place in the languorously sensual climate of the American Deep South. Vivid descriptions of the blossom-scented air, cigar smoke, the murmur of the sea, sitting on verandahs fanning away the heat, create a real sense of physical immediacy. It seems to be the ideal setting for a romantic interlude, writes SUE ASPINALL.

But the remarkable thing about this novel is that it is not simply a story about a woman defying all conventions for the sake of 'true love'. It is about something much more radical, and much more difficult to define: a woman's struggle for her own identity and autonomy.

The protagonist, Edna Pontellier, gradually comes to recognise that her feelings are not what society expects them to be. The catalyst for this recognition is her sexual love for a young man she meets while on holiday with her husband and children. Although it doesn't come as a bolt from the blue because 'At a very early period she had apprehended instinctively the dual life — that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions'.

Edna's reaction to her growing awareness is to start

doing as she likes and feeling as she likes, which means abandoning the various roles she is expected to play as hostess, wife and mother, and spending more time alone, wandering the streets, and painting.

Her husband is, naturally, shocked — 'he could see plainly that she was not herself. That is, he could see that she was becoming herself...' Edna's process of self-discovery also involved a re-assessment of her relationship to her children.

### PASSIONATELY

The novelist Kate Chopin, describes this in what was for the time unprecedented terms of honesty: Edna was fond of her children 'in an uneven, impulsive way. She would sometimes gather them passionately to her heart; she would sometimes forget them

...Their absence was a sort of relief, though she did not admit this, even to herself'.

It was Kate Chopin's challenge to the ideology of motherhood which most enraged the critics of the time. In the USA of the 1890s, when the novel was first published, women's economic independence was beginning to be grudgingly accepted because the Civil War had decimated so many of the 'breadwinners' that many more women from the middle classes were forced to earn a living.

### REALISTIC

But, particularly in the South, motherhood was still sacrosanct, and to hear children described as 'antagonists...who sought to drag her into the soul's slavery' was certainly going too far. The novel was publicly condemned, described as 'sad and mad and bad', and Kate Chopin was shunned by former friends and acquaintances. She never wrote another novel.

The excellent introduction by Helen Taylor informs us that, before the publication of *The Awakening*, Kate Chopin was regarded as a respectable,

devoted wife and mother, despite certain unconventional habits such as crossing her legs at the knee and smoking cigarettes.

### CONTRADICTIONS

It is clear from the ending of the novel that no woman in Kate Chopin's position could have coped with the enormous contradictions of living out her beliefs in practice. In the novel, Edna is eventually isolated. Even her lover is unable to understand the changes that have taken place in her consciousness, because they are so profound.

Edna wants simply 'to give herself where she chooses' — she realises that, despite her love for this man, 'the day would come when he, too, and the thought of him would melt out of her existence, leaving her alone'. She rejects marriage, even to a man she loves, as a means of fulfilment. Her autonomy is more precious.

It seems amazing that these startlingly modern ideas should have been described as long ago as 1899. Unfortunately, for Kate Chopin's Edna, the only solution was suicide. Nearly 80 years later, the same problems exist for women, but at least by

relying on the support of other women and a women's movement, we have more chance of surviving our

attempts to change our lives. *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin is published by The Women's Press, 1976.

## BOOKMARX CLUB

THE BOOKMARX CLUB supplies paperback books for socialists and trade unionists for as little as £4.50. We send up to six books a quarter whose retail value can be no more than £7. Now well-established with an excess of 800 members, Bookmarx is an opportunity which no one should be fool enough to miss. These are the books for the second quarter of 1978 (retail prices in brackets). You get List A plus one other (please state preference) for £4.50. We will send additional lists for £2.50 each.

**LIST A**

**TRADE UNIONS UNDER CAPITALISM** Tom Clavin & Laurie Chantreas (£1.95)

A collection of some of the best Marxist writings on the industrial system and the role of the workers in the war against 'class' Marx & Engels as well as contemporary writers.

**KILL ME QUICK** Meja Mwanuzi (£0.95)

The author, Ananias Mwanuzi, is a member of the African Communist Party in Tanzania.

**THE AWAKENING** Kate Chopin (£1.00)

A beautiful and a historical book which is a masterpiece of the art of the novel. It is a masterpiece of the art of the novel. It is a masterpiece of the art of the novel.

**LIST B**

**LENIN VOL 3 - REVOLUTION BEHEGIDED** Trotsky (£1.95)

The best collection of Lenin's writings on the Russian Revolution. It is a masterpiece of the art of the novel. It is a masterpiece of the art of the novel.

**LIST C**

**IN THE RAPIDS OF REVOLUTION** John Mackay (£2.95)

A new edition of the writings of the great socialist leader Mackay, all new and all brilliant. It is a masterpiece of the art of the novel.

**LIST D**

**POLITICS OF THE JUDICIARY** J.A. G. Griffiths (£1.25)

A detailed account of the role of the judge and the legal system, this new book is essential reading for all who are interested in the law.

**A LIGHT SHINING IN RUCKINGHAMSHIRE** Caryl Chesson (£1.00)

A powerful and a historical book which is a masterpiece of the art of the novel. It is a masterpiece of the art of the novel.

**OUTCASTS OF FOOLGARAH** Frank Harris (£0.95)

The historical novel by the famous Australian author Frank Harris. It is a masterpiece of the art of the novel.

**LIST E**

**WOMEN'S BODIES, WOMEN'S RIGHTS** Linda Gordon (£1.50)

A new edition of the first book to explore the role of women in the USA.

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# Socialist Challenge

## Workers' plan needed

# SPEKE! NOT ONE JOB MUST GO

WORKERS at the Triumph No 2 plant in Speke were given a little booklet outlining the company's redundancy proposals last Thursday evening, reports MARK TURNBULL.

When the closure was first announced, payments of up to £10,000 had been mentioned. 'The big golden handshake', the press had screamed. But now it has been revealed that it is more a case of two brass fingers.

The offer is:

\*One week's pay for every year's service — as Leyland are obliged to pay by law;

\*An additional week's payment for every year;

\*A maximum of 12 weeks' pay in lieu of notice.

What this amounts to is that instead of the rumours of thousands of pounds, it has turned out that most workers will only receive around £600, and many a good deal less.

After the 17-week lay off at Speke ended in February, most workers were quite happy to sell their jobs. But now the mood has drastically changed.

'Everybody is disgusted and blazing' says Peter Wilson who has worked at Speke for eight years.

'All the workers are together now,' he adds. 'I am not a militant but we are all so disgusted we will not let them get away with it. There is talk of an occupation.'

At a mass meeting held on Saturday, the Speke workers backed up these words when all but four voted to reject the company offer. Sensing the

anger, combine shop stewards chairperson Derek Robinson declared:

'Not a bolt will be allowed to leave the TR7 plant.'

But Robinson went on to say: 'We are for an improvement of productivity in British Leyland so we can compete in commercial terms on the international market.'

Yet the previous week Leyland workers had decisively rejected the latest productivity deal for Leyland. How much Robinson's talk of 'nuts and bolts' is merely a negotiating ploy remains to be seen.

Certainly, rumours circulating at the weekend suggested that Leyland was preparing to increase its offer even before the original one was laid on the table; that the initial offer was made so that Leyland could appear 'generous' when the money was increased.

The only answer to these sort of tactics is for the Leyland workers to show that their jobs are, quite simply, not for sale.

The most immediate expression of such resistance would be an occupation of the factory, and the building of mass support throughout Liverpool and throughout Leyland for the one-day strike agreed at the Liverpool Trades Council conference earlier this month.

But even if these steps are taken it is unlikely that Leyland boss Michael Edwardes will retreat. Instead of shifting the TR7 production to Coventry, he could simply shut down production of the model completely.

From a strictly commercial point of view, Edwardes would feel every justification to make such a move. The TR7 has proved something of a flop. Yet the reasons for that failure are widely acknowledged to be failures of management design, and marketing.

Leyland is trying to make the Speke workers pay for mistakes which they have no responsibility for; just as the overall strategy of the Edwardes's plan is to sacrifice over 10,000 jobs in the interests of solving Leyland's profit problems.

By itself, an occupation and even a one-day Liverpool general strike will not counter management's strategy. What would?

First a demand for a cut in the working week throughout Leyland without loss of pay — to maintain the jobs if the TR7 is scrubbed.

Second the opening of Leyland's books, and a full workers' inquiry into how Leyland is run and who is responsible for the problems the workers face.

Third a decisive rejection of the entire Edwardes's plan previously agreed by the official union leadership in Leyland. It is a workers' crisis and it needs a workers' plan.



SOCIALIST UNITY supporters were among the 1,500 who picketed the National Front meeting in Brixton on Saturday. Over the past week the election campaign has dramatically hit the streets in Brixton. See pages 2 and 3 for a full report

Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

## W H Smith reply

WE ARE still unable to announce whether WH Smith will be distributing the paper in its outlets.

However, we have had a communication from them, and we reprint the letter below with a suitable addendum. We continue to urge readers who want to buy their copy of the

paper through the local WH Smith outlet to let it be made known by making a specific request to the shop.

We thank those readers who have responded to our special pleas to make an extra effort in getting in their donations to the fund drive, in light of the fire-bombing on our premises.

Unfortunately our accountants have not totted up this week's efforts, so rush in your donations so that next week the total will be well over the weekly target and yet another brick is removed to reveal the vital message concealed underneath the wall!

YOUR issue of 30 March contained, as an insert, a letter to readers from your Editorial Board alleging that 'within the newspaper distribution sector Smith are in a virtually

monopoly position.' This statement is untrue.

There are about 33,000 newsagents in this country, of which about 375 are WH Smith shops or bookstalls. Throughout Britain there are about 430 wholesale distribution depots of which WH Smith have about 96.

The letter also stated that if we decided to discontinue our trial selling of Socialist Challenge, 'hundreds of people' would no longer be able to buy the paper from us. You

must know that our highest sales figure for any issue of Socialist Challenge was 123 copies, and our sales have averaged 95 copies per issue.

I ask you to publish this letter so that readers of your Editorial board's statement may know the facts.

SIMON HORNBY, [Retail Managing Director, WH Smith]

IN THE interests of completing the picture, we quote from last

year's report of the Royal Commission on the Press:

'WH Smith, John Menzies and Surridge Dawson dominate wholesale distribution. They distribute between them nearly 70 per cent of national daily newspapers and periodicals...'

'Some aspects of the relationships of the publishers, wholesalers and retailers are now under review by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission following a reference to them by the Office of Fair Trading.'

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