

- Prescription charges up to £1.
- Striker assumed to receive £12 a week when their families claim supplementary benefit.
- £11 billion cuts by 1983.
- 50,000 jobs cut in Civil Service.
- 5% real cut in Social Security benefits.
- Child Benefits up only 75p to £4.75 a week. £1.20 rise would be needed to keep pace with inflation.
- Earnings Related Supplement on Unemployment Benefit to be abolished from 1982.
- Beer up 2p a pint.
- Cigarettes up 5p for 20.
- Petrol up 10p a gallon.
- 25% income tax grade abolished.
- 3% real growth per annum on the ARMED FORCES.
- 2½% real growth per annum on POLICE and PRISONS.
- Wide-ranging tax handouts for businesses and investors.

# Expensive medicine: Sack the Quack

GRABBING pennies out of sick people's pockets to put pounds in profiteers' pockets: that's the Tories' policy. Since taking office, this Government has increased prescription charges from 20p to 45p, then to 70p, now (from December) to £1.

That is the most callous blow in a budget designed to squeeze the living standards of the working class and the worse-off for the sake of boosting profits. The Tory economic quacks describe it as a "shift to enterprise".

by JO THWAITES

Put up with "three years of unparalleled austerity" (the words of Tory Minister John Biffen, a few weeks ago), and hope that somehow, some time, higher profits will bring more employment and better living standards: that's what they say.

They promise to cut drastically the welfare state and let free enterprise capitalism do its best. Like the 1930s? Like the 19th century?

With the whole capitalist system of production for profit in deep crisis, the three years of unparalleled austerity are for sure, and any recovery is doubtful and distant. In any case, the Tories want to hamstring the unions and penalise strikers so that even if British capitalism does turn upwards, workers will not be able to take the chance to win improvements.

The Tory policy is not even working according to their own promises. Inflation is still rising. They have not delivered the tax cuts they promised. As



British capitalism slumps, they need just as high or even higher tax rates even when they are cutting public services.

## 'U-turn'

Some big business circles and even some Tory MPs are calling for a Tory 'U-turn'. The 'wets' only want different tactics for

the same aim of squeezing the working class. But the Tories' divisions underline the fact that this Government can be beaten.

The steelworkers have shaken them. The BL workers and the steelworkers together, with labour movement solidarity, could shatter their policies and drive them to the point when the Government cannot govern.

Parliamentary protests

and 'strong words' from the TUC will not halt the Tory attacks. The labour movement needs to stop talking to the Tories and start fighting them.

## Fight

The movement should break all collaboration with the Tories, mobilise its full weight behind the steelworkers and the BL workers, and organise for a general strike. And socialists must strive to renovate and reorient the movement, to gear it for a fight against the Tories, to win support for socialist policies, and to win the accountability and democracy in the movement which can get those policies put into practice.

## FUND

So far this month we have had:

Islington .....	£5
Sheffield .....	£5
Bury .....	£34.50
Total so far.....	£44.50

With rising costs, our £200 monthly target is more necessary than ever. Send contributions to: Fund, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

## BL, steel: unite to stop the Tories

APRIL 9th is the D-Day for the Tories' and the BL bosses' invasion of the working conditions and organisation of BL workers.

Any BL worker who reports for work on that day will be reckoned to have accepted the bosses' ultimatum of a 5% pay rise and 92 pages of strings. Total job mobility and flexibility will be enforced, and shop stewards will be cut out of negotiation over standards for various jobs.

As a T&G steward at Jaguar Browns Lane, Coventry, told WA, "On April 9th you would go into work having lost your trade as well as your conditions, and with a lousy wage increase".

So the Leyland Cars Joint Negotiating Committee has called for an all-out strike from April 9th.

The strike call came after a growing wave of rank and file revolt.

AUEW-TASS representatives have said their members on the computers may black payroll alterations for the 5% rise. A majority at Jaguar Browns Lane has voted to strike. Since it was a narrow majority (and a minority on the night shift), the Jaguar stewards have postponed action. "The real argument is about timing — whether we should strike on Monday [31st] or April 9, when the company imposes the deal", said convenor David Holloway

The steel strike shows that workers can fight back against a Tory onslaught on jobs and living standards. If the BL workers come out while the steel strike is still continuing, and ally with the steelworkers, they can strengthen the common cause against a common enemy: the Tories' policy of specially squeezing workers in the public sector and nationalised industries to help boost British capitalism's profitability.

- There must be flying pickets to the depots where BL stocks are held, and to make sure all BL plants are out 100%.

- Shop stewards should work out a code of practice for defence of existing rights and conditions against the 92-page document, and fight for that code of practice to be respected.

- The strike should go for the full claim — £24 increase, inflation-proofing for wages, and a 35 hour week by 1982 — and the safeguarding of existing rights and conditions.

- BL workers should reply to threats by Edwardes to close down the car plants by occupying the factories and fighting for the reorganisation of production under workers' control, with work-sharing without loss of pay.

- Link up with the steelworkers. Make it a joint struggle against the same enemy.



Michael Edwardes

## IRAN: TURNING AN ELECTION INTO A PLEBISCITE FOR KHOMEINI

JUDGING by the first round results announced so far in Iran's parliamentary election, it doesn't seem that President Bani Sadr will get a parliament that agrees with him.

Despite its failure to win in the presidential election last February, the Islamic Republican Party led by Ayatollah Beheshti looks like doing well this time. The party is seen as the party of Ayatollah Khomeini and it received a big boost when, shortly before the first round on 14th March, the Imam in a televised statement urged Muslims to turn away from the parties of the left and the right.

That will be a problem in some cases as a number of these parties have already been banned from participating in the election. The Muslim People's Republican Party of Ayatollah Shariat Madari, the National Democratic Front led by Matine-Daftari, the Radical Party and the Kurdistan Democratic Party are all banned.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party has got round the ban by standing candidates without a party label. Thus, Ghani Belourian, a leader of the pro-Moscow wing of the KDP, stood in Mahabad where he won by a landslide. Elsewhere in Kurdistan the government has declared results null and void, using as an excuse the fact that there were armed men in the town.

Given the present censorship measures and repeated attacks by Muslim fanatics, the Fedayeen Khalq are virtually a banned party. The left Muslim Mujahedeen Khalq leader Massoud Rajavi, who was excluded from the presid-

ential election where he threatened to win the votes not only of the left but of millions of Sunni Moslems, is being backed by a number of left parties including the Fedayeen and Iran's pro-Moscow 'communist' party, the Tudeh Party. But Rajavi's supporters have come under attack from Muslim fanatics and, according to *Le Monde*, there is an anonymous poster campaign against



Bani Sadr and Khomeini

Rajavi absurdly claiming that this devout Muslim who spent years inside the Shah's jails is an atheist and a 'SAVAK agent'.

Several factors have conspired to obscure the lines of political demarcation in Iran. No truly democratic Constituent Assembly has been set up and the conditions do not exist for open debate — press freedom, freedom too from arbitrary arrest, from attacks and

from denunciation. There is the persistence of civil war or nearly civil war conditions in the areas dominated by non-Persian peoples, above all in Kurdistan. And there is the domination of the broadcasting media among a population where 65% of the population is illiterate.

Above all, the leadership by the clergy of the movement that overthrew the Shah has meant that Islam has become the banner brandished by millions to express their hatred of imperialism, of oppression and poverty.

This lack of demarcation is most striking when candidates like Hojatoleslam Ghaffouri are supported by five different parties, some of the right and others of the reformist left.

The procedure for the ballot added technical confusion to the political confusion. In a country where over half the population is illiterate, the idea of having to write out the names of those you support

was bound to lead to chaos at both the ballot and the count.

At present Bani Sadr is being inundated with allegations of various kinds of election malpractice and has set up a commission of inquiry to investigate them. But while he has set back the date for the second round of the election, he has dismissed demands to annul the first round completely.

ANDREW HORNUNG

## ZIMBABWE

# The working class steps forward

A SERIES of apparently spontaneous strikes has broken out among African workers in Zimbabwe. They have been both widespread and shortlived, involving up to 10,000 workers at any one time staying out for just a day or two.

The striking workers are not organised in any union and their action probably expresses their accumulated anger at years of poverty, racial discrimination and appalling conditions at work. The average wage in the manufacturing sector is about \$60 a month. Africans are banned from skilled jobs, are not allowed to strike, and can be indiscriminately dismissed or fined under the Masters and Servants Act.

Lack of organisation and threats of lock-out by their white bosses (threatening to replace the strikers' labour from the massive pool of unemployed, or to withdraw altogether from Zimbabwe) have meant that the strike will not immediately succeed in changing conditions.

Further, the role of ZANU, not yet in office, has been conciliatory, urging the strikers to return to work until such time as the new administration can look into their wages and conditions.

The language of the incoming minister of labour, Kumbirai Kyngai, is thoroughly Fabian. 'Any precipitous action at this stage can

only serve to damage the goodwill which has been built up between government, the employers and the employees and will have a crippling effect on the economy'.

For the present the workers, fresh from voting Mugabe into power, appear to be heeding these leaders. Kyngai, a radical within ZANU (PF), is promising to introduce a minimum wage which will have its main effect among agricultural labourers whose average \$20 a month, and domestic workers who average \$35 a month.

He is also reportedly promising to introduce workers' councils, which will combine bargaining rights with responsibility for discipline. Whether they become genuine labour organisations or mechanisms of state control over the workers remains a question of struggle.

For the present the workers are making it plain to the new government that they expect concrete results from national liberation. One of the legacies of the national movement has been that the independent struggle of the African working class has been subsumed to the nationalist demands of the petit bourgeoisie.

In 1948 a general strike hit every mining and manufacturing area in the country. As late as 1965 there were mass strikes. Since UDI,

however, the independence of the working class has been undercut. Its militants were drawn into the guerilla struggle and away from the immediate place of production. Its union organisation either disappeared or fell into the hands of reactionary stooges set up by the AFL-CIO or the ICFTU (in which murky business the TUC International Committee was involved up to its neck). Its ability to take industrial action was badly curtailed and wages were much reduced.

A ZANU statement describes the revolution as a process with two distinct phases: 'In the national-democratic phase, all elements of the oppressed and coloured people have to be mobilised to fight against the common enemy. The second stage of the socialist revolution will be undertaken by a movement with a proletarian ideology after political independence has been won'.

'But the success of this process in the second stage depends on the emergence of a working class movement with a proletarian ideology in the first phase'.

These strikes indicate that the growth of the working class movement must be the immediate goal of Zimbabwean revolutionaries — whatever the ZANU leadership does.

BOB FINE

## FIGHT THE CUTS

## FIGHT THE CUTS

## FIGHT THE CUTS

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## TOWN HALL BOSSES ON THE RUN

IN THE TOWN Hall workers' pay dispute, the employers are already split, while NALGO's action is being stepped up.

The dispute is over the implementation of last year's pay deal: the employers have refused to honour the 'comparability study' which went along with the measly 9.4% pay increase in July 1979.

The town hall bosses reaffirmed their position at a meeting on Monday March 17th, and they issued guidelines to local employers outlining a policy for sending home officers who refused, as a result of the national NALGO instruction to perform all, or most of their normal duties. (This national instruction covered the blacking of the sending out of rate demands and the blacking of work with outside

contractors). However, a special meeting of Tuesday 19th March of NALGO's local government delegates overwhelmingly supported the industrial action and pledged full financial support to any members who were victimised.

Since then, three councils, in Cleethorpes, Nuneaton and Bassetlaw have made interim local settlements, while the London Boroughs of Haringey and Greenwich have both declared that they support NALGO's stand.

There are obvious dangers in these local pronouncements. Firstly, local settlements could diffuse the national action over this deal, leaving weak branches out in the cold; and secondly, none of the local agreements are for the full

comparability settlement which NALGO is claiming and which the employers haven't even tried to dispute in terms of the figures.

However, the encouraging sign is that the employers are split at this early stage, while the industrial action being taken by NALGO is solid. All the signs are that this will be a short dispute, in which the union will be victorious — unless the NALGO negotiators snatch defeat from the jaws of victory, and accept a compromise solution, which will certainly be offered and could serve to set the membership of NALGO at each others' throats instead of concentrating their minds on ensuring that this year's pay settlement is better than last year's.

ALAN CHERRETT

## Cuts mean crisis for NUT

THE NUT Conference at Easter at Blackpool will not be the comfortable seaside jamboree of previous years. The union faces a real crisis of survival in a period of massive education cuts, widespread teacher redundancies and a salary policy in shambles.

Union membership figures stagnate as a result of massive cutbacks in teacher training and jobs, as well as competition with other teaching unions.

Union finance, already wracked by inflation, come under increasing pressure as the need to sustain members taking strike action increases rapidly. The Executive can no longer avoid the prospect of levying members and sustaining striking members on less than full pay, as other white collar unions have had to do.

The main grievance which the Executive has to face is on salaries. Members are fed up with the total confusion of piecemeal interim payments and repayments, and the unending leaks about the Clegg commission report.

Teachers' salaries are falling further and further behind, eroded by 20% inflation. Only a demand for a £5000 starting salary for April 1980, with flat rate increases to match the rate of inflation will form the basis for a united battle on salaries for the coming year.

Meanwhile, the Executive

is still pinning its hopes on the final Clegg report... whenever it may appear.

The other major debate at the conference will be over Educational Standards. Last year's conference set the date of September 1980 for implementation of the Union's class size policy of 30 in primary and secondary schools and 27 in infant reception classes.

This year's document calls for action on class size, supply teacher provision and more vaguely on marking and prep time and on defending the curriculum and staffing during falling rolls. It is skirting round the problem of seriously fighting the Tory cuts — cuts which affect not only school meals, books and equipment, but many teachers' jobs.

The rate support grant cutback and the cash limits imposed by the Tories will mean that employers will insist that any pay rise is paid for by further cuts and loss of jobs. The union leaders have given the go-ahead for one day protest strikes but there is not national strategy to roll back the cuts, or to link up with other public sector workers.

The real test for the union will be in areas like Avon and Trafford where intransigent employers are well dug in and refuse to negotiate even after strike action has been stepped up. If the NUT leadership backs down, the way is open for every LEA to push through cuts and redundancies.

Finally, the National Executive has opposed taking any decision about the TUC Day of Action, and this will be discussed at the conference. It is vital that the call for all-out strike action on May 14th is raised loud and clear and the union is won to that position.

CHEUNG SIU MING

## Liverpool cuts conference: a stage-managed flop

THE conference called by the Merseyside Anti-Cuts Committee in Liverpool last Saturday was a disappointment — both in the numbers that turned up (less than 200 despite being billed as a national conference) and in the fact that it was a carefully stage managed affair by the Militant, the main force behind it.

The conference totally lacked any aim, being dominated by set piece speeches from the floor from Militant supporters and from Colin Barnett, secretary of the North West Regional TUC, Eric Heffer, and Joan Maynard.

The highspots of Heffer's speech were an admission that to date the NEC had done nothing on the cuts issue and weren't likely to do much more in the future, and a harangue against a woman whose small child had been doing a highly effective job of disrupting his flow of hot air.

The resolution presented to the conference, called for complete opposition to all cuts, the restoration and expansion of local authority services, and opposition to rate rises. It said nothing, however, about rent rises, interest charges on council loans or support for workers taking action against

the cuts. Neither did it make a call for Labour councils to refuse to implement cuts and fight the Tories, or Labour parties to replace councillors who make cuts.

And despite the fact that many delegates were only presented with the resolution at the conference itself, the organisers refused to take any amendments or alternative resolutions. The reason given for this was that the conference wasn't as large as had been hoped and therefore couldn't possibly discuss such matters. Needless to say, this line of thought didn't stop the

organisers from putting forward their own resolution!

One of the stated aims of the conference was to form a National Anti-Cuts Committee to co-ordinate the activities of the various local committees. Certainly something along these lines will be needed if the fight against the cuts is to be made as effective as possible. However, on the evidence of Saturday, it's doubtful if we're any nearer to achieving this. Evidently many of the delegates thought so as well. By the end of the conference more than half the delegates had already left.

PETE KEENLYSIDE

Nearly 500 women from trade unions, women's groups, Labour Parties and campaigns came together last Saturday to start building a fightback against the Tory attacks on women's rights.

The Fightback for Women's Rights conference was initially called by **Socialist Organiser**, but soon attracted support from many more groups and campaigns and labour movement organisations, ranging from Snooker for Women to Women's Aid, NAC, NUS and Gingerbread. **GERRY BYRNE** reports:

NOT 'should we be organising in the labour movement?' but 'how should we do it?' was the question that dominated the Fightback conference which packed into the Conway Hall last Saturday.

It was clear from the number of delegations, and from contributions in the workshops, that most of the women who had come were already activists in their unions, Labour parties and trades councils, as well as in women's groups and campaigns.

Mary Corbishley opened the conference for *Socialist Organiser*, explaining why it had called the conference: the present attacks on women's rights necessitate a fight to change the labour movement. Our rights are under attack on every front, and women's struggles, from Grunwicks to Chix to the steel strike, show that women are prepared to fight and often have a few lessons in solidarity and determination to teach male trade unionists. But too often women are made to feel outsiders in the movement.

The labour movement must be made habitable for women just as must be made democratic and accountable to all its members, if it is to meet the Tory challenge. We need an assault on its structures and hierarchies, to make it responsive to our needs and demands.

Jo Richardson, who led the opposition to the Corrie Bill in parliament, developed these ideas in more detail, especially on how far women still have to go before we can take our full place as equal and active members of the labour movement.

She concluded that the lesson from the anti-Corrie fight was that women could organise for the labour movement to take up their rights — and organise successfully.

## Picket

By far the largest workshop, attracting about 150, was on women and the labour movement. It was an opportunity to discuss practical ways of organising and drawing in women to active participation, and to examine the obstacles in the way of that. Sisters related their experiences of sexist treatment and how it created a barrier to the issues they raised being taken seriously. 'How can we get across our ideas when the reaction you get when you go down to a picket line', for example, is 'What's a sexy bird like you doing here?'

We heard from *Women in the NUT* that as soon as they started organising effectively the NUT officialdom told them, to drop 'NUT' from their name, and tried to stifle them.

There was no shortage of examples of patronising remarks, abuse, and the difficulties created by the fact that no provision is made for mothers of young children to participate.

What was refreshing, though, was that the discussion didn't degenerate into moans but always return-

ed to concrete questions of how to organise. Should we go for all-women caucuses so women can gain confidence to take up sexism and raise the issues they want discussed in their union branch — using such tactics as arriving at meetings all together, with a plan of action worked out beforehand? Or should we opt for more women's sections and sub-committees to be campaigning bodies, which could include men to help out in taking the issues out into the communities and workplaces?

Many felt there was a place for both kinds of organisation. Contrasting experiences were related by women from trades council sub-committees in Coventry and Sheffield.

Some, especially older Labour Party women, opposed the whole idea of women's sections on the grounds that they were a way of hiving women off into 'tea and buns sessions'. This was answered by Fran Brodie, who had written a conference paper on the history of Labour Party women's sections: 'If they are all 'tea & buns' we don't let them stay that way. We organise to change them'. She pointed to the experience of the Labour Women's League which had at one time organised 300,000 women (not all of them Labour Party members) and called for a mass campaign of women against the Tories. 'It's been done in the past, we can do it again'.

There was general support for this, and for making a start by organising women for the TUC Day of Action on May 14th.

This call was echoed in the maternity rights workshop, which called for a mobilising committee for women for May 14th. One of the less-known threats in the Tories' Employment Bill was explained by Von McClary and Irene Breughel. The Bill attacks a woman's right to get her job back after having a baby; it lays down that an



# Women's Fightback says: ORGANISE FOR MAY 14

employer does not have to give a woman her job back if it is not 'reasonably practicable' and she is offered an alternative and 'unreasonably' refuses.

The workshop felt that these provisions should be highlighted, and that a big women's presence on May 14th would show our opposition to the Bill. At the report-back, Linda Youd from Salford made a strong call for Women's Fightback contingents to be organised for the marches and demonstrations on May 14th.

## Links

The cuts workshop, which attracted women active in nursery campaigns, cuts committees and Women's Aid refuges, focused on ways of getting across the meaning of the cuts to women, and the need to answer the question: where is the money to come from? Kath Caulfield, reporting back, said: 'I am sure, and I think most people agreed, the money's there. It's there for defence.

It's there for the police. Who gets the profits that we make? It's there in the pockets of the bankers and the financiers.

'Why can't we have it for our services. Why can't we decide what it's spent on? Why should we pay the rate rises when at least half our rates go straight to the bankers?'

The abortion workshop discussed the success of the anti-Corrie campaign and the importance of cementing the links made with the labour movement in that campaign. Reporting back, Sara Roeloffs of NAC warned that some of the things in the Corrie Bill were in danger of being brought in 'by the back door'. She told the conference that the Pregnancy Advisory Service, one of the two big charities Corrie had tried to cripple, has been ordered by Whitehall to remove the word 'abortion' from their posters or they will lose their licence which is due for renewal this week. She asked:

NAC also told the conference about plans for a women's festival to be held

in June, and a rally in the Autumn.

The Campaign against Depo Provera, which held a separate workshop, explained the dangers of this contraceptive injection.

The campaign organisers asked for help in compiling evidence on the drug's use and effects, to be used as evidence at a public inquiry they are calling for.

Rather than discuss the whole gamut of laws that discriminate against women, the Legal Rights workshop decided to focus on the immigration laws and how women are assumed always to be dependents of men coming into the country, and never the breadwinners. Discussion centred around a paper on the immigration laws prepared for the conference by Emily Grundy of the Campaign Against Immigration Laws. (Black sisters invited had unfortunately been unable to attend, because of a clash of dates with a conference on the immigration laws.)

It was proposed that Fightback should organise a

**THE FIGHTBACK** conference brought together some 450 women and about 20 men. 270 were delegates or representatives: 35 from trade unions, 9 from trades councils, 45 Labour Parties or branches, 13 Labour Party women's sections, 9 YS branches and three University Labour Clubs sent delegates.

The London Co-Op Political Committee, the National Organisation of Labour Students, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, and the Labour Party's own Women's Advisory Committee sent representatives.

There were active members of many different trade unions at the conference, with especially big contingents from Nalco, NUT, CPSA [9 sent by the union's London Broad Left] and T&G ACTSS; ASTMS and NUJ sent representatives from their women's rights/equality committees.

Thirty-two women's groups, and 8 Women's Voice groups, sent contingents.

145 of the women were active in Labour politics, and 120 said trade union work was their main activity, while about 220 were mainly involved in the women's movement. Many, however, were active both in the women's movement and Labour Party, and even more were both trade union and women's movement activists.

national speaking tour specifically on the racist, sexist nature of the immigration laws.

Lunchtime workshops were held on Labour Party women's sections and on women in the YS, which (despite clashing with a popular play by Counteract in the main hall) attracted such support that some people couldn't get into the crammed meetings.

## Women's sections

These workshops very quickly got down to practicalities: organising Fightback caucuses for the YS Easter Conference and the Labour Women's Conference in May. Frances Morrell of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy linked the fight for women's position and demands in the Party to the CLPD's fight for re-selection of MPs and accountability, and told the workshop about the Campaign's latest demand for positive discrimination (one woman and one manual worker to be included in every parliamentary shortlist). She suggested that Fightback should approach other campaigns in the Labour Party for a joint conference of radical Labour Party women. Carla Jamison and Rachel Lever both spoke on how we could turn local women's sections outwards and link them with the women's movement and the mass of women in the communities, and use them to agitate in the Party for women's rights.

These ideas were well received by the closing plenary and some thirty women (in addition to the original organisers) volunteered to come onto a planning committee to organise a further, policy-making conference, and to start work on the many ideas for action that emerged from Fightback's first conference.

Already, in the first days after the conference, a Fightback group is being set up on an East London estate. There could be no better testimony to the success of last Saturday's conference.



Photos by Susan Glen

## NOT JUST CHEER-LEADERS?

The IMG's approach to the SWP goes hand in hand with a general softening of their politics.

**EXAMPLE:** The IMG have a policy on Nicaragua of more or less unlimited credit for the Sandinistas. Now apparently they are adopting the same attitude to ZANU in Zimbabwe.

At a London IMG rally on Friday 21st, Tariq Ali hailed ZANU's election victory and described Mugabe's acts of conciliation with imperialism and the white settlers as 'temporary concessions'. Heckled from the audience, he launched into a tirade. Who was to say that ZANU's compromises were not necessary? No-one sitting in London, he said, can lay down a policy for Zimbabwe.

But what has happened to Marxism if a government alliance with leading figures of the old order (David Smith of the Rhodesia Front and Denis Norman of the Commercial Farmers' Union) and an invitation to Peter Walls to stay on as army chief are just 'tactical concessions' — as an editorial in Socialist Challenge [March 13th] describes them?

The SC editorial goes on: 'However, it is not sufficient for revolutionary Marxists to act simply as cheer-leaders'. But at the London rally the IMG were acting simply as cheer-leaders — literally. A ZANU speaker got a standing ovation. There was no criticism.

What did IMG members think when they opened their papers the next day and saw reports of ZANU leaders trying to quell the strikes in Zimbabwe?

**EXAMPLE:** At the Labour Coordinating Committee conference last weekend Socialist Challenge supporters were present in some numbers, and put several amendments to the LCC leadership's perspectives.

One amendment, making detailed modifications to a list of LCC priorities, left unchanged the priority: 'to make the institutions of this country genuinely democratic'. Another amendment, completely new, spells out an aim of 'popular sovereignty over all decision making processes' and a list of reforms [Freedom of Information Act, etc] to achieve it.

Do Socialist Challenge supporters now believe that the capitalist state can be dealt with by peacefully extending democracy? Or is it another of those theoretical issues [see above] that just don't seem very important any more?

by

MARTIN THOMAS

THE INTERNATIONAL Marxist Group (IMG) has recently announced that it is seeking unity with the much larger Socialist Workers' Party. It has got a short reply from the SWP: writing in the latest issue of the SWP monthly Socialist Review, Pete Goodwin says unity is "not on". But the IMG apparently intends to continue pressing for unity. What is happening?

The SWP (or its forerunner, IS) and the IMG have competed as rival groups for 20 years now. Up until very recently the IMG has argued that the SWP's politics and organisation are inadequate for revolutionary purposes... and has acted accordingly by trying to recruit and gain influence in competition with the SWP.

This did not mean that the IMG was against revolutionary unity — only that the IMG argued that the SWP did not provide an adequate framework for revolutionary unity.

So what is new? From the IMG's explanation of their attitude (Socialist Challenge, March 13) it seems that nothing is new... except that the IMG has become disheartened about building itself as an independent revolutionary organisation.

## Differences

The Socialist Challenge article says nothing about the often bitter polemics between IMG and SWP over the years. It does mention "key political differences", but these turn out to be "on the united front, the independent women's movement and so on", and the differences on the united front, at least, is described as "tactical". The description would appear to be just, for the most serious example Socialist Challenge can find of the SWP's errors is that in the teachers' union it "fetters school-based actions and unofficial strikes".

For over 20 years, the IMG described the SWP as "centrist" — i.e. revolutionary in its general intentions, but incapable of building a consistent revolutionary organisation which will not dither and buckle in sharp tests of the class struggle. Now the IMG states that it is "opposed to a fusion where one side calls the other 'centrist' rather than 'revolutionary', as with the 1968 fusion between IS and Workers' Fight"... implying presumably that the IMG now considers the SWP to be revolutionary rather than centrist.

For any serious member of the IMG, or anyone thinking of joining the IMG this turn-around raises the question: why bother? The SWP has a bigger organisation and more extensive activity. Why just

# IMG & SWP: Does nothing really matter any more?

vote for the IMG leadership's proposal to seek unity with the SWP? Why not vote with your feet and join the SWP directly?

For serious SWP members, the IMG's approach must seem dishonest.

Lay it on with a trowel, is supposed to have been Disraeli's advice on flattery, but some SWP members will not respond as well as Queen Victoria. Pete Goodwin's argument is straightforward. The IMG places great stress on the united front approach as against "rank-and-fileism" (which the IMG defines as

various efforts at international link-ups — but that does not seem likely to weigh heavily in the scales.

Look at the history.

In the 1950's and early 1960's, the SWP/IS was openly anti-Trotskyist and anti-Leninist. It was notoriously soft in its political attitudes (indeed, it made a virtue of this, calling itself open and undogmatic). It drew out the logic of its "state-capitalist" theory in fatalism and virtual indifference to struggles in the Third World.

All the Trotskyist or would-

now calls for was a real possibility. But the IMG refused unity! Workers' Fight was the only group to take up the unity call.

And the SWP/IS move to the left soon halted. The old leadership remained. The old method of minimal day-to-day demands and general socialist propaganda — excluding transitional demands remained. And the Trotskyists or would-be Trotskyists, including the IMG agreed that the SWP/IS remained centrist.

In 1971 the SWP/IS gave notice that its politics were

The IMG does not even try to argue that the SWP has suddenly changed for the better. Instead it seems that the IMG has just thrown in the towel on all its political battles with the SWP, muttering "it was nothing really... a few tactical differences in the teachers' union... some theoretical arguments on the USSR and transitional demands... we haven't changed our minds but it doesn't really matter."

It's a logical follow-on from the IMG's failed efforts



Paul Foot talks to Tariq Ali

"attempts to unite rank and file workers around the demands of revolutionaries". How then can the IMG unite with the SWP, an organisation (in Goodwin's words) "based on rank-and-fileism", without the united organisation being paralysed or blown apart by continual disputes?

So it seems the unity appeal will result in nothing but the IMG trying to ingratiate itself with the SWP and getting spurned. The one factor that may give the IMG some hope is the SWP's closer relations with the USFI (the international current of which the IMG is part) recently, following the collapse of the SWP's own

be Trotskyist groups, including the IMG, described the SWP as centrist.

Around 1968, the SWP/IS changed significantly responding to a big radicalisation and a big growth in membership. It came out in favour of building a democratic centralist party. It backed the Vietnamese struggle against US imperialism. It rediscovered some of the ideas of Trotskyism, and it made a turn to the working class.

It also put out a call for unity. With the SWP/IS rethinking its ideas, and a big radicalisation going on, it was a time when the united revolutionary organisation the IMG

incompatible with Trotskyism by throwing out the Workers' Fight supporters (an action which the IMG's Tariq Ali recently defended in public). More expulsions followed: the Right Opposition in 1973, the 'Left Opposition' in 1974, the 'IS Opposition' and (on politics similar to Workers' Fight) the Left Faction in 1975.

between 1976 and 1979 to scrape together an all-inclusive united revolutionary organisation out of the non-aligned left and various grouplets. But the fact is that the issues — the great theoretical principles on which Trotskyism has been based for 50 years or more! — do matter.

And so for IMG members who are serious about fighting for Trotskyism, their leaders' latest tack raises the question: how much longer will they put up with their leaders' lack of will to fight for their formal ideas, their recurring impulse to find somewhere to dissolve and bury themselves?

## Tactical

The SWP has sobered up somewhat since 1975, but has given no signs of a major rethink.

# The evolution of Eastern Europe

continued from p. 11

What we have learned on this point from the Ukrainian independence movement is also very significant. As a result of the division of the Ukraine before the Second World War, the Ukrainian nationalist movement in Poland had contributed in bringing independence tendencies into being in the Soviet Ukraine. But on the other hand, the difference in social system between these two sections of the Ukraine had led to the evolution of the Ukrainian nationalists in Poland toward the adoption of the social forms of property of the Soviet Ukraine. This is a phenomenon which should not be forgotten, especially in the case of present-day Germany.

Our policy for the buffer zone countries, given the conclusion we have arrived at on their class nature and also the place they will have in the coming war, does not raise any moot problems. The discussion on the political resolution has clarified the problems posed by the buffer zone countries.

We are for unconditional defence of these workers' states against imperialism in the war now being prepared. It is fundamentally the same problem as that of the defence of the USSR. We defend these states as working class conquests, regardless of the bureaucratic means which were used to bring them into being and regardless of the policy followed by their governments. Our defence of these states in no case, at no time, implies a limitation of our criticism of the policy followed by the governments of these states.

We have designated these states as deformed workers' states specifying that their deformation has been identical to that of the USSR principally in the expropriation of the proletariat from the administration of these states. It follows therefore that, as for the USSR, our political programme for these countries is that of political revolution having as its aim the elimination of the bureaucracy from power and its resumption by the working masses. This point does not raise especially different problems from those of the USSR. Let us merely observe that there is not a native bureaucracy in these countries possessing a strength comparable to that of the Soviet bureaucracy; in truth, it is the Soviet bureaucracy which constitutes the principal prop, the principal strength of the native bureaucracies.

As in the case of the USSR, it is obvious that the defence of these countries does not exclude but on the contrary implies our support to movements of the worker and poor peasant masses against the bureaucracy. In the case of these countries, as in that of the national minorities in the USSR, we are also in favour of supporting mass movements for national independence from the yoke of the Soviet bureaucracy. In the buffer zone countries, we are for the independence of these countries and their organisation into a voluntarily organised federation.

All these points present no difficulties. They have long been the common property of our movement acquired on the question of the USSR in the past years by following step by step the evolution of the first workers' state. The only difference is that these countries suffer even more severely from their unequal relations with Moscow than do the

nationalities of the USSR. Over the decades the national question has always been a very sensitive point in these countries. Finally the question of their federation has had a long tradition in the workers' movements of these countries, it having figured in the programmes of socialist parties of these countries even before 1914.

In conclusion, we see that the buffer zone question has, in fact, been the extension of the Russian question which has so often been discussed in our movement, and not the point of departure for a new chapter in the history of the Soviet regime. But it is an extension which has taken its own peculiar course.

Our definition of the USSR, our comprehension of the dual role of the Soviet bureaucracy, has permitted us to orient ourselves in a generally correct manner in the study of what has happened in the buffer zone countries and in understanding their fundamental tendencies. At bottom this was decisive.

But on the other hand, various inadequacies on our part have made us, mark time, have led us into secondary problems and even into error. Today the situation has largely contributed in permitting us to overcome our weaknesses without great internal difficulties. It permits us to basically understand the buffer zone countries, their development, their contradictions.

We believe that the discussion based on the resolution presented by the International Secretariat will enable our movement to acquire all necessary clarity on this question and to seriously arm our militants for the political problems they will be faced with in the coming years.

# LCC conference: 'Better Keynesian than nothing'

"Progress comes by small percentage changes", said Alan Taylor, the last of the four main speakers, when I talked to him after the end of the Labour Coordinating Committee conference on the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES) last Saturday, 22nd.

For the last few years change has been going against us. But if we can get it going our way over the next 20 years, I'll be satisfied.

With a perspective like that in the midst of developing slump and devastating Tory attacks, little wonder there was a thin attendance and a ragged discussion.

Of the 50 or so who did come, though, most had more sense of urgency than the main speakers. Taylor's contribution was criticised by almost every speaker from the floor. He proposed developing workers' ownership by a sort of profit-sharing scheme where the profits — less dividend payments! — would be ploughed into buying back firms from the bosses.

Floor speakers argued that this 'sort of worker capitalism' operating within a market economy would just split up the working class. Social ownership and getting 'the fundamental levers of the economy under democratic planning' are vital. Moreover, the idea of combatting the power of the bosses by buying them out bit by bit is pure day-dreaming.

The other ideas from the main speakers were less zany but equally concerned with finding ingenious devices to somehow turn the capitalist system to socialist ends. Francis Cripps argued that economics is a very reactionary science because (?) 'American-dominated', and thus he would 'ask for sympathy for Keynesians'. 'It is better to be a Keynesian than nothing' — and it is after all home-grown.

Keynesian demand-management has failed, he said, because of balance-of-payments problems. 'What went wrong is that after the war we accepted an American vision of

a world with very high levels of trade'. Now we need import controls and exchange controls to 'remedy Britain's trading position' and enable Keynesian policy to work.

Stuart Holland presented figures showing that £85 out of every £100 of public spending comes from private enterprise suppliers — and so the Tory cuts will hit private enterprise. 'When I present these



Audrey Wise

figures in the House of Commons, the hubbub on the Tory benches dies down.

We should, said Holland, argue for more public spending for socialist reasons but also on the basis of these figures, and (for example) tell old age pensioners not only that they have a right to welfare entitlements but also that 'they are helping the nation by spending some money'.

'Another socialist caught up in capitalist thinking' was the comment of one activist (and supporter of the AES) on Cripps' speech. Some speakers opposed import controls altogether (as an effort to export unemployment), others warned that they could be taken up by the Tories or Labour Right as part of a pseudo-alternative economic strategy.

AES supporters admitted the unsatisfactory nature of the 'strategy': 'You can't really call it anything more than a tactic', they commented on the programme of planning agreements, import controls, price controls, and increased

state spending which is proposed by the LCC, Tribune, the Communist Party, and various unions.

But the debate was rambling, partly because of the way it was organised and partly because Socialist Challenge supporters, the most strongly-represented left-wing group at the conference, were so mealy-mouthed that it was hard to tell them apart from slightly critic-



Michael Meacher

al-minded AES supporters.

The clearest argument came over Audrey Wise's opening speech on 'Why We Need an AES'. She took up the argument that 'those who have power never cede it willingly'.

The answer, she said, was to 'make sure the workers are on the side of a transforming Labour Government', so that 'when we get a government which actually tries to use

state power, the people will be on our side'. Then 'Michael Edwardes and Arnold Weinstock will not man the barricades or shoot the bullets'.

One activist promptly commented that — although she could not envisage armed struggle in Britain — the anti-socialist threat from the army and police could not be dismissed so glibly. Nik Barstow took up the point: blueprints for an ideal reforming Labour Government are no answer to capitalist power. We need a revolutionary strategy based on supporting, extending, and generalising workers' actual struggles.

As the debate continued, Wise and others replied by saying 'the right sort of economic strategy will gain the labour movement so many allies as to isolate the reactionaries'. But at the same time they argued throughout the day that popular support for socialism is very low.

That showed the vicious circle the leaders of the LCC are caught in. They propose schemes for tinkering with capitalism from above, in abstraction from the class struggle. Such schemes naturally get only passive support from workers. Thus the LCC experts conclude that the workers are passive. Radical socialist demands are unrealistic and they had best resort to ... more schemes for tinkering with capitalism.

The vicious circle continues, with the LCC experts floundering in ineffectual middle-class bewilderment, searching for the scheme which is finally going to get them 90% popular support. But in fact active support for change develops only in and through class struggle. For the LCC to break out of its vicious circle, it will have to steer away from the blueprints and towards active involvement in the class struggle now.

MARTIN THOMAS

# UNDERHILL: PART OF A WIDER WITCH HUNT

THE report on *Militant*'s activity in the Labour Party, compiled by Labour's former National Agent and professional witch-hunter Reg Underhill, was published last week. The right wing press had devoted a lot of space to pressing for Labour's NEC to publish the report, and the NEC finally gave Underhill the go-ahead to publish, while refusing to publish it themselves.

The press could hardly disguise the fact that, despite all their build-up, Underhill's 'revelations' were disappointing — and they had had to pay him for the copyright! The *Daily Mirror*, which has recently been publishing long tirades against *Militant* by Joe Haines, simply had a short article without any comment.

Underhill's dossier largely consisted of the same documents he presented to the NEC in 1975, when they were considered by the NEC's Organisation Sub-committee and led to no action.

The most recent document dates from 1978, and Underhill has still to prove that the document really does originate from *Militant*.

Underhill claims that he is against expelling *Militant* — a change from his behaviour in the 1950' and '60s when he witch-hunted hundreds of left wingers — but he wants the NEC to take a lead in fighting *Militant* politically and asking its leaders to 'explain themselves'.

In fact, Underhill is just setting *Militant* up to be hunted down by right-wingers locally. He is sending copies of a summary of his report to all CLPs. He claims to provide a rallying point for Labour Party members who might other-

wise leave because of *Militant*. According to the *Financial Times*, even if Underhill doesn't fight for *Militant* to be expelled, Callaghan will.

But the Underhill report is also part of a larger campaign to divide the left — and not so left — on the NEC and to reverse the decisions of last year's conference. As the prospect of mandatory reselection comes nearer, right wing MPs are getting more and more determined in their attempts to avoid it.

At last Monday's PLP meeting nearly 60 MPs proposed that reselection be open to all party members, however active or inactive, and a second proposal was put to reorganise the NEC.

In this situation Underhill's 'revelations' of *Militant*'s supposed hold in 60 CLPs is a valuable weapon for the right. They can argue against re-selection — and try to sway union block votes at next year's conference — by using Underhill's evidence of 'unrepresentative' GMCS.

They can claim that *Militant* will lose Labour votes — though it was the government that lost more Labour votes than anyone else last year.

The left in the party cannot just ignore Underhill on the grounds that he exaggerates *Militant*'s influence, as some NEC members say he has done. It is an attack on the left's right to organise within the party at a time when the PLP and the right are trying to regain the offensive against the democratisation of the party.

Underhill is trying to carry that offensive into every CLP in the country when he takes up cudgels against *Militant*.

# MECCANO: CALL FOR PICKET LINE HELP

ON FRIDAY 21st March, the workers picketing the Meccano plant in Liverpool called for a mass picket outside the plant.

Although the picket was smaller than expected, the 50 or so workers who turned up, despite the snow and the cold, were united in their determination to fight any more job losses on Merseyside.

Workers from Meccano were still hoping for a new buyer for the factory and talks

are still going on with Liverpool council (to whom the Meccano bosses owe a lot of rates) to keep the factory open.

Mike Egan, G&MWU district official spoke to the pickets pointing out the need to fight every closure and appealed for support on the picket line from every factory on Merseyside.

Workers at Ince B power station have promised to send four workers to strengthen the

picket line on a regular basis and the Meccano workers are asking other workers on Merseyside to do the same.

The Airfix bosses (of which Meccano is a subsidiary) must not be allowed to move out the £1½ million worth of toys or any of the machinery from the workers and rob the workers of their jobs like so many other companies have done in the past.

MICK CASHMAN

# Klein Bros: no more 'arrogance and contempt'

70 WORKERS AT Klein Bros. Ltd. of Salford are now in their third week on strike for union recognition. After a long series of niggling incidents, things came to a head when the management refused the staff the right to make sandwiches in the canteen. The vast majority walked out and immediately joined the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers who made the strike official.

line and Sandywell's, who do some work for Klein have blacked it, as have some mail order firms.

Maureen Marston, Area Officer for the NUTGW explained the importance of the strike: "In Manchester less than half the garment workers are organised. This is the first recognition struggle we've had for some time and we're determined to win. 80% of the workforce here are women. This shows that women are no longer prepared to be pushed around by 19th century management.

"Unfortunately a lot of our members are on a three day week and collections are difficult to get. We need the support of the trade union movement to win."

## Drumming

The strikers are showing tremendous enthusiasm and determination. Most of them are on the picket line every day and they've already threatened the management with a mass picket. Despite the fact that they've never done anything remotely like this before, they are busy drumming up support in the labour movement locally.

They've already spoken at Manchester and Salford

Trades Councils and at the AUEW District Committee meeting and money has been collected at Stretford Trades Council and several local factories. However more support and particularly money, is urgently needed. Their bosses have refused to pay out tax rebates and other money that is owed to them and they are not getting strike pay yet.

## Help

This strike can be won with the help of organised workers and a blow dealt to all the cowboy bosses in the clothing industry. It's the job of all militants to make sure that this strike gets all the support it deserves and doesn't become another Grunwick's.

How you can help:

1. Inform your members of the dispute.
2. Collect money for the strikers. Cheques should be made payable to the NUTGW.
3. Support the picket line.
4. Boycott all the Klein Brothers garments. These bear the label "Bendyk".
5. Messages of support c/o 409 Wilmslow Rd, Manchester M20 9NB.

MICK WOODS & PETE KEENLYSIDE

# Mapping out a campaign against state racism

THE NATIONAL conference of Campaign Against Racist Laws held on 22nd March took place at an important time.

The Tories' latest immigration rules came into effect at the beginning of March. A White Paper for the new British Nationality Act is due to appear this summer. And the Tories' economic policies are hitting the black communities particularly hard.

CARL was created to organise last November's demonstration against immigration controls. The 150-odd delegates from black and anti-racist organisations, CLPs and the revolutionary left, decided on four main areas for future work: • Opposing the implementation of the new immigration rules, trying to make them unworkable.

• Campaigning against the new British Nationality Act and other forms of state racism especially the 'sus' laws.

• Pickets of local police stations on April 23rd and a national demonstration on April 27th will commemorate the first anniversary of the murder of Blair Peach and the police rampage in Southall. (And the inquest on Blair Peach reopens on the 28th).

• Supporting the Black Freedom March from Bradford to London in the summer.

Two major problems, especially for the revolutionary left, remain after the conference.

While unions and the Labour Party at national level support CARL, the task of combatting racist attitudes among the white rank and file of the labour movement has

hardly begun.

And meanwhile the revolutionary left has failed to win the trust of the Asian community. Speakers from a number of Asian organisations criticised left groups as more interested in recruiting black members than in seriously helping to build a campaign against racist legislation. The Anti Nazi League in particular was repeatedly singled out for criticism, above all for failing to defend Brick Lane against an NF march in September 1978.

A fight is now needed to win the rank and file of the labour movement to support CARL's policies. The conference laid a basis for a revival of anti-racist work on a national level. Whether or not that basis is built now depends on activists in the Labour movement.

STAN CROOKE

## Gaffers

A picket told Workers Action, "We all joined the Union — all of a sudden really. We were all pissed off with the gaffers' attitude — their arrogance and contempt for us". Typical of this attitude was the fact that workers sometimes had to work in temperatures as low as the 40's so that money could be saved in fuel bills to swell the profits.

Of those who walked out, only three have gone back even though everyone has been given their notice. At present there are only supervisors and 12 scabs working.

Support has come from TGWU members at Birkharts and Tibbets who usually move Klein Bros. goods and little or nothing is going in or out. Postmen at the Salford office are refusing to cross the picket

# Ireland: a nation divided, the working class paralysed

MARTIN THOMAS reviews the Belfast Workers' Research Unit report on Trade Unions in Northern Ireland

LOOKED AT from two different angles, Northern Ireland politics presents a completely different appearance.

An occupying army, flanked by a huge apparatus of interrogation centres, special courts, prisons and police repression, is battling it out with the most militant fighters from the minority Catholic community. The Protestant community, which dominates the repressive forces and usually is in alliance with the British Army, is bitterly hostile to the Catholics and their demand for a united Ireland.

The working class is totally divided. The Northern Ireland Labour Party is a tiny Unionist rump, disowned by the British Labour Party. In the Protestant working class, Loyalism and Unionism — right wing Toryism — dominate. The Provisionals have been moving closer to a socialist working-class outlook, but they still make military activity the centre of their strategy rather than a subordinate part of a strategy based on mass mobilisation.

There is nothing resembling united working-class politics.

But at first sight the Northern Ireland trade union movement presents a totally contradictory picture. 57% of workers are unionised, a higher proportion than in Britain. There is no Protestant-Catholic division in the trade union movement: in fact, 78% of unionised workers are members of British trade unions. The AUEW and the T&GWU are the biggest unions in Northern Ireland just as they are in Britain.

And the trade unions regularly assert that they are against all sectarian divisions in the working class. Trades Councils in Belfast and Derry have often taken left-wing stands.

The Belfast Workers' Research Unit (WRU) pamphlet on *The Trade Unions in Northern Ireland* explains this paradox.

"The 'unity' to which the trade union officials refer is ... a shallow one. It might be more accurate to say that the loyalist workers tolerate the trade union movement as long as it concerns itself with bread and butter issues.

"For their part the trade union officials have been content not to shatter this fragile state of affairs. They have remained inactive, or have sought compromises. Their non-sectarianism is passive, not the result of concerted action against sectarianism."

Within this framework, individual socialist trade unionists can at best win toleration. The WRU talked to two socialist trade unionists, Joe Bowers and George Craig. They "felt that their standing in the union was based on their efforts to improve wages and conditions, and because of this they were accepted despite their political views on issues such as repression, for which they could find little sympathy among their mainly loyalist rank and file members.

## Passive coexistence

"Craig, for example, was able to tell the workers at British Enkalon during the Ulster Workers' Council strike: 'If you think the UWC can do more for you, then go out', and only 15 out of 1900 workers left. But it is difficult to go beyond that".

Some other individual cases show what the WRU mean when they assert that the trade union movement is non-sectarian "only in the most passive of senses".

Jimmy Graham is the leading official of the AUEW in Northern Ireland. He is a long-standing member of the Communist Party.

But: "Most of the AUEW membership is in the sectarian cockpit of Shorts, the Shipyard and Mackies and as a result the AUEW has judiciously steered clear of anything that could be construed as political..."

"Graham has also on occasions shown that he is a prisoner of his sectarian membership, and in 1977, for instance, shared a platform with Bill Craig and Ian Paisley at a rally protesting at the closure of the Naval Airyard in Sydenham... Graham made no protest when Paisley opposed the closure... in terms of a British sellout of the 'loyal people of Ulster'."

John Freeman is the leading official of the TGWU. A Protestant from the Shankill, he nonetheless became a Socialist Republican.

"In 1971 he was virtually the only trade union leader to publicly condemn internment". At the time he was convenor at Shorts. "He suffered for his principles. After he had announced his opposition he had to be smuggled out of Shorts in the back of a car and soon afterward had to flee the Shankill Road for the safety of Ardoyne".

His members would not tolerate an active stand against imperialist repression. But still he was able to become Regional Secretary in 1974 — as long as he kept to trade union matters.

In the mid-'60s, when the situation was not so explosive, some trade unionists were active in the civil rights movement. But then the movement collided violently with the batons and clubs of Protestant sectarians and the Protestant-dominated police. "In order to protect their official position... the official trade union movement began to withdraw from the Civil Rights Movement".

The most active political role the trade union movement has played since then is in the Better Life For All Campaign. "This campaign had its origins in January 1976, when, after some particularly savage sectarian violence in South Armagh, trade unionists in Newry started a petition of protest... The Northern Ireland Committee [of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions] were quick to take up the spirit of the [petition] and organise it into the Better Life For All Campaign".

Andy Barr, a CP member, described the Better Life Campaign as "a constructive set of proposals which hold out the prospects of peace and prosperity for the people". But in reality, "the demands which it put forward contained little that anyone could disagree with, and, indeed, few tried". At best it was an effort of pacifist wishful thinking: "the right to live free from threats of violence... the right to associate freely... the right to well-paid work and decent housing... the right to free and full education... the right to adequate social services".

No struggle was proposed to achieve these rights, least of all one against the Northern Ireland or the British State. Indeed, often the Better Life Campaign was interpreted mainly as a campaign against "the extremists".

Thus "the Better Life For All Campaign was in practice campaigning against those who were prepared to take up arms against the state. By ignoring state violence it was in practice condoning it..."

Nothing much has ever come of the campaign. "Its only major activity was a rally through the centre of Belfast on November 20th, 1976, which attracted only a few hundred people and was admitted to be a 'disappointment'."

The way the trade union movement fades or withdraws into irrelevance when it comes to the great political issues was also shown in the 1974 and 1977 Loyalist strikes, aimed at killing 'power-sharing' and at forcing greater British repression of the Catholic community.

In 1974 the trade unions called on people to continue working, but did nothing about it except to organise a small back-to-work march led by Len Murray and heavily protected by the police and army.

The other sectarian strike, in 1977, never really gained

momentum. But that was no thanks to the Northern Ireland Committee of the trade unions.

The Labour and Trade Union Coordinating Group (led by the Irish Militant) put out a petition against the stoppage. Northern Ireland Committee full-time officer Terry Carlin issued a statement to the media saying that the petition was 'unofficial' and calling upon workers not to sign it.

The NIC's own leaflet gave the advice: "If you or your colleagues have been intimidated, report the matter to the Police. Very urgent, phone 999". Good advice to the many Catholic workers who had often been victims of brutality by the notoriously sectarian Northern Ireland police...



hanging in the Castlereagh police interrogation centre. 3,000 workers marched in protest in West Belfast. The NIC did nothing.

There is a strong logic behind the Northern Ireland trade unions' passivity. Since capitalism became monopoly capitalism, the trade unions have faced a centralised adversary, closely tied up with the state. In Northern Ireland, with its more or less permanent slump conditions, a great deal of employment is directly dependent on state aid and intervention. If the trade unions fail to take up a revolutionary strategy, aimed at overthrowing the state and completely reorganising society, they must necessarily seek to cooperate with and seek favours from the state.

But the Northern Ireland state was founded on sectarian division. And so the union officials got their recognition. And now they sit on several boards and committees, from the Northern Ireland Economic Council through the Labour Relations Agency to the Northern Ireland Development Agency... and the Police Authority.

There are two trade union seats on the Northern Ireland Police Authority. Recently, one of the trade union representatives, Jack Hassard, resigned. The protests of an official police doctor about brutality in Castlereagh, the revelations of an Amnesty International report, and the admissions of the official Bennett report, had convinced him that the NIC talk of "very valuable work... in achieving reforms within the police" was whitewash.

The representative of the Law Society, the professional association of lawyers, also resigned. The lawyers, not an especially radical or militant group, refused to appoint a replacement. But the trade unions meekly sent along NIC full-time officer Terry Carlin to replace Hassard.

All this shows very clearly that to propose trade union unity as the principle and

where — to the Orange UDA, or to — for action issues.

It even relies being complex issues like sectarianism in a huge levels of protest. And it Protestant workers belated in different and different

Economic occasionally and Catholic has happened occasions the Belfast 1967, led by and in the struggles of times the broke down.

And that happen, unless are united by a program answers the questions.

If there were militant labour with such a program probably could economic serve as a forge. Cat worker unit



Jim Larkin (left) united the Belfast workers in 1907. But unity was shortlived. The unions do not actively fight the influence of bigots like Billy Hull, shipyard shop steward and Loyalist Association of Workers' leader (below centre, with other Loyalist leaders).

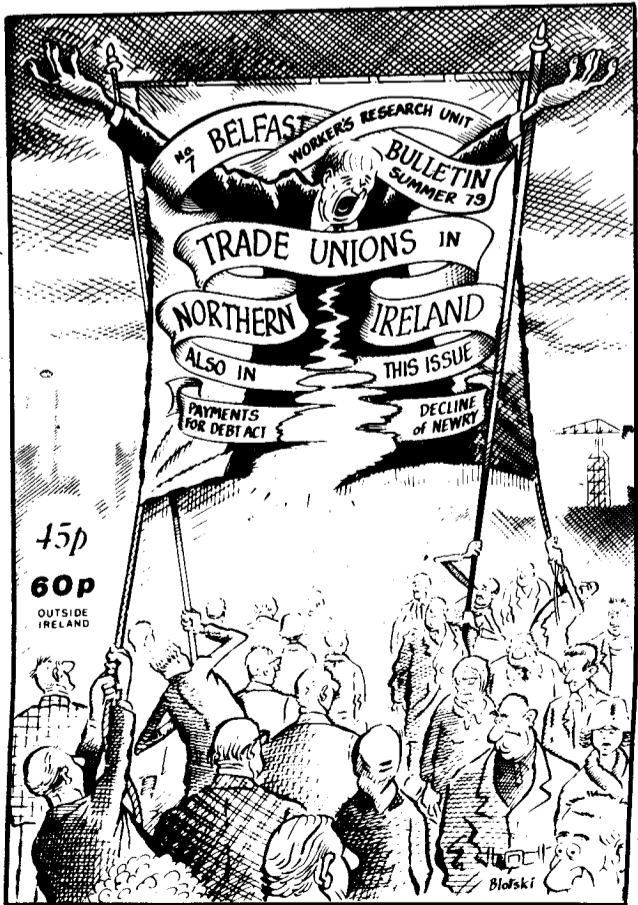
starting point of a political solution in Northern Ireland — as the Militant do — is a contemptible evasion of reality, even though the idea is sometimes attractive to trade unionists in Britain bewildered by the bloodshed in Northern Ireland. It amounts simply to seizing on the 'good side' of working class life in Northern Ireland and shutting your eyes to the 'bad side'.

Trade union unity in its present form is based on avoiding the major divisive political issues: partition and the British military occupation. It exists because of a tacit agreement between workers and trade union leaders that the trade unions will deal only with immediate bread-and-butter issues, and workers must look else-

movement. I movement a lists, trade geared to an itical disunity

## Content evasion

Militant proposing a defence (answer to "ence") (i.e. and the gangs: the violence in the British Royal Ulster get much Militant. As one pointed Irish Coe



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ions conference was discussing the Better Life campaign, "the paramilitaries are members of all affiliated unions". Trade unionists are already armed — and shooting each other.

A trade union movement which could organise a militia to fight for a real solution in Northern Ireland would be a different trade union movement from the one that actually exists. It would be a revolutionary trade union movement. And that revolutionary trade union movement would not aim its efforts equally at the fighters for Irish freedom and the defenders of Protestant supremacy!

It would seek an alliance with the Republicans, as the Citizen Army formed by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union allied with the revolutionary nationalists in 1916. It would direct its main fire against the British Army and the forces of the Northern Ireland state. While striving to rally Protestant workers to a struggle for a united Socialist Ireland, it would fight the Protestant sectarian militias too.

In the existing trade union movement, steps to form a trade union militia could only lead to two hostile militias being formed, one Republican, the other Unionist. (And given that Protestants tend to monopolise the jobs in heavy industry in Northern Ireland, the Unionist militia would be much the stronger).

In part it is this reality, as well as the drive to cooperate with the Northern Ireland state, which makes Irish trade union leaders opt for keeping their heads down politically. Any strong stand, they fear, would lead to many Protestant members hiving off.

The fear has a real basis. A revolutionary workers'

British imperialism intended and James Connolly predicted: to "set back the wheels of progress... destroy the coming unity of the Irish labour movement" and shatter "all hopes of uniting the workers irrespective of religion or old political battle cries".

### Socialist programme

Northern Ireland was set up as a sectarian state, a 'Protestant state for a Protestant people' with a 35% Catholic minority trapped within it. It could have no response to the Catholic community's demand for civil rights except repression. And successive British governments have been able to find no programme for Ireland except to try to wear down the Republican resistance by military force and police-state measures.

British withdrawal and Irish unity would not automatically solve the conflicts between the communities or lift the economic depression. But they would take away the biggest prop of Protestant sectarianism — the British support for the Northern Ireland state, and the hope of regaining the old unqualified Protestant supremacy. And they would provide a broader framework in which the Irish people could tackle their problems.

In any case, any socialist programme for Ireland must have British withdrawal and Irish unity among its leading demands. The fate of the Civil Rights Movement showed that a programme for democracy within Northern Ireland is as impossible as squaring the circle. Doubly



in the labour movement actually existing unity is adapted to political

so a programme for socialism. For many activists in Britain, it is our own unions which, by their passivity, are condoning the sectarian, undemocratic, repressive set-up in Northern Ireland. It is certainly "our own" army holding the ring. The first essentials for any socialist policy for us are solidarity with the fight for Irish freedom and an active campaign for Troops Out Now!

**Sunday 6 April.**  
Irish Republican Socialist Party  
Easter commemoration march: 2.30 from Galtymore, Cricklewood Broadway, London NW2.



# THE CLASH RUDE BOY

No one knows what the Rude Boy knows!

Produced and Directed by JACK HAZAN & DAVID MINGAY



## Fighting the law... and the law won

Antonio Germaro reviews the film RUDE BOY.

The film *Rude Boy* sets out to capture this period, by focusing on the life of Ray, an unemployed working class youth from a council estate in South London. Ray could have come out of the song ... 'Now we get a rude and reckless/ We been seen looking cool and sneekless/ We been drinking brew for breakfast/ So rudie can't fail'.

Ray is a friend of the Clash and his main ambition is to become one of their roadies. He lives harassed by the cops, working in a crippling 'job' selling 'domination' pornography to middle-aged gents, receiving his paltry SS cheque every week, Ray is presumably representative of youth in danger of becoming 'lumpen' until he is drawn to the Clash by their music and lyrics.

We follow him through his court appearances, his perpetual drunkenness, moments of pleasure in a toilet cubicle with a girl, and on the road with the band in concerts and motels.

Although he is a symbol, Ray is at the same time a fallguy for the film, used so as to tackle many of the unrealistic (if not reactionary) illusions and prejudices rife within the youth that follow the band.

This could have been an exceptionally good device to show up the link between particular oppressions and their relation to other more general questions of how society is run — the necessary unity of what and black workers and youth to fight back, the battles of the Anti-Nazi League and their relation with music.

However the directors, Hazan and Mingay, botch this completely. Ray's anti-left comments, his racist attitudes and generally his drunken fatalism are not really answered. The directors seem content to allow their audience, too, to wallow in Ray's own confusion, rather than try to break out of it. There just aren't any answers.

Ray fails miserably even in his main ambition. A drunk roadie is no use. Meanwhile the black kids are

preyed on by the police using the Sus law and arbitrary arrest: unlike the white kids such as Ray or the band itself, the black kids get sent down.

The bouncers continue their brutal attacks on the audiences, while the Tories sweep the country and Margaret Thatcher enters No.10.

A powerful and uncomfortable feeling of despair gradually encompasses the film. The opening scenes of black and Asian kids taking on the NF and the police, which set the blood racing, and the shots of the Victoria Park carnival, quietly disappear from view.

Struggle and 'hit back as we might. things only get worse. 'I fought the law and the law won' is the dominant idea.

There is no escape, for the clampdown is already here and there is nowhere to turn. No real solutions. The fascist right is repugnant ... but the left groups (in this instance the SWP) are manipulative and ignorant of working class discontent, at most trying to use it to get power and authority in a post-revolutionary state: 'In Russia there's still the same people riding round in cars... and we're still walking'.

The only salvation is a glorification of armed struggle as practised by the Italian Red Brigades: a resistance which will shoot bourgeois and 'communist' (unspecified) alike.

There is a powerful autonomist element in the Clash's songs such as 'The Prisoner' and 'White Man at Hammer-smith Palais'. In that way autonomism emerged in this country view musical channels, at the same time that it was spreading on the Continent, particularly Italy.

Despite the political limitations and at times the excruciating dialogue with its studied inarticulateness, the Clash come across as sympathetic and dynamic on stage. The film footage of the concerts is brilliant, and the music will remain in your mind for days afterwards.

FOR an entire generation, the 'new wave' explosion from late 1976 allowed them to identify with a new musical tradition based initially on relatively unsophisticated forms, but also showing a real trend to musical innovation. And it brought back vitality.

Apart from a very few exceptions, the previous years were marked by a total poverty in rock music. The great leftovers of the 1960s (and their latter-day imitators) dominated, ploughing out the same tediously long songs replete with whining guitar solos and supposedly impressive feats of physical endurance on the drums.

Rock had become tasteless and boring as guitarists struggled with ever-more complicated chords fed through the obligatory mountains of speakers. The guitar as phallus ruled the music scene, with a sexual imagery that often left one wondering whether the bands were playing music or simulating masturbation — neither for the benefit of the audience.

The Punks killed this. Young, raw bands began to produce short exciting songs, relating to the frustrations and desires of the most rebellious sector of youth.

Gone were the kaftans, the long hair flowing back in the stage wind, and the self-satisfied smugness of the 'megastars' talking of love, women's thighs and genitals, and other equally spurious fantasies concocted in far away beach houses and the mansions of California, or

somewhere equally immediate to the everyday life of their audiences.

And punk, by mobilising this energy and this rebellion, was able to break through the political torpor of the Wilson- Callaghan years.

Consensus was not the name of the game, but rather the violence and hypocrisy of the times. In the year of the Jubilee, when the pathetic displays of fidelity and loyalty to 'our' monarch were reaching fever pitch even down on the council estates draped with Union Jacks, the Sex Pistols' 'God Save the Queen (and her Fascist Regime)' reached number one in the charts, despite a BBC ban.

It was the year of 'Anarchy in the UK' and of the Clash's first album, with cover pictures of the police attacking the Notting Hill carnival. The songs 'Career Opportunities', 'Janie Jones', 'London's Burning with Boredom Now', and 'Police and Thieves' left no-one in any doubt as to what they were all about.

The Clash's stage show was just as direct: backdrop pictures of British armoured cars in northern Ireland. They were bringing the war back home, whether that war was against the British in Ireland, the police against black kids in Brixton, or the general harassment of youth on the dole.

All a far cry from the noxious complacency and respectability of media and politicians.

In this, the *Workers' Action* paper for the *Fightback* conference last weekend, Gerry Byrne analyses the dominant ideas of the women's movement and how *Fightback* can take up the fight for women's rights in the Labour movement.

WOMEN ARE coming under the most severe attack on our rights and conditions since the War. We knew it would take a long fight to get the right to work, to child-care, to free health and equal education, to control our fertility and to define our sexuality, the right to maternity leave and financial independence; but at least we were inching forward.

Now it is all threatened, and the fragility of the reforms we have won must confront the women's movement with the need to re-think.

The groundwork for today's attacks was in many cases laid by the Labour government, especially its 1976 cuts. But the Tories are pushing us back on all fronts with a single-mindedness which calls into question the adequacy of our movement, organised around local struggles or particular aspects of our oppression.

The scale of the Tory attacks, against a background of sharp crisis, demands massive resources of human energy and organised strength, on a greater scale than the women's movement alone can muster.

That is potentially present in the labour movement, though its bureaucratic set-up, its domination by middle-aged white men who actually fear to win, and its conservative ideas, make it a difficult ally for the women's movement.

Many women active in groups and campaigns feel they can place no reliance on the labour movement to fight for women's rights, even though it is now confronting the same enemy. But it is not only women who cannot rely on the labour movement as it is: any group of workers, men or women, who engage in struggle with employers or the state, find that their leaders more often stand in the way. To make the most use of the vast potential of the labour movement — and the Labour Party too — the ordinary members need to take control. In that process, socialists and fighters for women's liberation must fight also against most of the ideas that dominate the movement: national interest, petty bargaining, sexism and racism.

But it is not only as an ally in the present struggles that we need to re-shape the labour movement.

The real social liberation of women is inconceivable in a society where resources are directed to where they will make a profit rather than to where they are needed by the majority of the people, whether they can pay or not. Our liberation is predicated on a qualitatively different system, one in which the vast mass of people who actually produce the social wealth will decide on how it is to be used. But how do we get such a system?

## Roots of oppression

Marxism has always argued that it is the struggle of contending classes that produces major social changes; and that capitalism's life-long fundamental enemy — the working class — has both the potential of burying the profit system and the basic motivation and ability to reorganise society for mutual cooperation instead of cut-throat competition. Because the working class (including all its sectors: white-collar, service workers, etc.) is the first class in history with no vested interest in oppressing any other class, it can in freeing itself also free humanity for rule by the vast majority and put an end to repression and exploitation.

Women's oppression developed alongside class society. The subjugation of women, their isolation from social production and reduction to the role of childbearing and servicing of individual men in the family unit, arose with the rise of private property: private inherited wealth meant a woman tied to a man as his sexual property to ensure a 'legitimate' property line.

The family, in all epochs of class society, exists as the basic instrument of women's oppression. It is also one of the central pillars of class rule. For the ruling class, it ensures the succession of wealth and privilege; for the oppressed classes, it is a framework for instilling obedience, subservience and self-limitation in the interests of the rulers of society, and provides millions of isolated and competing units to break down the solidarity of the oppressed.

The real social equality of women will only be achieved by the disappearance of the family as an *economic* unit, and the breaking of the link between woman's biological role in child-bearing and her social role as child-rearer and homemaker. It is easy to point to the facilities that will be needed to break this link: they are all the things the women's movement is fighting for now (though it is possible to envisage other gains too, such as the socialisation of housework). But there is no general agreement in the movement about the *social changes* that will be needed.

Marxists in the movement argue that women's liberation is inseparable from socialist revolution, and that socialist revolution is inseparable from working class struggle: not just economic struggle, but political and ideological struggle as well.

Women have a vital role to play here. Not only are we half the working class (and thousands of others striving for personal liberation too) and as such a major component in the economic struggle; but arguably we also have an irreplaceable political and ideological job to do, to clear away the sexist garbage that is so powerful a weapon in the establishment's armoury. For the working class can only overthrow class rule by breaking the mental and ideological chains that tie it to its present rulers. The working class cannot hope to organise society as the vast majority ruling itself, while at the same time maintaining racial oppression, anti-gay practices, or the enslaved position of half its number. And in fighting the sluggish reformist bureaucrats who channel the crippling ruling-class ideas into the working

# The women's and

class, the radical energy of the women's movement is another bonus.

For the working class to successfully overthrow capitalism and put an end to oppression and exploitation, it must become conscious of just how oppressed women are, and it must take up and pursue the fight for the liberation of women as a central part of its own self-liberation.

There are of course other, more general, ideas that need to be fought for: an understanding of our history; an economic and social analysis of present-day capitalism; a sense of internationalism; a view of the state institutions, of parliament, of religion and ideas themselves, of strategies, tactics and principles that will lead the working class movement forward avoiding bourgeois snares; and a hundred other things. These are crucial tasks for socialists, men and women: and *Workers' Action* aims to contribute to these tasks.

## The Women's Movement

THE YEARS SINCE the Second World War have brought major changes in our lives, sharpening the contradictions governing our lives.

The laundrette, convenience foods, and press-button heating have objectively cut down household labour. Advances in fertility control (though still terribly imperfect, and incomplete without abortion on demand) make us no longer slaves to our bodies. The growth of service jobs, the NHS, etc., have brought millions more women onto the 'labour market' and into the trade unions.

But these are low-status, low-paid jobs. In the unions, though we are a third of the members, our voice is small and weak. We are still utterly lumbered with the shopping, cooking and child-care, both because of the lack of socially provided facilities and because of men's barely changed expectations and demands for personal service: and this burden, whether we have another job or not, serves to isolate us and weigh us down, keeping us out of political and public life. And the media continue to portray us as the little woman in the home, trivialising our lives. The loosening of the bonds of petty respectability has been paid for in an upsurge of the most vulgar and brutalising sexism.

Rising expectations meeting cramping limitations produced increasingly conscious anger and the formulation of our own demands. Added to this was the impetus of a parallel ferment: the labour movement in the late 1960s, increasingly pressed by the outriders of approaching capitalist crisis — unemployment, wage freezes, anti-union laws — was pushed into sharper confrontation with the system as a whole. In France in 1968, students' actions sparked a general strike of ten million workers in every sector of the economy (including media and professions), whose aspirations clearly went beyond a mere change of government.

In the USA, the black movement for civil rights of the early sixties in the southern states exploded in full-scale rebellion through dozens of industrial cities, demanding not just votes and jobs but pride and power and dignity too. And out of all this grew a women's movement echoing the black rebellion and the May events in the cry: we've waited too long.

In many ways, today's women's movement still retains the imprint of those days: the emphasis on pride and autonomy, the libertarian political outlook, the uneasy relationship to the organised labour movement, the radical élan, and the concern with personal alienation.

The women's movement is a living movement; it grows and develops; some early ideas have been pursued, clarified, and led to conclusions; some have been lost and rejected, have disappeared. Nor does it exist in a social vacuum: it interacts with other social forces, it picks up their ideas and develops them, it creates changes in other movements; it is sometimes repulsed, absorbed, diverted or distorted by them.

So the movement is not a dead thing, to be skewered and dissected or analysed as a specimen. But that does not absolve us of the responsibility of trying to understand it, take a measure of it, see how it changes and what is constant.

One of the constant features is the movement's concept of organisation. Spontaneity is valued above almost anything else. Hence, the almost across-the-board rejection of formal structures, of permanent positions, of hierarchies, rules, leaders, or even the possibility that these might develop. Hence, the emphasis on small groups, individual participation, rejection of delegation, of 'speaking for' anyone else, or indeed of decision-making at all beyond a collective 'organic' consensus.

To some extent this mode of organising is valuable, reflecting real insights into how formal organisation can deter participation; to some extent it is an unnecessary self-limitation on what the movement could achieve. Which outweighs the other, or can the gains and the losses be reconciled in some way? It has to be asked. It would not do for a movement which sets itself the aim of breaking down some of the most deeply-held but irrational ideas, the most ingrained prejudices, itself to raise its form of organising to a fetish, to be defended automatically against all comers.

What are the important and valuable features? The idea that formal structures can harden into a 'machine', the property of an elite, no longer controllable by those it is supposedly there to serve. The idea that leaders and hierarchies lead to passivity on the part of the led, a passivity that is our socially-given lot as women and which we are struggling to break free of. Delegation to 'responsible' bodies and people often means loss of control over decision-making, exclusion of minority opinions, manipulation by people who 'know the procedure', can 'handle meetings' and so on. Large meetings and complicated formalities can intimidate and soon drive away those who lack assertion and self-confidence —

precisely those attributes that as women we are conditioned not to develop.

But lack of formal structures does not guarantee against dominance, leaders or unacknowledged cliques. Most women in the movement have probably experienced at some time that feeling on being on the outside looking in, a feeling that the real action, the real decision-making, is going on elsewhere. 'They' all seem to know each other, seem to have the same views on everything, and the only way to join the charmed circle is to acquiesce, nod your head and look like you know what you're on about.

All it proves is that organisation abhors a vacuum. Dispensing with structure doesn't make all the evils associated with it disappear. It's like the argument we use on abortion: making it illegal doesn't make it go away, it just drives it underground and makes it more dangerous. You can take the analogy too far, but the 'underground' organisation in the women's movement, the cliques, the unspoken leaders, is dangerous precisely because its 'non-existence' means there are no channels for change.

This way of organising interacts with the existing class base of the women's movement and conspires to exclude working class women because they do not share the same experiences and social networks.

The massive scale of the attacks on our rights means that we need a movement that is capable of mobilising the mass of women and focusing their struggles. But the very ferocity of these attacks is also forcing thousands, hundreds of thousands, of women, to fight back. At first on a partial basis, in defence of a particular nursery, particular jobs that are threatened, or attempted wage cuts. But this opens the possibility of drawing them into a movement struggling against the whole range of attacks and for the complete liberation of women. We must make sure this movement is open to their involvement.

Small groups, informal discussions, consciousness raising sessions and rudimentary procedure are a good way of gaining confidence, of finding and exploring our way around new ideas, of working out what we really think and feel. These things are valuable gains. But why should they be *all* that the movement is? Wouldn't it be good to find ways of turning the *feelings* of solidarity we get in these groups into a really powerful effective solidarity that can take on the most powerful institutions in society and win.

To do that we also need ways of organising that are appropriate to mass struggles, to sharp confrontations. We need to ensure that these ways of organising provide maximum democracy, real active participation by the mass of women. We cannot just hope that small groups will 'come together' in ready-made agreement. We have to find ways of handling differing views and still retain our cohesion, of being confident that decisions taken are likely to be acted on and realised because they reflect the needs and wishes of the majority of women involved.

We need to learn from the experiences of other movements and other struggles. We turn for inspiration not to the 'great traditions' of the official labour movement — slow routine and cumbersome 'procedure', ways of deciding and organising that exclude and confine to passivity not only the majority of women, but also the majority of the male membership. We need to look to those situations when the movement has broken out of the well-worn channels of official routine and swelled to mass involvement: strikes, occupations, mass pickets, general strikes, insurrections: and to the ways of organising that have been thrown up spontaneously by these struggles — strike committees accountable to mass meetings, factory and neighbourhood councils as in Portugal, councils of action, soviets, popular militias. We can learn from these struggles.

One of the things the women's movement prides itself on is its openness, the ability of different currents and points of view to coexist without the movement tearing itself apart. This, again, is both a strength and a weakness. A strength because we need to be open to trying different ways, testing them out in practice, rejecting some, accepting others.

It becomes a weakness when confusion is elevated to a point of principle. Failure to follow through an analysis to its conclusion, the coexistence of contradictory ideas held by a single person, are justified as 'open-mindedness'; theoretical consistency is dismissed as 'dogma'. At the worst, a kind of guilty anti-intellectualism is pronounced on the grounds that logic, abstraction and objectivity are 'male' modes of thought, and that women should rely on their own experience and not on theories coming from outside themselves.

We would argue that there is no such thing as 'pure' experience, outside of an interpretation of what that experience means; different people experience the same objective situation differently depending on their existing ideas or prejudices, predispositions, previous experiences; and one thing the women's movement should have taught us all is that we all to some degree conspire in our own oppression, internalising the self-limiting destructive values of society. What we need, to break out of this, is not to wallow in subjectivism (which only reinforces the grip of these unconscious and semi-conscious ideas) but a much more rigorous attempt to become conscious of where our ideas have come from, whether they relate to our real situation, whether they



# movement socialism

can take us forward.

The rejection of 'a theory' also has its dishonest side: first of all because this stance itself is the expression of a 'theory'; second, because it is not actually a call to reject all theory but a special pleading for one particular theory and an especial intolerance for another.

Moreover, instead of ideas being appraised on their own merit, they are accepted or rejected according to their source: specifically, ideas put forward by women defined as members of 'male-dominated' left groups are often rejected out of hand and certainly viewed with deep suspicion. Actually, it narrows down even further, because Labour Party women are OK, and even those from the Communist Party (and you can't get more authoritarian than that!) In the end

pression range from cultural re-emphasis on 'female' values and withdrawal from male society (especially from personal relationships with men) and development of an alternative female culture, to outright 'destruction of men as a sex-class'. They all, however, reject work alongside men for common goals as collaboration with the enemy; however 'nice', non-sexist, or sympathetic individual men may be, they are all members of the oppressing sex-class. In this they see the central focus for women's liberation being directed against men, rather than as a struggle alongside men of the oppressed and exploited class against the class system which perpetuates their oppression.

At a fundamental level radical feminism is a concession to reactionary ideas on women. It accepts the 'natural divi-

This is understandable as a reaction to many bad experiences women have had in trying to organise in the labour movement, and indeed with some left groups. But it avoids the central question: what sort of a revolution, and what sort of a society, will issue from this 'separate but equal' struggle? The only content a 'feminist revolution' can have outside of class struggle and socialist revolution is a radical feminist sexual holocaust.

## The Labour Movement

GIVEN THE PRESENT state of the labour movement, there is some justification for the fears of many feminists that a class struggle perspective will simply swallow up women's specific demands. It is male-dominated; its organisational practice (when and how meetings take place, bureaucratic procedures etc) serves to exclude women from participation because it takes no account of the needs created by domestic and childcare responsibilities that still rest on women. The prevailing attitudes are sexist, making women feel either that they are invisible or that they stick out like a sore thumb. Its priorities are male-defined, according much greater emphasis to the economic interests of male, skilled white workers than to women or other oppressed, less easily organised sections, limiting itself to issues of wages and conditions that concern them and missing those issues that are vital to women and crucial to their ability to organise.

But should we just give up on the labour movement because of this?

That would be passive, fatalistic resignation. It ignores the fact that women, especially working class women who are the majority, cannot opt out of the class struggle. We can choose to be passive victims of it or active fighters to change our conditions, but class society and class oppression will not simply go away because we choose to ignore it or not 'concentrate all our energies' on it. And as the present Tory attacks show, the crisis of class society is deepening and there will be less and less chance of closing our eyes to it.

It is fundamentally pessimistic to say: here we are, we're going to change the world, free ourselves from millennia of oppression, eradicate mountains of prejudice, but we can't tackle the labour movement, we'll get swamped.

But we are the labour movement, at least a very substantial section of it, and have a damn sight more right to our ideas and needs than the jargon-ridden officials who sit on it. Millions of women are in unions, simply to defend their basic interests (and some women, like those at Chix or Grunwicks, go through bitter struggles for the right to organise); millions of women vote Labour and see it as their party. It is already our movement in the sense that women comprise a large part of it: the point is to *make it our movement* in the real sense, in that it takes up our concerns and fights for our interests.

But it will take a fight. *Fightback* can make a start by helping to coordinate those feminists already active as individuals in their unions, Labour Parties, trades councils etc. How we organise together need not in the least be dictated by how the labour movement as a whole functions: it may be as issue campaigns, small groups to help women gain confidence and learn to be more assertive in union meetings, autonomous caucuses organised either by union or by workplace or both, day-schools and workshops to exchange experiences, etc.

The answer to those who fear that the aims of the women's movement would get lost or stifled if it turned its energies towards the labour movement is that, on the contrary, we would be in a position to gain millions more women for the struggle. In transforming the labour movement for our needs, we could call on the support of all those whose interests it is to open up the labour movement to real participation by the mass of its members.

In the Labour Party there is already a struggle going on for greater accountability, more control by the membership, to turn it into a party that can articulate and fight for the real interests of its members. The women's movement has a lot to contribute in showing how particular ways of organising can militate against women's participation. And the entry into the struggle of substantial numbers of radical left-wing women intent on smashing hierarchies could tip the balance against the Callaghans and Heales.

Does organising in the labour movement mean we have to drop issues of specifically sexual oppression because they're 'personal' and that we only concentrate on 'big' issues of wages, jobs and pensions? The answer is, only if we accept the right of male bureaucrats to define what the labour movement is about. It exists to defend the conditions and forward the interests of all workers. Our right to organise, participate, even our right to work in the first place, are dependent on a whole range of other things.

The present attacks on the welfare state, the social services, the threat to whole communities such as Corby and South Wales, is forcing the labour movement to the realisation that the interests of the working class cannot be narrowly encapsulated by just the question of wages and conditions at work. It is beginning to accept that the fate of the unemployed, the young and old and sick, dependents or wage-earners or claimants, are its responsibility too. With the anti-Corrie campaign we have started to win the argument that 'personal' questions like the right to decide when and if to have children are also class questions.

Nor should we have to buy our right to organise in the labour movement at the cost of putting up with sexist treatment. We have a right to be there and to put forward our views. It is the male chauvinists who should be forced to explain why they think they have a right to abuse sections of the labour movement just because they're women.

If *Fightback for Women's Rights* can mount a strong campaign along these lines — challenging the existing hierarchies, helping to turn bits of the labour movement outwards to join up with struggles of the women's movement, and constructing bridges and signposts to shew women ways to get into and organise together inside the labour movement — it could open up whole new territories for the women's movement.



Grunwick women defend their union rights

it is those women who are in an organised revolutionary left group who are most vilified and distrusted.

Since the women's movement is so constructed as to prevent its being taken over by a minority capturing some leading position, one is bound to ask: if there isn't that sort of danger, isn't it a very anti-democratic suppression of ideas that is being practised?

No, it might be objected, it's not the ideas we object to, it's the fact that you're 'putting the line' that's been worked out in advance together with men, abusing the spontaneous working out of ideas that is the hallmark of the movement. But this is disingenuous. While there undoubtedly is a lot of fumbling around for ideas, most of the major theories we meet with in the movement have been worked out by closed little cliques; nor are any of them especially pure or new or particular to the women's movement.

## Radical Feminism or Marxism

RADICAL FEMINISM sees the fundamental divide in society as a sexual one, rooted in the opposed biological natures of men and women. All societies have been based on a male monopoly of violence arising from the inherently aggressive nature of male sexuality. The more spectacular instances of male violence (rape, wife-battering) are only the overt manifestations of the systematic degradation of women by men which is the basis of all social organisation. Culture, always male-dominated, provides the spurious justification for women's oppression by over-valuation of male virtues — strength, power, competition, objectivity, abstract logic, technology — and underplaying women's contribution to society: compassion, cooperation, caring, intuitive understanding.

The solutions radical feminists propose to women's op-

pression of the sexes, the ascription of innate qualities to both sexes, the unchangeability of human nature whether the male or female half. It downplays both men and women as social beings, formed by their experiences and circumstances but also capable of changing those conditions and, in that, changing themselves, and relies instead on a rigid biological determinism. Because of this, it is fundamentally pessimistic for the prospects of women's liberation; if women's oppression is rooted in unchanging biological reality, then the prospects for breaking out of it are reduced either to doomed utopian schemes or genocide.

Marxism and radical feminism stand at opposite ends of the women's movement. Conscious adherents of either position are in a minority, and as such are not easily accepted by the middle ground. But they represent the only two internally consistent perspectives for women's liberation.

Many feminists see themselves as 'revolutionary' — to indicate that they are not just concerned with reforms to ease women's position, that formal equality is not enough, that a fundamental upheaval is necessary to shake up the old ideas, to put human relationships on a new footing, to ensure that equal rights before the law are backed up by the material, social and psychological prerequisites for real equality and liberation. In this we concur.

But, for most feminists, revolution is one thing — proletarian revolution quite another, especially if the centrality of the class struggle means that feminism should direct itself towards, and aim to base itself on, working class women. Perhaps unable to envisage a socialist revolution in which working class women play a central part to claim their rights as workers, as women, and as people, such feminists simply fear that women's concerns and energies will just be dissolved into the class struggle. They prefer to hold out the perspective of women's liberation as a kind of 'separate but equal' struggle, going on parallel to the class struggle.

# COMMUNISM AGAINST STALINISM

# The evolution of Eastern Europe

IN THIS ISSUE we conclude our series on *Communism Against Stalinism in Eastern Europe* with the report by Pierre Frank to the Fourth International's Third World Congress (1951) on *The Evolution of Eastern Europe*. Frank sums up the reasons which led the Fourth International to conclude that Stalinist action in Eastern Europe had led to the creation of deformed workers' states while still "not attribut[ing] any progressive character to" the Stalinist action, and "continu[ing] to consider it as counter-revolutionary as a whole".

As Frank notes, the 3rd World Congress reasserted the attitude of the 7th Plenum (April 1949):

"a] An evaluation of Stalinism cannot be made on the basis of localised results of its policy but must proceed from the entirety of its action on a world scale. When we consider the state of decay which capitalism presents even today, four years after the end of the war, and when we consider the concrete situation of 1943-1945, there can be no doubt that Stalinism, on a world scale, appeared as the decisive factor in preventing a sudden and simultaneous crash of the capitalist order in Europe and in Asia. In this sense, the 'successes' achieved by the bureaucracy in the buffer zone constitute, at most, the price which imperialism paid for services rendered on the world arena — a price which is moreover constantly called into question at the following stage.

"b] From the world point of view, the reforms realised by the Soviet bureaucracy in the sense of an assimilation of the buffer zone to the USSR weigh incomparably less in the balance than the blows dealt by the Soviet bureaucracy, especially through its action in the buffer zone, against the consciousness of the world proletariat, which it demoralises, disorients and paralyses by all of its politics and thus renders it susceptible to some extent to the imperialist campaign of war preparations. Even from the point of view of the USSR itself, the defeats and the demoralisation of the world proletariat caused by Stalinism constitute an incomparably greater danger than the consolidation of the buffer zone constitutes a reinforcement".

Frank also notes correctly some of the errors in the analysis of the FI's 1948 2nd World Congress leading the FI at that time not only to consider Eastern Europe as still capitalist but also to exclude the possibility of the Russian bureaucracy pushing forward its social transformations in East Europe to the point of overthrowing capitalism. (The Second World Congress formulated a stark alternative: either Russian withdrawal from Eastern Europe under imperialist pressure, and reconsolidation of capitalism there, or a revolutionary uprising of the working class in Eastern Europe). Justifiably reluctant to assume in advance that the Stalinist bureaucracy would go through with decisive anti-capitalist measures, the FI ended up formulating a series of artificial restrictive criteria which had to be satisfied before it would recognise any overthrow of capitalism, such as 'real planning'. "Rigorous norms" were applied when they did not have any grip on the real development.

Frank's account is also, however, confused in a way that foreshadows the opportunist attitudes towards Stalinism which were taken by many Trotskyists in the early '50s and which have reappeared on many occasions up to the present day. He presents the developments in Eastern Europe as somehow reflecting "the grandeur of the revolutionary forces in all their scope let loose by the decomposition of capitalism". Only over the previous year, he states (i.e. since the opening of the Korean War), had the FI appreciated "the full scope of these forces". Thus Frank links the analysis of Eastern Europe into the perspective developed by Michel Pablo and others in the Trotskyist movement in the early '50s: a perspective of an abstract historical force of 'Revolution', operating as something quite over and above actual conscious workers' struggles, which was irresistibly sweeping across the world, only with its form of appearance sometimes distorted by Stalinism.

This perspective would obviously lead to an assessment of the East European developments as essentially progressive and revolutionary — quite contrary to Frank's explicit assessment of those developments as counter-revolutionary overall.

But in fact the transformations in Eastern Europe after 1949 did not reflect an upsurge of world revolution but a downturn. By 1951 that downturn was undeniable on any sober account of reality: in fact it could be dated from about 1947-8. More specifically, the East European transformations reflected the restabilisation of imperialism and its new offensive via the Marshall Plan, the bureaucracy's response to that offensive, and a new stability and strength gained by the bureaucracy.

To recognise that downturn and the bureaucracy's new strength would have meant some readjustment of short-term perspectives for the Trotskyists, but not any fundamental revision of their revolutionary programme (nor any downgrading of the important struggles that did take place in the early '50s). But many Trotskyists — motivated no doubt by the desire to maintain short-term revolutionary perspectives — resorted to wishful thinking... wishful think-

ing that ended up gravely weakening their revolutionary programme.

The fundamental ideas of Frank's report which remain valid for us today are not the wishful thinking but the sociological definition of Eastern Europe and the reassertion of the FI's anti-Stalinist conclusions of 1946-9.

COLIN FOSTER

THE SOVIET buffer zone of Eastern Europe, which came into being after the Second World War, has aroused lively discussions in and around our ranks. Our opinions have evolved and we have rectified errors committed on this question in the past years. Today the evolution of the buffer zone countries on a number of fundamentals has been completed in an irreversible manner. Our ideas have been clarified on several important questions such as the nature of these states and the conclusions to be derived therefrom. The resolution submitted to the Congress registers our progress in this matter. It is not without value to view this problem from as broad a viewpoint as possible, to first of all retrace the road we have traveled.

At the end of the Second World War, as a result of the Potsdam agreements, the entire world was confronted with a zone of influence of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. The Russian state — which we considered a degenerated workers' state — dominated a series of capitalist states militarily and politically; coalition governments between Stalinists and bourgeois politicians were constituted; the capitalist economies were not fundamentally uprooted, although important changes had been introduced.

Molotov had declared at the first occasion, in the name of the Soviet government, when Russian troops entered Rumanian territory, that his government had no intention of altering the social system of these countries. The only and avowed desire of the Kremlin in these countries was to replace the hostile governments of the past (the *cordon sanitaire* at the end of the First World War) by governments friendly to the USSR. But we understood at that time what was involved was not the desires of the Kremlin bureaucracy. The workers' state, and not only the bureaucracy, would have its influence on the new territories. What could this lead to?

On the theoretical plan we took as our point of departure our definition of the USSR and Trotsky's succinct remarks in *In Defence of Marxism* on the question of territories occupied by the USSR and susceptible to integration within it. These remarks have been cited many times in our discussions and are certainly known to all the comrades present here. Let us only refer to this one:

"Let us for a moment conceive that in accordance with the treaty with Hitler, the Moscow government leaves untouched the rights of private property in the occupied areas and limits itself to 'control' after the fascist pattern. Such a concession would have a deep-going principled character and might become the starting point for a new chapter in the history of the Soviet regime; and consequently a starting point for a new appraisal on our part of the nature of the Soviet state".

## Discussions after 1946

These lines prove how important the evolution of the buffer zone was for us and for the world workers' movement. Developments in the buffer zone also were of decisive importance for the Soviet Union.

We followed these developments passionately, meticulously. If you assemble everything that has been written in our ranks since 1946 on this question, it can be stated that we have never sinned in the domain of the concrete study of the events. We may have committed errors in theoretical interpretation and in perspectives, but our study of the events was always very rigorous. No one ever contested the facts presented by the International as the basis of our discussions. All the discussions took these facts as their point of departure.

We must confine ourselves here to a reference for historical reasons only to the discussions we have had with those who had a different definition of the USSR than ours. These discussions with the theoreticians of 'state capitalism' or of 'bureaucratic collectivism' never had any bearing on the buffer zone, properly speaking; they were simply appendices to the discussion on the Russian question. Neither the supporters of the theory of 'state capitalism' nor those of the theory of 'bureaucratic collectivism' contested the facts assembled by the International. The facts had only a minor importance for them. Later on we will mention the discussions between comrades sharing our common theoretical basis.

Our movement took a position on the question of the buffer zone for the first time at the Preconference (March 1946) and at the 1st Plenum (June 1946). The resolution adopted by the Preconference noted:

"The introduction of a series of military and politically controlled countries into the economic sphere [of the USSR];  
"The plundering and politically reactionary, conservative, and capitulatory nature of the Soviet bureaucracy

"The granting of governmental powers to the leaders of the Communist Parties regardless of their real strength;

"The elimination of oppositionist elements, the expropriation of foreign concessions, the acceleration of economic reforms by encouraging organs of dual power [committees of control of production, trade committees of poor peasants which carry out the agrarian reform]"

This resolution declared itself in favour of the progressive reforms, for the right of the peoples to self-determination, for the free development of the workers' movement.

The 1st Plenum dealt especially with the occupation of numerous territories by the victor armies. The resolution said the following concerning the territories occupied by the Soviet armies:

"The Fourth International demands the withdrawal of all foreign armies, including the Soviet army, from all occupied territories.

"The Fourth International does not in any way abandon its slogan of the unconditional defence of the USSR. The Fourth International is likewise for the defence of the progressive measures which have been realised in the territories occupied by the Red Army.

"Wherever reactionary movements appear and, with the support of the imperialists, attempt to overthrow the more or less satisfied economy and to re-establish landed private property... we will oppose these movements and fight on the side of the Red Army for the defeat of the imperialists and their agents until the workers of these countries are strong enough to confront the bourgeois counter-revolution alone.

"In all the occupation zones our militants should defend our policy in such a manner so that it cannot be utilised against the Soviet Union to the advantage of imperialism".

We see then that in the first two positions, we clearly formulated our position on the defence of the USSR and the reforms carried out in the buffer zone against imperialism, and on the defence of the workers' movement of these countries against the bureaucracy, but that there is not a word on the nature of these states and their economies, nor on the tendencies of their development.

The first general theoretical position taken was formulated in the theses written by comrade Germain on *The USSR on the Morrow of the War* which appeared in the *International Bulletin*, September 1946. It was said that in a general way this study expressed the position of the International Secretariat, and it opened the discussion on the USSR, the buffer zone and Stalinism for the 2nd World Congress. Here is its essential part concerning the buffer zone question:

"Inherent in the system of production brought into being by the October Revolution is the tendency to break out of the frontiers of the USSR especially because the productive forces on a world scale cry out for collectivisation.

"Taking as our point of departure the tendency of the bureaucracy to 'structurally assimilate' the countries where it maintains its occupation over a whole period and which it wants to integrate into its economic system; taking likewise as our point of departure the impossibility of achieving this assimilation without the action of the working masses, it can be stated that the countries occupied by the Soviet bureaucracy can be divided into three zones:

"a] all the territories incorporated into the USSR, where structural assimilation has been completed.

"b] In Poland, in occupied Germany, in Yugoslavia and in Czechoslovakia, the beginnings of structural assimilation correspond to a very strong revolutionary impulsion or to an exceptional situation involving the physical disappearance of the propertied classes. The nature of the economy and of the state remains bourgeois in these countries. However, the relationship of forces are such that for the moment the bourgeoisie is at the mercy of an action of the proletariat. It is only the bureaucracy's fear of the proletariat of these countries as well as of imperialism which keeps it from delivering a coup de grace to the native capitalists.

"c] In Finland, Austria, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria the state and the economy remain fundamentally bourgeois".

This long quotation needs no comment. In the discussion which occurred at the time, Marcoux, who had assembled a very important documentation on the question, examined the question in a static manner and even denied the existence of a tendency to structural assimilation; his point of view was rapidly outmoded by the march of events. On the other hand, comrade E R Frank, who was in agreement with the analysis, defined what was developing in the buffer zone as a tendency toward the establishment of a 'state capitalism' based on a mixed economy (state capitalism and private property) and not toward the installation of a workers' state.\*

At the 2nd World Congress (April 1948) which took place some week after the Prague coup, the discussion did not go beyond the positions previously taken by the International in 1946. In the Theses adopted by this Congress, the part

\* It should be pointed out, however, that when the discussion resumed at a later stage E R Frank was one of the first to make clear that capitalist property relations had been destroyed in the buffer zone, the process of 'structural assimilation' having been completed.



dealing with the buffer zone describes the policy of the bureaucracy, there also verifying its dual character; it shows that due to the development of the international situation the bureaucracy despite itself found itself obliged to adopt a series of economic and political measures against the native bourgeoisie. It underscored the sharpening of the tendency toward total structural assimilation, but viewed this as possible only through a revolutionary mobilisation of the masses in opposition to the bureaucracy. The Theses of the 2nd World Congress declared that the situation was transitory, but also that the economy of these countries remained capitalist and that the state remained a bourgeois state in its structure as well as in its function.

Politically the Congress confirmed our position of struggle against the restorationist tendencies and our support of the struggle of the masses for which it formulated a programme of transitional demands. Finally, the state and the economy being characterised as capitalist, the Theses came out in favour of revolutionary defeatism in these countries in the events of war.

Viewed with hindsight, the discussion then was marking time as a result of the situation itself. It was necessary that the situation itself become further clarified for us to make further progress.

Some months after the 2nd World Congress, the split between the Yugoslav CP and the Cominform occurred. In the period which followed, important economic and also political developments began to occur in the buffer zone countries which transformed them considerably. All these events renewed the discussion and placed it on a new plane. On the other hand, the events in China were also to contribute to a clarification of our thoughts on a whole series of problems, including those of the buffer zone.

The discussion led to the adoption of a resolution by the 7th Plenum in April 1949.

The 7th Plenum resolution described the developments which had occurred in the buffer zone since 1945, namely the period of agreements between Washington and the Kremlin, marked by agreements with what remained of the native bourgeoisie in the buffer zone countries, and then the period of 'cold war' marked by a struggle against the economic and political positions of the native bourgeoisie, which was waged primarily with bureaucratic methods.

The 7th Plenum resolution concluded with a study of the theoretical significance of the evolution of the buffer zone countries. This latter part explains the transition regimes of the buffer zone countries as the resultant of the action of several factors: the decomposition of capitalism having attained a very advanced stage in these countries, the belatedness of the world revolution, and the role of the USSR as a workers' state but acting under the leadership of the bureaucracy with the methods peculiar to this caste. We have nothing essential to change on this point and that is why we have incorporated this part of the 7th Plenum resolution in the resolution submitted for adoption to the 3rd World Congress.

But a part of this same 7th Plenum resolution showed itself to be inadequate or ambiguous or false and the discussion immediately reopened. It was the part of the resolution dealing with the social nature of the buffer zone states which reactivated the debate. The resolution recognised that structural assimilation had reached a very advanced state, it noted that the bourgeoisie was no longer in power as the ruling class. But it refused to say that the 'leap' to workers' states had been made. The resolution considered these states as bourgeois states of a special type, something like 'degenerated bourgeois states' although their structure — in the words of the resolution itself — was closer to that of the USSR than that of normal capitalist states. As a reason for this definition the resolution mentioned "the historic origins of the present situation and... the still indecisive social physiognomy" of the buffer zone countries. It indicated "the elimination of national frontiers between the buffer zone countries" as the "decisive and fundamental" factor for the completion of structural assimilation.

## Property relations overturned

One year later, at the 8th Plenum, the discussion still continued in our ranks, and beside the adoption of a brief resolution on the class nature of Yugoslavia, two resolutions were submitted for a consultative vote of the Plenum, one by comrade Pablo, the other by comrade Germain, differing in the premises on which they based their definition of the Yugoslav state and in which the problem of the nature of the buffer zone countries was in fact inferred.

The developments which have occurred in the buffer zone since then have enabled us to overcome the differences which existed at the time and to evolve a very precise position, with an equally clear understanding of the reasons which caused the delay and the errors of our movement on the question of the buffer zone.

We believe that the buffer zone states are no longer capitalist states and that, like the USSR, they are fundamentally, i.e. in the domain of the relations of production and property, workers' states. The changes which were made in their economies, the extension of nationalisation and planning to all spheres of the economy, fundamentally distinguishes them from capitalist states.

What has happened in these countries is not a quantitative increase in nationalisations as has taken place in certain capitalist countries, but a qualitative transformation of the economy. It is not only heavy and light industry which is nationalised and planned but also the banks, all of transportation and all trade, foreign and domestic, wholesale as well as retail (in large part at least).

It is true that the land is not formally nationalised. This is not a negligible question, but it is not fundamental from the standpoint of a sociological characterisation, in view of the considerable restrictions on the purchase and sale of land,

and the introduction of collectivisation on the countryside.

The relationships of production and property have been upset from top to bottom in these countries, and this transformation is continuing and involving spheres which have not as yet been affected (with the exception of agriculture with which we have already dealt). A return of these countries to a capitalist type structure will only be possible through a counter-revolution, which is obviously linked to the outcome of the coming war.

These are the fundamental changes of the economic structure which make us characterise these states as workers' states. There are, to be sure, important differences on the political and even on the economic plane among those states and between them and the USSR. That is not surprising. The evolution of varied human societies, among them workers' states, toward socialism cannot help but be affected by a whole series of factors. The march from capitalism to socialism will certainly give rise to very diverse social forms.

What is happening in the buffer zone countries is rather the obverse. The reactionary intervention of the Moscow bureaucracy tends to impose forms approximating those in the USSR upon these countries and also to Russify an important part of their state apparatuses for the purpose of assuring Kremlin control.

We are also witnessing on the plane of social relations in the buffer zone countries the imposition of a policy modeled on that of the Soviet bureaucracy which is directed towards the creation of an apparatus and socially privileged stratum in relation to the mass of the workers.

But all of these elements, which have a very great importance in determining our policy in these countries, are not decisive so far as the sociological characterisation of these states is concerned.

Exception is made, in the resolution submitted to this Congress, in this sociological characterisation of the buffer zone countries, for the Soviet zone in Austria, which has not undergone any of these fundamental transformations.

The resolution submitted to the Congress designates the buffer zone states as deformed workers' states. What do we mean by this designation?

We did not use the term degenerated workers' states because of the fact that this designation should only be applied (as in the case of the USSR) to a workers' state which was born in the revolutionary struggle of the masses and which subsequently deteriorated as a result of the bureaucratic seizure of power to the detriment of the working masses.

The buffer zone states are not the product of the revolutionary action of the masses but of the action of the bureaucracy, to which question we will return later. The defects they now have were present from the beginning. We do not mean 'deformed' in the sense of workers' states marred by bureaucratic deformations as was the case with the USSR in the first years of its existence. In this context the word deformed means that these states have primarily the same fundamental defect as the USSR, i.e. the complete elimination of the proletariat, on the economic as well as the political plane, from the leadership of these countries.

In saying that we have been belated in characterising these states as workers' states, we do not believe that we were wrong on this point in 1946 and at the time of the Second World Congress. We still believe that up to 1949 these states still retained a fundamentally capitalist structure, although it was considerably damaged from the capitalist point of view. The descriptions and analyses made by our movement up to 1949 were correct as a whole. We had correctly emphasised the principal tendencies of development. We were hesitant on the possibility of the realisation of these tendencies under existing conditions or at least as we interpreted these conditions.

The transformation of bourgeois states (decayed) into deformed workers' states under the conditions it has occurred has raised a series of theoretical problems which should be dealt with.

For us, the norm in such a transformation is the revolutionary action of the masses, their armed struggle destroying the old apparatus of the bourgeois state and substituting a new state for it. The manner of the transformation in the buffer zone countries does not correspond to the norm. Essentially it was the result of the action of the bureaucracy of the USSR and its agents. Does this call for a revision of Marxism? We do not think so at all.

From what happened at the beginning of the Second World War and from the deductions Trotsky had drawn from these events, we were ready to grasp the tendency toward structural assimilation, to understand these phenomena as they occurred. But we hesitated in our theoretical generalisations. Why?

The bureaucracy is not a class, it has no fundamental role in history, it does not make history, on the contrary it seeks only to cheat history. But it has demonstrated an undeniable power, for reasons we well know, to deform and disfigure the march of the historic process. Stalinism falsifies past history, but it employs the same methods — and they are not without their consequences — on the present. We have seen Stalinism distort fundamental ideas in the minds of communist workers; we have seen it manipulate workers' organisations and their policy. The Kremlin bureaucracy, with all the material and political power it derives from the Soviet state, has been able to manipulate phenomena to the point of rendering them momentarily more or less unrecognisable, without however derailing the fundamental social forces and the laws of history. One of our primary weaknesses was that of not always being able to rapidly disentangle the profound nature of phenomena from the disfiguration they had suffered at the hands of the bureaucracy.

On the other hand, we ourselves did not exactly appreciate the conditions under which the bureaucracy had to operate. It is true that it acted in quite an empirical manner; in the beginning it did not dream of going beyond its agreements with imperialism. It merely wanted to convert the buffer zone states into zones of military protection and not

into a belt of workers' states on the borders of the USSR. Molotov's declaration when Soviet troops entered the territory of a capitalist state for the first time, the theory of people's democracy (1st edition), was not contrived to deceive the bourgeoisie. The Kremlin bureaucracy had been obliged to go further than it intended. But we have only recently begun to appreciate more exactly the conditions under which the Kremlin acted. It is only approximately one year ago that we have begun to appreciate the grandeur of the revolutionary forces in all their scope let loose by the decomposition of capitalism. The discussion on the political report at this Congress has permitted an understanding of the full scope of these forces.

It is the decomposition of capitalism which has spoiled all the calculations of the bureaucracy as well as of imperialism in their search for a compromise which was also to include the buffer zone countries. We were especially cognisant of the bureaucratic character of the measures taken by the Kremlin but we were insufficiently appreciative of the forces which impelled the bureaucracy to reluctantly take the measures which in turn more and more barred the road to a compromise with imperialism and created a fundamentally different situation particularly in the buffer zone countries.

Among the causes of error on our part was the absolute juxtaposition of the action of the masses and that of the bureaucracy. We said: A workers' state is not the creation of bureaucratic action, but only of the revolutionary action of the masses. The bureaucracy, as we well know, never or almost never eliminates the action of the masses in its interventions; what it seeks to suppress is the action of the masses which it cannot rigorously control; but it is very well able to utilise the action of the masses which it can control in order to attain its own objectives at a given moment.

That was also true in the buffer zone countries. It placed the workers' movement there under its tutelage, it proceeded from purge to purge, it destroyed all initiative of the masses, all independent action, to a considerable degree, but it nevertheless mobilised these masses in a form it completely controlled for the purpose of being able to proceed to the important changes it deemed necessary in the buffer zone countries. We did not believe that it could carry out an operation of such scope in the buffer zone countries without losing control of the mass movement.

Because we were not always capable of analysing the formative effects of bureaucratic action on the historic process, because we did not have an extremely precise estimation of the forces let loose by the decomposition of capitalism and because we did not always understand the utilisation of the masses by the bureaucracy, we committed errors on the buffer zone question; and we became involved in a problem which was not the real one, because there was no real solution for it, namely that of the criterion which determines the moment when the 'leap' takes place. We were not faced with a relatively normal process. History had gone through bureaucratic channels in these countries and the endeavour to apply rigorous norms there was not without its dangers.

## A counter-revolutionary action

It goes without saying that it recognising the character of the bureaucratic action in the buffer zone countries we not only do not attribute any progressive character to it, not only do we continue to consider it as counter-revolutionary as a whole, but we underscore the limits of bureaucratic possibilities. They were brought to bear on bourgeois countries in full decomposition where social relations had already been very unstable before the war and where the bourgeoisie had been considerably undermined during the war.

It also goes without saying that the evolution of the buffer zone countries since 1945 does not provide the slightest justification for the theory of 'people's democracy' (1st edition) which imitated the old social democratic revisionist conception of a possible gradual passage from capitalism to socialism. This theory has been a lamentable failure in Western European capitalist countries. In Eastern Europe, the bureaucratic intervention which was substituted for the revolutionary action of the masses had nothing whatever in common with gradual, organic evolution.

The buffer zone situation has also demonstrated several facts to us which lead to important theoretical or political conclusions.

The buffer zone situation demonstrated that the coming to power of Stalinist parties under bureaucratic conditions (contrary to those in Yugoslavia or China) had similar although less marked consequences on these parties. The contradictions of society were reflected in these parties with growing acuteness. The pressure of the masses made itself strongly felt in opposition to the demands of the Muscovite bureaucracy. The apparatus, even the leadership itself of these parties, is sensitive to this pressure. Thus far the tendencies expressing or reflecting this pressure have shown themselves extremely weak in face of the GPU apparatus, but one cannot exclude a different development in objectively different conditions.

Another very important point. The buffer zone experience has revealed — and even bourgeois observers have testified to this — that the working masses of these countries, although very hostile to the bureaucracy, are very attached to the transformations in the system even though they were achieved bureaucratically. Trotsky wrote in the definition of the USSR which he gave in *Revolution Betrayed*: "The social revolution betrayed by the government party still lives in the property relations and in the consciousness of the toilers".

In the buffer zone countries as well, the social transformations not only live in the existing property relations but also in the consciousness of the toilers although these social relations occurred not in a revolutionary but in a bureaucratic way. That is a very important element for a proper appreciation of the buffer zone countries.

# Liverpool dockers back steelworkers with call to 'Make our strike national!'

LIVERPOOL dockers have given a tremendous boost to the steel strike.

Last Thursday 100 dockers walked off the job. In accordance with T&G instructions not to handle any steel, they refused to load steel aboard the Berisala, a Russian cargo ship bound for India.

The dockers were locked out the next day and all 6,000 dockers came out in support. Ancillary workers, tug-men, dock-gate men and clerical staff all struck, and the entire port ground to a standstill.

Dennis Kelly, chairman of the Liverpool dock shop stewards' committee said, "We explained to the lads that the instruction to load the steel was contrary to the

directive from the T&G Executive.

"We put it to them and they all agreed to withdraw their labour. Everyone is out. It is entirely up to the employers whether we return to work.

"We will work every other cargo but this steel and that means we are willing to do 99% of the work on the docks."

"This is the only way to win the steel strike", he added.

At a mass meeting on Sunday, the dockers voted to continue the strike indefinitely and for the strike to be made national. There were delegates at the meeting from Hull and Southampton docks and they are voting in

their own workplaces later on this week.

Stan Sheridan from the Yorkshire and Humberside Divisional strike committee said "I believe that if there is a dock strike as well as a steel strike, our dispute will be over within a week".

In Scotland and Cardiff, dockers are supporting the Liverpool dockers by refusing to handle any cargo diverted from Liverpool. The solidarity action of the Liverpool dockers with the steel strikers shows the way to winning the steel strike.

After 13 weeks, the closure of the docks nationally could mean the victory of the steel workers in a matter of days.

JO THWAITES

# WORKERS' ACTION



Outside the talks on the inquiry, women steelworkers lobby union leader Bill Sirs

# Steel Inquiry: Sirs climbs down on jobs

ON THE DAY THAT 1000 dockers struck in support of the steel workers, Bill Sirs agreed to the terms of reference of a committee of inquiry into the steel strike.

This inquiry will have an 'independent' chairman and two assessors, one from BSC and one from the unions. It will only look at pay.

At first Sirs said that it should look at the jobs question too, but now he has climbed down.

The BSC bosses and the Tories hoped that agreement on a committee of inquiry would mean a return to work. The steel unions' executives voted down that idea. After 12 weeks on strike, the steel workers will not just meekly go back to work on the promise of any 'independent' inquiry.

But the union leaders are clearly focusing all their efforts on finding some way to end the strike — on whatever terms.

What can we expect from this committee of inquiry, even on pay? Who will the independent chairman be? Sirs and his cronies wanted the Tories to set up the committee (rather than ACAS), and it doesn't take much working out to see what kind of 'independent' chair they would come up with.

The dockers' action on Friday 21st obviously took them by surprise. The idea that dockers could refuse to load steel and walk off the job, and that after they had been locked out 6,000 other dockers, the entire workforce in Liverpool could walk out in support, had obviously never crossed their minds, so pessimistic are they about the chances of actually winning the steel strike.

Support from other unions and the TUC has been sluggish. Moss Evans' telex to T&G members did not have much effect and had

to be made into an instruction before it was heeded. Even so, the T&G could have taken real action to support the steel workers, like organising flying pickets of the transport depots, and holding regional meetings so that all T&G members were fully aware of the instruction not to handle steel.

The dockers walked out on Friday, held a mass meeting on Sunday and are now calling for an all-out national docks strike.

Solidarity action of this



kind from the dockers could stop the scab loads of steel still getting in at small ports such as Ipswich on the East coast and at Torbay. Last week there was a massive operation to get steel into the country at Torbay, with a queue of lorries half a mile long waiting outside the docks to transport steel away. ISTC pickets there said that many of the drivers were T&G members and their names and the numbers of their lorries had been noted.

A large shipment of steel was also landed in Topsham, in Exeter, from a Danish-registered ship, the 'Joel' and it was not flying the obligatory ensign showing its port of origin. When the 'Joel' put into Cardiff the next week to reload, it was blacked by the dockers there and had to leave empty.

If the docks strike was to spread to cover all the docks in the country no steel would be able to get in or out, and no amount of 'resourcefulness', as the Financial Times calls it, on the part of the steel stockholder bosses, could overcome that.

The steel strike would be won in a couple of days.

In the face of the solidarity action of the dockers, the union leadership's agreement to a committee of inquiry is rather pathetic, to say the least. It shows just how far Sirs and Co. are from the rank and file.

It also shows the need for regular mass meetings of the strikers, to vote on the proposals being put forward in their name by the leadership. These meetings could also bring the strikers who are not on the picket lines, and so are open to the BSC and Tory propaganda on the television and in the bosses' press, into the activity of the strike.

Regular local and national strike bulletins must be produced by the strike committees, so that the steel strikers don't have to rely on the bosses' papers for news of what is happening in other areas of the country.

The steel workers have the power to win with the solidarity of other workers. The rank and file steel workers know that. We must make sure that Sirs gets the message loud and clear. There should be no settlement for anything less than 20% with no strings and the safeguarding of jobs.

## S Wales: Steel strikers put their leaders on the spot

AT A STEEL strikers' meeting in Newport last Saturday, the main hall was packed out and the speeches had to be relayed out to queues outside and strikers in the bars.

Throughout the rally many of the steelworkers heckled the speakers — Bill Sirs, Hector Smith, Tony Benn and Roy Hughes, Labour MP for Newport.

When Bill Sirs said the strike was just about pay, and the ISTC and the NUB were calling for a committee of inquiry, steel workers shouted "Don't sell us out — It's about jobs as well".

The feeling was summed up at the end of the meeting when a speaker from the floor asked Hector Smith why he split the pay fight from the fight for jobs. Smith could only reply that it was what the negotiating body had decided.

Sirs felt he had to say a bit more. He said that from the outset he had wanted both issues linked but the TUC steel

committee had decided against it. Many strikers know that if the pay issue is settled without a victory on jobs, then there will be little or no fight left for another battle later on.

Tony Benn got a good reception from the strikers. But he called for import controls, though mentioning in a round-about fashion that he didn't wish to export unemployment to workers in other countries. Selective import controls in the coal, steel and steel-related industries would avoid that problem he claimed.

Roy Hughes MP laid emphasis on what he had done in Parliament for the strikers (which was news to everyone) and called on the steel workers to join the Labour Party... in order to get more worker MPs. He congratulated the steel strikers for their resistance but gave no indication of how the steel strike could be won.

At question time, several speakers denounced the local full time official, John Foley, for giving dispensation notices to Alpha steel and enabling them to export steel. Speaker after speaker shouted at Foley to get down to the picket lines to see what it was like.

Foley's only reply to these accusations was to say the GKN in Cardiff was putting out a lot more steel than Alpha and that more pickets were needed there.

At GKN, the bosses have opened up a new gate to try, and beat the pickets who have stopped supplies of gas, oxygen and oil.

Another speaker asked Tony Benn if he thought a general strike was needed. Benn evaded the question by saying that it was a trade union issue. If the trade union side of the labour movement declared a general strike, then (he said) it would be up to the Labour Party to support it, as they did when the dockers were jailed in Pentonville.

GEOFF WILLIAMS

PAY negotiations for steel workers in the private sector are due to start fairly soon covering virtually all private firms.

The fact that the private steel workers are going in for their wage claim some three months after the start of the BSC strike demonstrates the crazy situation where a number of different agreements cover the same industry. There is a split between BSC and the private sector and some firms are covered by the Independent Steel Employers' Association, some by the Sheffield Shift agreement, others by the Bulk Steel Agreement and the majority by the Engineering Employers' Federation agreement.

In order to overcome this anarchy, which only serves to divide workers, we need one agreement for the whole industry. Why didn't the steel unions make this part of their demands at the start of the dispute, and stop the split between BSC and private steel?

J.C.

## SHEFFIELD CONFED SUPPORT WEAKENS

ENGINEERING shop stewards in Sheffield reaffirmed their support for the steel strikers at a meeting last Friday. But as a result of the treachery of the engineering union leaders nationally, the Sheffield action has weakened.

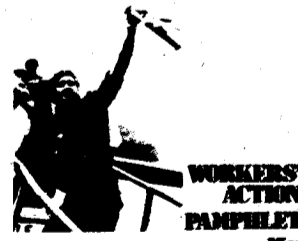
The local Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) is calling for nominal pickets outside all engineering plants in Sheffield to stop steel going in. Blacking of the work done by ISTC members who have returned to work will continue, although the Friday meeting decided that it would be subject to the discretion of the CSEU members at each individual plant.

Earlier in the week, a delegation of CSEU Sheffield officials went down to London to discuss with the TUC and the Executive of the CSEU ways of building up support for the steel strike nationally — only the previous week, Sheffield engineering shop stewards had called off their solidarity action when they saw there was no national support.

But the CSEU Executive would only go as far as supporting the Sheffield action, and would not agree to extending it to the rest of the country.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

## MARXISTS AND NICARAGUA



From WA, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD. Add 10p for postage.

## FREE EDMUND ZADROZYNSKI

Friday 28 March. 6pm: Picket the Polish Embassy, 47 Portland Place, W1. 7.30pm: Meeting at Central London Poly, Marylebone Rd. Speakers: Edmund Baluka (former Polish shipyard strike leader), Reg Race MP, Stephen Corbishley (CPSA NEC, in personal capacity).

## EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

SATURDAY 29 MARCH. Labour Committee on Ireland conference. 2pm to 5pm, Islington North Library, Manor Gardens, London. Credentials £1 for individuals, £2 for organisations, from LCI, c/o 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

SATURDAY 29 MARCH. Solidarity with Nicaragua. Conference sponsored by the Nicaragua Coordinating Committee and the Labour Party. 10am at the University of London Union, Malet St, WC1.

MONDAY 31 march. Trade union rally in support of the Chix strikers. 7.30pm, Slough Community Centre, Farnham Rd, Slough.

SATURDAY 5 - MONDAY 7 APRIL. Labour Party Young Socialists Annual Conference in Llandudno. Details of accommodation, fringe meetings etc from Barricade, 16 Glen St, Edinburgh.

SUNDAY 6 APRIL. Irish Republican Socialist Party Easter commemoration march. 2.30 from Galtymore, Cricklewood Broadway, London NW2, to rally in Kilburn Square.

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