

UNION LEADERS MUST INVESTIGATE TRANSPORT

AIR, RAIL, SEA, - NO SAFETY FROM MURDEROUS TORY CUTS

THE TRADE UNION leaders must set up a full scale investigation into the entire transport system of this country.

This investigation must expose the way in which Tory cuts in transport spending are causing death and injury on an unprecedented scale.

Both the Glasgow and Purley crashes are the direct result of Tory spending cuts.

The Glasgow crash happened when a train travelling towards Springburn was routed from single track onto the wrong section of double track.

British Rail last week admitted that the single-track section had been cut back from double track by economy measures.

The Purley crash occurred on track where British Rail, as part of its cost cutting drive had halved the number of caution lights.

Even the Tory 'Evening Standard' was forced to say in an editorial on 7 March:

'British Rail managers are given no directives to cut corners, but it is made clear to them that their key to successful budgeting is not so much what they need as what they can get away with.'

'They have got away with too much and passengers are now paying for it sometimes with their lives.'

Speaking of the Glasgow and Purley crashes the same editorial said:

'If BR had not been so concerned with cost-cutting they would already be testing the Continental warning system which would have prevented both these crashes and probably the Clapham disaster too.' This system would cost BR £150 million.

BR is starved of resources by the



15,000 residents from South London, and Kent, gathered to march and protest against British Rails high speed rail link from the Channel Tunnel, which in many cases will run through their back gardens.

Tory government to make the railways profitable, ready for privatisation and rich pickings for the City sharks.

Yet Thatcher readily spends an extra £500 million on the Channel rail link to buy off rebellious Tory voters in Kent.

Spate

In a spate of railway accidents over the past five years:

- 15 people were injured when two express trains crashed outside Newcastle upon Tyne railway station on 30 November 1988.
- A commuter train crashed outside St Helens the same month, killing the driver and injuring 18 others.
- In October 1987, four people died when a train fell into the river Towy in Wales when a railway bridge collapsed.
- The same month a train crash at

Forest Gate, London injured 14 passengers.

• On 26 July 1986 nine people died when a passenger train collided with a van at a level crossing in Lockingham, Yorkshire.

• In September 1986 60 people were hurt and one person died when two express trains hit each other at Colwich, Staffordshire.

• In December 1984 two people were killed after a passenger train hit a tanker train in Salford.

• Three people were killed and 60 injured at Wembley in October 1984 when a passenger train ran into a freight train.

• A derailment at Falkirk in July 1984 killed 13 passengers.

This list does not include the Kings Cross underground fire which killed 37 people or the Clapham crash which killed 35.

How much longer will the Labour

leaders stand by and allow this Tory slaughter to continue?

How much longer will they let sections of the Tory press slander railway and airline workers by trying to blame them for this mounting death toll?

The widest campaign must be mounted to force these leaders to act.

Investigation

If they refuse to organise a thorough investigation into the causes of these disasters, workers in the industries concerned must set up their own committees to expose the real culprits - the profit-hungry capitalist system and its representative, the Thatcher government.

Unless this action is taken it is only a matter of time before the next disaster strikes.

Inside this week's Workers Press

- A review of 'The Satanic Verses' by Salman Rushdie - Tom Owen
- A letter from a Republican prisoner in Long Kesh - pages 6&7
- Appeal for the Vietnamese Trotskyists - page 7

Workers Press

The bureaucrats and the Ayatollah

ON 26 February Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze visited Tehran.

Interrupting his tour of the Middle East which continued his efforts to end the Palestinian struggle against Zionism, he was given a warm welcome by the Ayatollah's men.

Among other topics of conversation, Gorbachev's representative offered his services as an unbiased mediator between the Iranian and British governments on the Rushdie affair. Mrs. Thatcher herself had requested as much.

But one subject we can be sure was not discussed. For the past six months the Iranian regime has been engaged in killing off thousands of its political prisoners. Among them have been many members of the Tudeh Party, the Iranian Stalinist movement as well as opposition groups of workers and Kurdish fighters.

Thousands of their tortured bodies have been flung into mass graves. Some of them were nearing the end of fairly short prison sentences when they were dragged off to face the firing squads.

The 'Morning Star' recently allocated a large part of one of its issues to the fate of the Tudeh members. Workers Press strongly supported their denunciation of the brutality of the Khomeini regime. Since then the issue has been completely dropped by the Stalinist daily. Now it is easy to see why.

Whatever changes are now taking place in the USSR and whatever confusion these are causing in the various Stalinist groups, these people remain the abject servants of the Stalinist bureaucracy.

In the days of their late leader Joseph Stalin, they followed every twist and turn of Moscow policy. Very often this meant concealing the truth about attacks on leaders and rank and file members in the workers' movement and especially on their own comrades.

We are not referring here to those thousands of communists who were destroyed in the jails of the Soviet bureaucracy itself, but to victims of the imperialists. The most notorious was in 1939. Stalin celebrated his alliance with Hitler by handing over some of the German communists who had taken refuge in Russia after 1933.

Survivors of the concentration camps have recalled how Stalin inmates were taunted by their Nazi captors when the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed and when Stalin sent birthday greetings to the Fuehrer.

The bureaucracy never allowed the presence of their loyal supporters in the prisons of some oppressive government to get in the way of diplomatic manoeuvres. More recently they have been on the best of terms with Turkish as well as other governments responsible for the murder of Communist Party members.

The Workers Revolutionary Party, true to the traditions of Bolshevism and of the Fourth International, will always defend the rights of those who struggle against imperialism and its agents whatever our political disagreements with them. We condemn the Stalinist cynicism of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze.

- Down with secret diplomacy!
- Down with the Khomeini executioners!
- Long live the Iranian working class!

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

In so far: £329.73

WE have a long way to go for our £2,000 March Fighting Fund. But we got off to an encouraging start with a donation of \$100 from LG in the USA to whom we send our warmest greetings and thanks. He wrote:

'You still put out a thoroughly revolutionary paper and your programme is excellent.'

And a letter came from a 20 year old German comrade with serious questions for discussion and clarification. He is seeking 'political connections with genuine Trotskyists'.

Publication of Workers Press is an important part of the work for reconstruction of the Fourth International, vital for genuine socialism and masses of ordinary people fighting capitalism and imperialism throughout the world. Help us ensure that the £2,000 target is reached this month.

Dot Gibson

Send donations to: Workers Press Fighting Fund
PO Box 735, London, SW9 7QS

MARXIST STUDENT SOCIETY FOUNDED

DUNDEE University Marxist Society has held its first two meetings. The Workers Revolutionary Party film 'The Bolsheviks' was shown, at the first meeting, followed by a discussion opened by WRP member Joe Eyre of the Education Institute of Scotland (EIS) the teachers' union.

Many questions have been raised, and it is proposed that future regular monthly meetings should deal with them.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

On Sunday 12 March, an International Womens' Day picket is being held at Durham prison, in support of Irish Republican women prisoners, followed by a march to nearby Frankland prison. (Assemble 12 midday at the prison, Old Elvet, Durham).

On Saturday 18 March, the Irish in Britain Representation Group March for Peace and Justice will join up with a demonstration organised by the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign. Assemble 12.00 midday, Whittington Park.

A national demonstration against the poll tax takes place in Glasgow on the same day.

Sunday 23 April sees a Blair Peach Memorial March and Meeting in Southall, organised by the Friends of Blair Peach, numerous black and community groups and campaigns, Labour Party black sections, the National Union of Students and others.

Will all WRP members outside London please send items for this diary. There is life north of Watford, we think!

LONDON WRP LECTURES

'Marxism': a series of lectures by Cyril Smith. No. 2, 'Marxism and nature', Friday 17 March, Room 9 Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1.

'Marxism and Ireland': a series of meetings. The second meeting on 'British workers and Ireland - from Karl Marx's time onwards' will take place on Wednesday 22 March at 7.30 p.m., Brent Irish Centre, Salusbury Road, London NW6.

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Please send me information about the Workers Revolutionary Party

Name.....date.....

Address.....

Trade union.....Age (if under 21).....

Send to: Secretary to the Central Committee,
PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

Five years since the miners' strike



Grim determination in the faces of men and women during the 1984-1985 British miners' strike

BY STUART CARTER

'The government's objective was to break Britain's most combative union, and hand the industry over to the multi-nationals. They have not succeeded in this and the stakes remain the same,' said French miners' leader Alain Simon at the rally in Manchester held to mark the fifth anniversary of the miners' strike.

More than 1,000 gathered to draw the lessons of the strike and continue the fight for justice for sacked and victimised miners.

Simon continued, 'You showed the capacity to fight the capitalist logic of market forces. The price of coal is determined by international markets and the stock exchanges.'

'But we know that the price of extracting coal is the blood of South African miners and Columbian children and we refuse therefore to accept the price of coal as justification for pit closures.'

Arthur Scargill opened with an

emotional tribute to the women's support groups and the international trade union solidarity which had sustained the miners' strike.

He mentioned the French miners who sent 40 juggernauts of food and toys at Christmas, also Austra-

lian trade unionists who insured that not one piece of coal left for Britain during the strike and above all the South African miners who, despite starvation wages, sent money to British miners. He said:

'11,000 miners were arrested during the strike. Others were

jailed on trumped-up charges and two men are still serving seven years for manslaughter. 'The strike was not about uneconomic pits, but about the government's attempt to destroy the NUM. There are three reasons why the strike was not more effective.

'The Nottinghamshire miners, who with 5,000 honourable exceptions did not strike, the deputies' union who did not strike despite ballot decisions to do so.

'But above all, if the British trade union movement and the TUC had called on the working class to take industrial action, that would have won the miners' strike.

'We were right to take the action we did and I have no regrets. The problem now is that 'new realism', the politics of fear, is crippling the labour movement and even sections of the NUM. Thatcher was elected by only 42 per cent of those who voted. The new realists should learn from Nelson Mandela and the people of Vietnam, Nicaragua and Cuba who showed that you can take on powerful enemies.'

Scargill ruled out a six-day week or a pact with the UDM. He criticised the Labour leaders and Kinnock who wanted to water down their policies and instead called for 'the whole means of production, distribution, and exchange to be taken into public ownership'.

He finished: 'I don't want Labour to win the next election. I've seen them win elections before. I want them to win political power and take away the privileges of the ruling class'. • **Workers Press will comment next week.**

I write to inform Briefing readers of a vicious slander campaign being conducted in Leeds against Cliff Slaughter.

In an open letter to Leeds Trades Council, Slaughter explains:

'...a vicious public campaign of vilification against my son (Patrick Slaughter) and against me and the political party of which I am secretary (the WRP)... (is being) carried out by, amongst others, certain members of Leeds TUC who, I know, do not represent that body or the overwhelming majority of the members.

'Part of this campaign, slandering Partick Slaughter as a racist and fascist, and me and the WRP as advocating defence of racists and fascists, was the leaflet distributed to Trades Council delegates at the December meeting by Stephen Long and other members of an organisation calling itself the

We reprint below a letter written to Labour Briefing on the case of Patrick Slaughter

International Communist Party.

'This leaflet referred, among other things, to, 'the campaign led by the Cliff Slaughter-led Workers Revolutionary Party which calls upon labour movement organisations to come to the defence of racists and fascists.

'The leaflet then says, "It became clear in the course of the ('Wild Boar') trial that Patrick Slaughter associated with proven fascists."

'...The main point here is the

utterly unprincipled resort to guilt by association, a favourite method of the class enemy, in its police work and in its anti-working class capitalist press...'

Over the 20 years I have known Cliff Slaughter I have had many political disagreements with him, but I know that he has never been soft on fascists or their supporters.

I therefore condemn the miserable attempt by the International Communist Party to attack Cliff Slaughter over the imprisonment of his son, Patrick.

The ICP's method of linking an arrested football fan with Patrick Slaughter, and hence with his father, shows that this political current has failed to absorb any of the basic standards of socialist debates and method.

**Cllr Garth Frankland,
Leeds**

REMEMBER BLAIR PEACH

Editorial

Wreckers

Ten years ago a young schoolteacher, Blair Peach, was cut down in his prime after an anti-fascist demonstration in Southall. He was killed by a blow to the head from a police officer. His killer and other policemen closed ranks and shut their mouths and justice has never been done. For almost a decade Blair's widow, Celia Stubbs, fought through the courts to bring his killer to justice, and won many victories to gain access to secret police records of that day's events. In the end members of Blair's family in New Zealand accepted an out-of-court settlement and ended Celia's chances of bringing the facts into the light of day.

Last year during the international day of action we marched in solidarity to the unveiling of a plaque in Blair's name in Southall and pledged that on 23rd April 1989, the 10th anniversary of his murder, we would return thousands strong to remember and rekindle our faith in the struggle for which he died.

Months ago Anti-Fascist Action, Southall Monitoring Group, *Searchlight* and many other organisations started to organise for 23rd April, which is to be part of another day of action to be held throughout Europe. Celia Stubbs is the day's main sponsor. A few weeks ago the Socialist Workers' Party, the organisation responsible for the decline and destruction of the Anti-Nazi League nine years ago, started a disgusting whispering campaign and finally announced that, hiding behind a front set up, they would hold their own march at the same time and place. Over the last weeks we have tried to negotiate in a dignified way with them, to make sure the day was one of overall unity, but they have continued to lie and cheat.

On 21st February an advertisement appeared in the *Guardian*, claiming signatures on behalf of a couple of dozen groups, sponsoring the SWP's activity. Investigations revealed that many of the groups had not consented to their names appearing and were in fact supporting Celia Stubbs' call. The advertisement was therefore an act of political fraud. It also asked for money. Celia Stubbs, who spurned offers of thousands of pounds to stop pursuing her call for justice, is an example to us all, and for the SWP to vilify her and misuse Blair's memory in this way is beneath contempt. They have worked on the basis that the movement would not wash its dirty linen in public, but it is the SWP's linen which is soiled, not the true movement's. The truth has never harmed the struggle against the forces of reaction.

Now genuine anti-fascists are asking whose interest is served by such a wrecking tactic. It smacks of fifth column activity to divide the growing strength of the anti-fascist movement in Britain. But we learned a lesson with the ruination of the old ANL and this knife in the back technique will not work a second time.

So whilst the world's neo-nazi movement gathers in Denmark to celebrate the 100th year of Hitler's birth, we in this country will join Celia behind the AFA banner to march through Southall. At the same time tens of thousands of others in our movement will be on the streets across Europe. In Leeds others will join in behind the AFA northern network leadership, and the following night we invite all decent supporters in the struggle against racism and fascism to join us at Friends House, London, for an international rally.

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NOTICE TO ST...
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BY BRONWEN HANDYSIDE

Workers Press reprints above the editorial from the anti-fascist monthly, 'Searchlight', for March 1989.

It does not need much comment, except to point out the development in consciousness of leading forces in the working class and middle class over the last 10 years.

The many black and community groups involved in the organisation of the memorial march for Blair Peach have learned much since the destruction of the Anti-Nazi League, and they will not be used by a cynical and contemptuous political forces again.

Two mistakes that the Socialist Workers Party, and many others on the left make is that they are convinced both that they can never have anything to learn from the working class, and that workers are so stupid that they can never learn

anything themselves.

This has never been the Marxist method.

The SWP is finding out, that neither of these comforting principles are true. The principled members of the SWP, must demand an explanation from their leadership of these events.

Most members of the old Workers Revolutionary Party, before the 1985 split with Gerry Healy, were trained also in these happy convictions.

Through our break with Healy and others, and the Stalinist methods they defended, and now in our campaign to fight alongside workers to defend democratic rights, we are learning many lessons. Through our struggles we have reconquered many of the Marxist principles we almost lost. We have learned a lot about the destruction of a corrupt leadership and what it means.

We hope to take those principles

into the working class - to that end we want to open up a dialogue with workers and others on the question of our draft programme, recently published in the Workers Press, obtainable from PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS. Letters on the programme are most welcome.

We urge all our readers and supporters to attend the Memorial march and meeting for Blair Peach, who gave his life in the struggle against racism - Sunday 23 April, Assemble 1 p.m., Southall Park, Uxbridge Road, and march behind the official march banner with Celia Stubbs and the family of Blair Peach. All indications are that this will be the biggest anti-racist march for the 1980s, and will set the scene for the 1990s. There will be a meeting after the march at the Fenner Brockway Centre, South Road, Southall. For more information, to sponsor etc, contact the Southall Monitoring Group, 50/52 King Street, Southall, Middx UB2 4DB.

Workers' summit open path of trade union unity.

BY J.T. BARNEY

A NEW set of punitive anti-trade union laws in South Africa, modelled on Thatcher's anti-union legislation, has forced the country's largest union federations to a summit meeting to discuss urgently the question of united resistance.

COSATU (the Confederation of South African Trade Unions), led by Stalinists, wants to discuss united action with NACTU (National Council of Trade Unions) which groups the black consciousness unions that the Stalinists formerly denounced as 'agents of the system'.

One reason for COSATU's initiative is that they don't want to lose control of the mass movement. They fear that NACTU's socialist rhetoric will find an audience.

NACTU is responding with caution. It doesn't trust the Stalinists whose federation is bigger and more influential. NACTU's bureaucratic leaders, too, are anxious to keep control over a section of the working class.

The two federations distrust each other and are more concerned to protect their spheres of influence than to advance the workers' struggle. This is why NACTU could break its commitment to participate in the summit.

But mass pressure is a decisive factor. Under brutal attacks by the ruling class, the workers realise that their most important weapon is class unity. The Stalinists want to hitch this desire for unity to their policy of a 'broad-based front against apartheid'.

Serious workers should seek ways to link the struggle for trade union unity with all the other struggles of the oppressed - the hunger strikers for instance. But they must oppose the subordination of the struggle for union unity to a Stalinist-style 'popular front'.

The union summit is a big step forward. It shows that, despite retreat, the South African working class has not been defeated; that it wants to defend itself; that it knows that united action is central to its defence.

In short, the summit opens up the way to united action which will make possible the transformation of defensive struggles into offensive ones.

So serious workers are urging NACTU to reconsider its position of withdrawing from the summit. For the leaders of both federations talk of unity is intended more to induce the bosses to compromise than to prepare the workers for battle. Now that workers' expectations have been raised and talk of unity is in the air the leaders will find it hard to resist calls for joint action. But neither set of leaders will have any compunction about reverting to their old position once they get a chance. That is why a new, revolutionary leadership has to be built in South Africa.

FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

LENIN AND TROTSKY ON THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

THE WORKERS Revolutionary Party Women's Commission salutes women in all parts of the world who daily make enormous sacrifices and suffer terrible hardship in struggle against imperialism. We stand in solidarity with women such as Martina Anderson and Ella O'Dwyer held in Durham prison and subjected to the sexual torture of continuous strip-searching. We stand in solidarity with the many thousands who give all they have to the fight for socialist revolution.

International Women's Day was established by the German revolutionary Clara Zetkin at a socialist women's conference in 1910. March 8 was chosen in commemoration of a demonstration of women workers in New York City in 1908 when hundreds of women in the needle trades gathered to demand the vote and the building of a needle trades' union.

In the WRP, the expulsion of G.Healy and his supporters in 1985 made it possible for women to take their place with pride in the re-building of the Fourth International. In the three-and-a-half years since then, we have established that the central task in re-building the Fourth International is the defeat of counter-revolutionary Stalinism.

It is very appropriate on International Women's Day to re-print two extracts from V. Lenin and L. Trotsky, leaders of the 1917 October Revolution in Russia. Separated by 18 years, they show the unprecedented gains for women initiated by the Bolshevik leadership of the revolution, and then the reactionary reversal of those gains by the Stalinist bureaucracy.

The first piece is part of a speech made by Lenin in 1919 to a Conference of Non-Party Working Women. The second comes from Trotsky's writings in 1937 when the leadership of the October Revolution had been destroyed by Stalinism and Trotsky himself was in exile.

‘THE POSITION of woman is the most graphic and telling indicator for evaluating a social regime and state policy.

The October Revolution inscribed on its banner the emancipation of womankind and created the most progressive legislation in history on marriage and the family.

This does not mean, of course, that a 'happy life' was immediately in store for the Soviet woman.

Genuine emancipation *Trotsky*



‘IT SEEMS to me that any workers' state in the course of transition to socialism is faced with a double task. The first part of that task is relatively simple and easy.

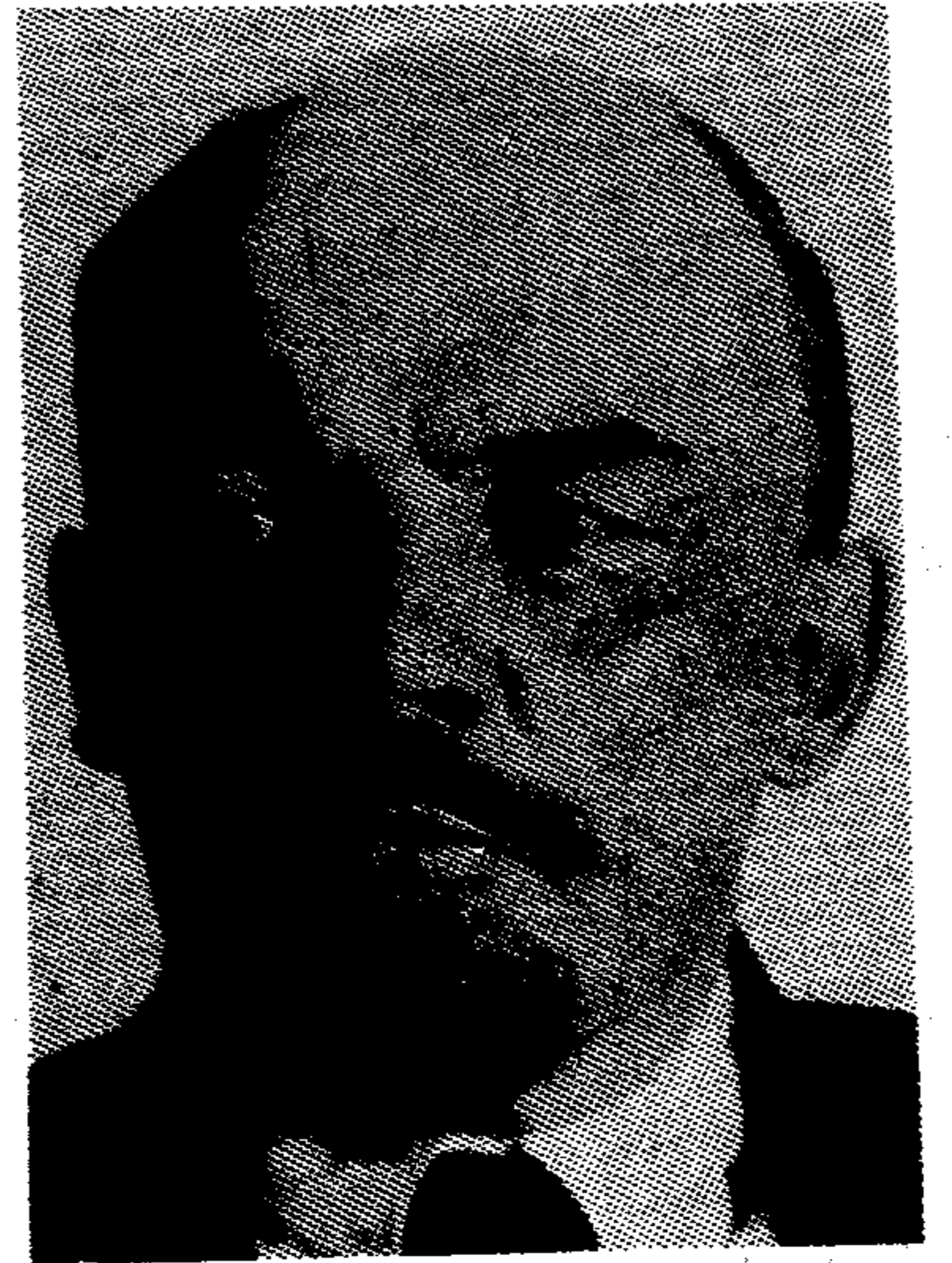
It concerns those old laws that kept women in a position of inequality as compared to men.

Participants in all emancipation movements in Western Europe have long since, not for decades but for centuries, put forward the demand that obsolete laws be annulled and women and men be made equal by law, but none of the democratic European states, none of the most advanced republics have succeeded in putting it into effect, because wherever there is capitalism, wherever there is private property in land and factories, wherever the power of capital is preserved, the men retain their privileges.

It was possible to put it into effect in Russia only because the power of the workers has been established here since 25 October 1917.

From the very inception Soviet power set out to be the power of the working people, hostile to all forms of exploitation. It set itself the task of doing away with the rule of capital.

Soviet power has been trying to make it possible for the working people to organise their lives without private property in land, without privately owned



Lenin

factories, without the private property that everywhere, throughout the world, even where there is complete political liberty, even in the most democratic republics, keeps the working people in a state of what is actually poverty, and wage slavery, and women in a state of double slavery...

We may now say proudly and without any exaggeration that apart from Soviet Russia there is not a country in the world where women enjoy full equality and where women are not placed in the humiliating position felt particularly in day-to-day family life. This was one of our first and most important tasks. 9

Lenin

On the Emancipation of Women
Progress Publishers,
pp 71-72

of women is inconceivable without a general rise of economy and culture, without the destruction of the petty-bourgeois economic family unit, without the introduction of socialised food preparation, and education.

Meanwhile, guided by its conservative instinct, the bureaucracy has taken alarm at the 'disintegration' of the family.

It began singing panegyrics to the family supper and the family laundry, that is, the household slavery of

woman. To cap it all, the bureaucracy has restored criminal punishment for abortions, officially returning women to the status of pack animals.

In complete contradiction with the ABC of Communism, the ruling caste has thus restored the most reactionary and benighted nucleus of the class system, i.e., the petty-bourgeois family. 9

Leon Trotsky,
Writings 1937-38,
Pathfinder Press, p.170

Letter from a Republican prisoner



I WOULD like to express appreciation at the recent publication of 'Politics From The Prisons'. Not only did it demonstrate substantial solidarity with the Irish democratic struggle, it also disclosed a perceptive awareness on your part of the nature of the struggle.

The concluding pages of the publication carried a resolution passed at the Workers Revolutionary Party's ninth congress. That resolution was an unambiguous refusal to compromise with imperialism or to assign any positive aspects to it. As such it is a laudable resolution. There are, however, a number of areas in which the resolution seems to lack analytical incisiveness.

Firstly, the idea of sectarianism as a mere tool is incomplete. Implicit in this view is that if we remove those who wield the tool, or if we can dissipate the fog of false consciousness, then the Orange working class will be more perceptive to progressive ideas.

This ignores the material reality of sectarianism rooted in the protestant working class institutions and practices, and which can exist independent of ruling class manipulators. As Bill Rolston points out 'the Unionist working class has frequently by-passed the more dominant classes within the Unionist bloc in terms of full-blooded commitment to sectarianism'.

Secondly, the resolution refers to an intra-Unionist division between ultra-loyalists and devolutionists which it characterises as a 'crisis'.

How accurate is it to call any such split a crisis? Are devolutionists not ultra-Loyalists and vice versa? Would it not be more correct to say that the term 'split' can only be meaningfully applied if it relates to a tension between devolutionists and integrationists?

Moreover, can it be argued with any enthusiasm that such a tension constitutes a crisis? If it does then would such a crisis have any transformative potential? I do not believe so.

Thirdly, the idea that Loyalism is only as

strong as its master has not been borne out by history. At times it has been so deep-rooted in the Protestant working class that it is difficult to see it evaporating even in the wake of a British withdrawal.

Furthermore, the resolution's 'absolute confidence' - that the best and most class conscious sections of protestant workers will prove to be the most valiant fighters - is misplaced.

One or two will become revolutionaries, perhaps; but one or two protestants have been members of the Republican movement over the years; protestants have died on active service with the IRA. I would contend that this is the exception that proves the rule.

Fourthly, the resolution in attempting to suggest why the British continue to remain in Ireland puts forward a 'negative' reason, i.e. the British feel that if they were to leave working-class revolt would occur.

But why would it occur? The factors militating against the likelihood of such a revolt would include: (1) no working-class movement has gained hegemony over the working class; (2) the Orange working class are unlikely to develop revolutionary aspirations; (3) the southern working class displays no signs of being more militant now than it was in the 1960s when it topped the world strike league without coming close to revolting.

The resolution in this regard seems to be more hopeful than realistic and tends to appear somewhat economic. In my view the anti-imperialist movement has never produced a comprehensive and coherent analysis pertaining to overall British interests in Ireland.

Work in this field has been fragmented and hollow sounding (this by no means proves that the resolution's interpretation must be ruled out as arguably extensive research and investigation may support the contention it makes).

Anti-imperialist analysis too often draws on the statements of ruling class figures and their allies such as the late John Biggs-Davison and T.E. Utley, but without actually attempting to ascertain just how representative of ruling class opinion such views are.

While such threadbare analysis may satisfy the faithful it is surely incumbent on thinking Marxists to offer the anti-imperialist movement an in-depth comprehensive and coherent analysis.

Fifthly, the decision by your Party to defend the right of the IRA to fight 'in whatever way it seems fit' may leave you open to the

accusation of 'tailism'. If the IRA were to resort to their campaign of sectarian warfare which it waged under the truce leadership of 1974/1976 would you still defend that right?

The present Republican leadership would hardly countenance such a move nor recognise any 'right' to make such a move.

Adams' recent call to the IRA to be careful and careful again was a warning that some things are fit and some things are not and the IRA must not be the sole judge in such matters.

The issues raised by an IRA campaign, however justifiable that campaign may be in general terms, are of such complexity, both morally and politically, that it appears to be an abdication of your revolutionary responsibility to make the point as you do.

Although you give unconditional support to the IRA you do 'counterpose the strategy of working-class action to their strategy'.

In so doing you seem to imply that a major reason for the Republican movement failing to opt for working-class action is that it believes 'there are two stages to the struggle', one national and the other social.

Despite protestations by many Republicans to the contrary, and Gerry Adams' recent ambivalence on the matter notwithstanding, the bulk of Republican strategical articulation combined with Republican political practice in the 26 counties would appear to confirm the validity of your assertion.

However, the issue cannot rest here. We must look beyond your criticism despite its correctness and examine the nature of the relationship between the Republican movement and the working class in the 32 counties.

Throughout its history the Republican movement has shown little inclination to view working-class potential in the manner that Marxists do. However the movement's approach to the working class displays dichotomy in relation to the working class in the north and that in the south.

According to a wide range of Marxist thought, the workers most open to Marxist ideas (and consequently ripe for mobilisation on working-class issues) are the industrial proletariat in the six counties.

The industrial proletariat largely comprises reactionary loyalists. The nationalist working class in the north is marginalised to the periphery of the industrial proletariat. The Republican movement accepts that it is a waste of time and resources directing anything other than the occasional rhetorical statement towards the loyalist workers.

However, it does have a relationship with the nationalist working class and does not exist separate from it.

The nationalist working class has found little structural space to mobilise in the traditional time honoured industrial way.

Yet it has mobilised and taken an insurrectionary stance against the state and expressed itself through the Republican movement. While it has not acted as a class for itself, its mobilisation against the state and its interreaction with the Republican movement suggest that the Republican movement is very much involved in working-class action.

As for the south, there is indeed a failure on the part of the Republican movement to attempt to mobilise the working class. This is linked, in my opinion, to the yet-to-be-demonstrated belief that there is a strong but sleeping anti-imperialist element in and around Fianna Fail. This Blaney-type Republican element, rurally based, conservative in outlook, Catholic in ethos, and bitterly opposed to women's emancipation, must seemingly be wooed if the struggle is to be won.

CAMPAIGN FOR VIETNAMESE TROTSKYISTS

We reproduce here the resolution calling for the truth to be told about the Vietnamese Trotskyists assassinated by the Stalinists during the 1945 revolution which has been launched in Paris. We urge friends and organisations in the working-class movement to write and give their support.

THE undersigned, having participated actively in the movement of solidarity with the Vietnamese people in their struggle for independence, demand that justice finally be done in the cases of the Vietnamese Trotskyist leaders Ta Thu Thau, Tran Van Thach, Nguyen Van So, Phan Van Hum, Phan Van Chanh, Huynh Van Phuong etc.

These men, survivors of the French colonial prison camps, had a wide audience in the Saigon working class during the 1930s. At that time they played an important role in the trades unions and Indochinese Congress. At different times they were elected to the Municipal Council of Saigon.

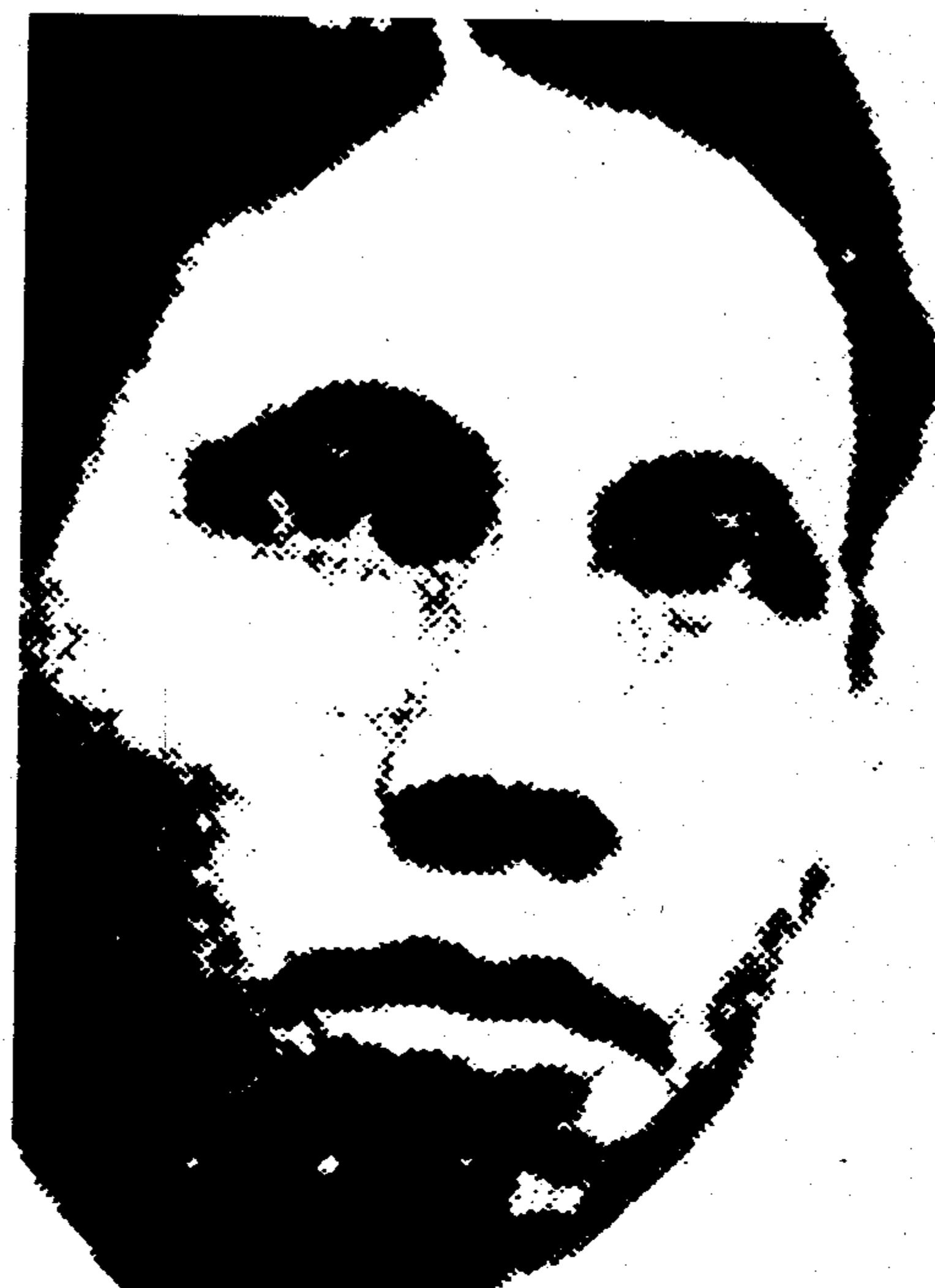
They were all arrested by the Vietminh, and then disappeared, in 1945.

At the time when the accused of the three Moscow trials have been rehabilitated in Moscow, and when the question of Trotsky has been opened up in the Soviet Union, at the time when voices have been raised in Hanoi for dignity to be restored to members of the Nhan van Giai Pham who were slandered in a vile fashion in 1956, it is high time to fill the blank pages - or rather to replace the ripped-out pages - of the history of the communist movement in Vietnam.

We demand free access to all documents relating to the 1930s and the 1945 revolution; we demand the re-publication of the writings of the Trotskyist fighters who disappeared. Vietnam cannot go forward without knowing its own history, and the history cannot be written while certain truths remain hidden.

• **First signatories:**

Laurent Schwartz (mathematician), Marcel Francis Kahn (professor of medicine), Madeleine Reberieux (university professor), Jean Chesneaux (historian), Georges Boudarel (historian), Michel Leiris (writer), Pierre Naville (writer), Maurice Nadeau (writer), Francois Thierry (university professor), Pierre Broué (historian), JM Krivine (surgeon), Yves Dechezelles (lawyer), Jeanne Singer (Research director CNRS), Daniel Singer (journalist), Georges Benrekassa (university professor), Christiane Marchello-Nizia (university professor), Marguerite Bonnet (university professor), JR Chauvin (writer), Philippe Bernier (writer), Yvonne Lenoir (doctor), Mattieu Cobis (CNRS), Noam Chomsky (MIT-USA), Tamara Deutscher (writer), Tariq Ali (journalist), Robin Blackburn (editor), Ken Coates (Bertrand Russell Foundation), Cliff Slaughter (sociologist, University of Bradford; Preparatory Committee for an International Conference of Trotskyists),



Ta Thu Thau

Gregor Benton (sociologist University of Amsterdam), Barbara Karsky (university professor), Jacques Kergoat (sociologist), Pierre Rousset (Writer), Dang Van Long (director of 'Chroniques Vietnamiennes'), Hoang Don Tri (engineer), Nguyen Giap Thoi (journalist), Hoang Khoa Khoi (technician), Tran Van Sam (worker), Tran Nu Liem Khe (student), Nguyen Lien (worker), Hoang Binh (retired), Hoang Kim Nga (professor), Simon Pirani (journalist, England; Workers Revolutionary Party), Adelaida Mangani (director of Argentinian Theatre), Ernesto Goldar (Argentinian writer), Ernesto Gonzales (MAS - Argentine LIT-CI), Luis Zamora (MAS), Marcelo Parilli (MAS), Silvia Diaz (MAS), Alberto Franceschi (PST Venezuela), Ricardo Napuri (PST Perou), Gyory Krasso (Hungarian October), Balazs Nagy (ex-member of the Petofo Circle of 1956 in Hungary; Preparatory Committee for an International Conference of Trotskyists), Janos Borovi (Combat International), Zbigniew Kowalewski, Ernest Mandel (USFI), Livio Maitan (USFI), Alain Krivine (LCR), Christian Picquet (LCR), Gerard Filoche (LCR), Michel Lequenne (LCR), Pierre Lambert (PCI), Francois Forge (PCI), G.Viennet (doctor), Bodet (student), Alain Tournier (teacher), Pierre Mirsalis (teacher), Elie Daniel (EDF), Christiane Barale (lecturer), Annick Masson (lecturer), R.Masson (teacher), D.Lecat (teacher), Froitiens (student), Saint Martin (teacher), Alain Rudier (professor), Daniel Assouline (teacher), Lenorviand (PTT), Alain Rame (nurse), Fabrice Zampolini (SNCF), Denise Mimouni, (teacher), Jean Marie Dotal (teacher), Jean Charles Spampeli (bookseller), Tashiro Yuko (audiovisuals), Marcel Pecastaings (EGF), Noel Lechat (computer scientist), Coussuant (teacher), M.Maitre (Teacher), Jean Carnet (factory inspector), M.Metayer (worker), Yves Berthault (teacher), Christophe Gilbert (PTT), B.Dupont, Michel Denoule, Ilandarideva (painter), Umeç (teacher), Louise Prager (teacher), Maurice Rajsfus (writer).

• **To add your signature write to:**
Chroniques Vietnamiennes, BP 746 - 75532, Paris Cedex 11, France
or: Preparatory Committee, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS, Britain

This is clearly one reason why 'socialism is not on the agenda'. This Republican constituency must not be alienated.

All this in spite of the interesting observation made by Kevin Kelly two years ago that there is 'clear evidence of an unslaked yearning among parts of the Irish electorate for some kind of credible ideological (not merely political) alternative'.

Perhaps, then, the Republican strategy is hopeless. Yet, if this is so, are Republicans alone wholly culpable for choosing such an option rather than heed the advice of the British left to put socialism on the agenda and all which that entails, such as the mobilisation of the working class and so on and so forth?

A major problem for Republicans in accepting as valid the advice of the left in Britain on this matter, and in particular on the nature of a socialist programme outlined by you, is the seeming irrelevance of the left to British political life.

Republicans may be understood if not excused for displaying a distaste for the advice of the left when to many Republicans, forged in the heat of the struggle, the staple diet of the left is a form of 'Punch and Judy' politics. Punch, Stalin, thrashes Judy, Trotsky and vice versa.

It is seemingly incessant, an end rather than a means. Meanwhile the audience, to whom a realistic alternative is supposedly being offered, sit and poke fun or go to better 'shows' elsewhere.

The apparent impotence of the British left is viewed by many Republicans as being inextricably linked to these 'irrelevant and somewhat theological' debates.

They incapacitate the left, satisfy nothing and allow the state to march on.

Moreover, it is hard to convince Republicans that the left in Britain do not serve a functional need to British capitalism. In the behaviour of any political group is a projection of future life should that group ever take power.

The fragmentation, incessant sniping and turgid denunciation of each other's views all serve to project an image of a totally disorderly future.

People may crave material improvements but they also wish to be free from chaos in order to enjoy them. The British left seem strategically deficient in this respect and they cannot absolve themselves of blame for the success of Thatcher in strengthening the right and ridiculing the left.

Republicans look at their own experience, sacrifices and achievements, no matter how minor the latter may be, and they cannot be faulted for thinking that, in spite of their theoretical inadequacies, they have posed a greater challenge to the British state over the past 20 years than the entire British left for all its theoretical clarity and revolutionary wisdom.

Comrades, there is a need to put socialism on the agenda. An agenda devoid of socialism is an empty shell. Marxist Republicans are trying to raise socialism to the agenda at all times. Their task is not always aided by the British left.

If Republicans are to emulate the left they will only do so in relation to successes and not failure. Demonstrate that struggle and not squabble is the order of the day and perhaps you may be part of that process of putting socialism on the agenda.

A. McIntyre

Republican prisoner, Long Kesh

• 'Politics from the prisons and other articles about Ireland' is a Workers Press Supplement. Price 80p (£1 post free) from PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

LETTERS

Write to: Workers Press, PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

Anti-fascist record

OUTSIDE the delegate meeting of the Leeds Trades Council on 22 February, four 'International Communist Party' members called Patrick Slaughter a fascist and accused Cliff Slaughter of organising a campaign in the labour movement in defence of fascists.

These are not only vicious lies; they place members of the ICP in the camp of anti-communism.

As far as we are concerned this is not a personal battle but a question of Marxism. We had a similar battle with the Healyites in the Healy WRP. Healy, North and Mitchell slandered Hanson and co., then Healy and Mitchell slandered North.

North persists with the same method. It was he who led his delegation out of the Central Committee meeting in 1985, stating that he was not going to take part in an attack on Healy's regime. He was 'here to appease the warring factions'.

That was his starting point.

The ICP and all supporters of North perpetuate the sectarianism and anti-Marxism of the Healyite WRP. The attack on comrade Cliff Slaughter is an attack on our Party and every one of its members.

My memories of Cliff Slaughter's anti-fascist activities go back a very long way. I was a delegate to the Leeds Trades Council for 14 years, from 1954 until I moved to London as a full-time worker for the Socialist Labour League in 1968.

Having returned to Leeds recently and having sold our paper, Workers Press, outside the Leeds Trades Council over the past few months, I find that, 20 years later, delegates have not forgotten the anti-fascist stand we took.

I am proud of that history. I moved the resolution in support of the Hungarian workers in 1956. It was in line with the principled struggle we conducted against all reaction and fascism. Our Party played no small part in turning the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament towards the trade unions and unilateralism.

Cliff Slaughter took a leading role in all of these struggles. The views of his son, Patrick, have been made very clear, not only by statements of his own but in the very fact that the only literature the police found when they raided his room was socialist and communist, together with a WRP membership card and a CND badge.

It was in the early 1960s that

Cliff and I heard that Jordan and his British Nationalist Party were out in force, selling their paper 'Combat' in Albion Street. We explained to passers-by who they were and began to assemble a group of people, including some from a local coffee shop Cliff knew personally. They in turn were able to rally many more.

Before long we had the fascists surrounded and were about to get stuck into them when the police arrived to rescue them. They were still chanting their Nazi slogans from the police van which we followed until it was outside Leeds.

That was no isolated incident. We organised and led many demonstrations in Bradford where there was a strong fascist presence.

The secretary of the Leeds fascists actually wrote a letter to the 'Yorkshire Evening Post', telling them he was resigning because he found politics too dangerous. He had earlier received a beating from some local anti-fascists.

People going into the 22 February meeting were horrified by what the ICP members were saying. One delegate said it was absolutely ludicrous - and he had refused to speak to Cliff since Cliff broke from the Communist Party 30 years ago!

I am sure those who know Cliff Slaughter's record of anti-fascism, disregarding any political differences they may have with him, will disown this vile campaign.

Workers Press supporters should do everything they can to denounce the anti-communist methods of the ICP. They should write to their local Trades Councils and get resolutions opposing it passed through their union branches.

Norman Harding

Rushdie: not a 'black issue'!

AT a NALGO (Sheffield) executive meeting on 2 March an attempt was made by shop stewards to debate the adoption and endorsement of an inoffensive statement by the Friends of Salman Rushdie.

The branch officials refused to allow debate on the motion claiming: 'This is a black issue and should be first debated by black members!'

So an issue that is fundamentally a libertarian one is seen by NALGO as a black issue; of course this clearly reflects the bankruptcy of

Sheffield City Council's multicultural policy.

Sheffield's 'socialist?' council in common with the Labour Party confuse tolerant multiculturalism with religious fundamentalism of a particularly oppressive kind.

After witnessing the tortuous posturings of the left in the Labour Party (Pat Wall, the Bradford MP, for example) and silence from Kinnock, the lukewarm attitude of appeasement from the Tories (Thatcher and Howe - we are upset by the suggestion that England is a fascist state), a respected author with an international reputation for attacking injustice is under a very real threat of death and driven to seek support from Paddy Ashdown and his salads.

Rod Baser
Sheffield NALGO

Who... and why?

THERE was surely no confusion, as Terry Brotherstone seems to suggest, about the point behind Clare Cowen's letter, 'Just who is Vanessa Redgrave?'

She asked quite specifically: 'Why can Workers Press not divorce Redgrave's acting qualities from her political role?'

Terry's concern to defend the quality of the review by David Pilling, which was never in question in Clare's letter, and, as he puts it, the policy of Workers Press to cover the arts, evades the matter raised about the decision to publish it, 'divorced' as Clare says that it was, from the political issues involved.

Assuming that the review was written for submission for publication in Workers Press, does not the political orientation of the Party towards the working class, expressed through its leading committees between congresses, guide what should and should not appear in the paper?

Was the piece really considered from the point of view of taking into account, as Terry states, 'the sort of readership that the paper may be presumed to have?'

The contradictions Terry meets on the way to fleshing out his case are most illuminating.

He says, for instance, that the special obstacle to 'covering the event' was the difficulty of finding many regular correspondents who would feel confident about reviewing the production in an unbiased manner. (Clare wrote of the difficulty of finding anyone who had been in the Party at the time of the split 'willing to watch her - Redgrave's - performance'.)

Having found 'the answer' which also lacked 'the indulgent verbosity which sometimes mars the work of some Workers Press reviewers'

(itself no reason for its appearance, although the point was well made); its publication, he claims, 'marked a real step forward in...the struggle to make Workers Press into a fully-fledged, objective, Marxist, workers' newspaper'. That the review's possible 'leading towards the evolution of a new standard of theatre criticism' was another reason given by Terry in vindication for its publication. The London critics' (of whom he rightly appears so disparaging) 'generally ecstatic assessments of the "English acting scene"', would actually have got it right on this occasion, according to Terry.

The play was 'almost universally hailed in the bourgeois Press', he tells us. And they didn't mention her politics either! A real step forward to an objective Marxist newspaper? That statement has still to be justified.

The decision to publish the review, and its provocative headline ('out of tune' with the main line, as Clare points out) must have given offence to many supporters of Workers Press.

An accompanying editorial statement would not have been amiss.

Meanwhile I, too, welcome Clare Cowen's letter; 'moving, important' and entirely clear.

Once again; just who is Vanessa Redgrave?

Jeff Jackson
SW London WRP

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Yugoslavia

Break the silence on the Albanian political prisoners!

BY RADOSLAV PAVLOVIC
IN YUGOSLAVIA there is an unprincipled coalition in the bureaucracy, and the Serbian leaders are the most reactionary part of it.

This coalition is based on an official but wholly false position which has been adopted by the Yugoslav League of Communists (the Yugoslav Communist Party).

It is claimed that since 1981 - if not before - a 'counter-revolution' has been in progress in Kosovo, an 'autonomous region' in the south of Serbia, 85 per cent of whose population are Albanians.

It's a funny sort of counter-revolution, say the Albanians. It has the red flag and slogans against the 'red bourgeoisie', and against social inequality.

Within the Yugoslav coalition the Serbs are pushing for a policy of military intervention. This is clear from the large-scale intimidation and repression that already exist.

While the Belgrade press spews out lies full blast, the Albanians are not able to contradict them.

For example, the Serbs held a big meeting in Belgrade on 19 November last year. The object of the meeting, called by Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, was to do away with Kosovo's autonomy.

The Albanian miners from the big Trepcja complex decided to reply to this challenge by demonstrating in the regional capital of Pristina, to show their opposition to the attack on their national rights.

When the miners gathered at dawn on the morning of 19 November in front of the management building and expressed some uncertainty about the march, the administration tried to dissuade them, but without much conviction.

If they had succeeded they would have put the Albanian leaders at federal level, already under pressure to resign, in a difficult position.

Then a Serbian woman, Juliana Gasic, the party leader in the mine, called out: 'Let's go! Let them know who the miners are!'

And the whole lot of them set off to the capital on foot, the management at the head of the column.

The miners were wearing their helmets, and order and discipline on the march were exemplary. There were national flags at the front, but there were red flags as well.

This shows that despite Belgrade's astonishingly chauvinistic campaign, class links between Albanians and Serbs are still firm

in Kosovo. And this is the only guarantee for the future.

But there is silence about the thousands of Albanian prisoners. Their exact number is carefully concealed from public opinion in Yugoslavia, but it is probably between 2,000 and 3,000.

Most of them are young people: young workers as well as students and teachers.

The reason for this silence, which extends beyond Yugoslavia, is that the prisoners have all been sentenced under the severest article of the Yugoslav penal code: counter-revolutionary activity. Yet there is not the slightest evidence of this.

The charges were counter-revolution, separatism, an attempt to create a wholly Albanian region with no Serbs in it, and so on.

As can be seen from the preface (published below) to a recent Albanian pamphlet, the Albanians



are only demanding respect for their dignity and real equality for their nation within the Yugoslav Federation.

This was expressed in their demand for Republic status for Kosovo instead of its remaining in the doubtful situation of an 'autonomous region'.

The letter mentioned in the preface is one that five Albanian

prisoners wrote to the Yugoslav authorities in the spring of 1985.

Point by point they refuted the accusations that had been hurled at them and their comrades.

What happened to them illustrates eloquently the methods of the Yugoslav political police, the notorious UDB-a, who are as brutal as Ceausescu's Securitatea are in Rumania.

The truth about the Albanian prisoners

THE letter to the Presidential Group of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia was written in 1985 by Albanian political prisoners in the Belgrade Central Prison, on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the popular demonstrations in Kosovo in 1981.

Albanian political prisoners have often written protests. They have been on hunger strike in prisons throughout Yugoslavia. However, the Yugoslav state never mentions these events in its newspapers.

The people who signed this letter of protest did so to explain the causes and real character of the 1981 demonstrations.

This letter is a protest against the crimes and repressions which have been carried out against the Albanian people in Yugoslavia. It explains and analyses in detail the main causes of the popular protests in Kosovo.

It shows what the protesters were demanding and provides a scientific explanation of the conditions which led inevitably to open popular protests.

Five years have passed since those events took place. However, from that day to this, nobody has made a scientific analysis of them: neither those who declared

This is the preface to a pamphlet produced by the Marxist-Leninist Organisation of Kosovo in 1986

themselves for the 'Kosovo Republic' slogan nor the Yugoslav state itself.

This is the importance of this precious document. Because it has come into our hands we are able to inform the public of Yugoslavia and the whole world.

The letter was sent to the authorities of the Belgrade Central Prison on 8 March 1985.

A few days later the Albanian political prisoners who had signed the letter were separated and dispersed throughout Serbian prisons.

For more than a month the UDB-a used ferocious methods against those who had signed, particularly Zijah Shemsiu. And on May Day 1985 - International Workers' Day - they murdered him.

Once again the UDB-a had destroyed a brave Albanian patriot. This time it was not able to conceal its crime or why it had been committed.

While he was still alive Zijah Shemsiu, with the help of a friend of Serbian nationality, managed to send us a copy of the letter.

The result is that the UDB-a has killed this brave Albanian patriot without preparing public opinion for the announcement of his death in their usual way.

Now we have in our hands the document which was the cause of this new crime by the UDB-a and we shall let the public know about it.

The Yugoslav League of Communists is about to begin its 13th Congress. It will do its best to distort the reasons for the Kosovo affair; it will do its best to make a travesty of the truth and avoid the truth.

This document reveals the truth which the Yugoslav Government has been trying to distort for the last five years.

Even if the Yugoslav Government should keep 15,000 Albanians behind bars as political prisoners it can never imprison the truth. All its attempts to do so will be in vain and will end shamefully.

Sooner or later justice will win and those who are now the source of oppression will have to give an account of themselves before the people and before history.

The letter was signed by: Zijah Shemsiu (sentenced to 13 years); Hydajet Hyseni (15 years); Bajram Kosumi (15 years); Ali Lajci (15 years); Gani Koci (15 years).

Personal Column

Peter Fryer

Salt of the earth

THIS week I celebrate a remarkable woman and a remarkable book.

The woman, who died just over two years ago at the age of 79, is Dulcie Yelland. She was one of the labour movement's countless unsung heroines, who shoulder more than their fair share of the daily drudgery of canvassing and meetings and literature sales.

Though Dulcie wrote like an angel, much of her best work appeared under a pen-name. When she died, Norman Harding reminded me of the articles, pungently exposing the intrigues of the right-wingers in Leeds Labour Party, that she contributed to 'The Newsletter' in the late 1950s under the byline 'Ursula Verity'.

Her widower Charles Yelland has put us all in his debt with his immensely readable account of Dulcie's life, entitled 'Dulcie Yelland 1907-1987: A Socialist of Our Times' (Leeds, Gipton History Group, £2.50).

Dulcie Yelland's life spanned an epoch of turbulent change: technological, social, cultural, and political. When she was born, motor cars had only just begun, flying-machines had not yet begun, to revolutionise transport.

The first imperialist world war started when she was seven; Russia's Bolshevik Revolution took place when she was ten; she was not yet 19 when Britain was gripped by the General Strike; she was in her mid-twenties when Hitler seized power in Germany.

This grand-daughter of a Welsh collier

was an intelligent young woman who thought for herself and could not and would not turn a blind eye to a world in deepening crisis.

She thirsted for explanations and for an answer to the question, 'What is to be done?'. So, after brief sojourns with the young theosophists and the young Liberals, she joined the Labour Party in 1933 and, under the impact of events in Spain and under the guidance of John and Mary Archer, became a Trotskyist four years later. She stayed a rebel to the end of her days.

Dulcie was a wonderful fighter, and a thorn in the flesh of employers who tried to take advantage of the war to cut across agreements.

When she worked in the canteen of a big Crossgates ordnance factory and organised her fellow-workers, they won a 40 per cent wage increase and other benefits.

When she moved to an engineering factory her militancy so upset the manager, a certain Colonel Lucy, that he offered to pay her full wages if she would stay at home. But he had to take her to a tribunal before he could get rid of her - and a firm that had been non-union for 100 years was by then fully unionised.

Charles Yelland's book is full of heart-warming stories like that. Read, for instance, how Dulcie clashed with 'Rat-face', the spit-spraying head rate-fixer at the AVRO aircraft factory in Yeadon, and how she got the better of him.

As in the industrial struggle, so in the fierce political battles within the Labour Party. Denis Healey, no less, paid her a memorable tribute when he burst out at a Divisional Management Committee:

'Oh, Dulcie Yelland, nobody takes any

notice of you any more. You're the most revolting Old Leftie in the whole bloody movement!'

Then there was the 1957 Labour Party conference, when for three days Dulcie was time after time not called to the rostrum. To the chair, she was invisible.

So she went and sat with the engineers, borrowed a hat to pull down over her face - and was at last called to speak on an anti-H-bomb resolution.

As she strode to the platform she heard that notorious witch-hunter Alice Bacon exclaim to the chair, Margaret Herbison: 'My God! What have you done? It's Dulcie Yelland!'

Dulcie's subsequent eloquent speech, with its call for the British working class to give a lead to the working class of the whole world, is here rescued from the oblivion of the Labour Party conference report and deservedly reprinted in full.

Behind Dulcie Yelland, as you read this book, you sense a whole phalanx of working-class women cast in the same mould as she - 'revolting Old Lefties' whose selfless devotion and courage over several generations have helped to build and sustain our movement and see it through the lean times.

Between Lydia Hardy, wife of the Scottish shoemaker who helped to found the London Corresponding Society in 1792, and the British miners' wives who showed their mettle during the strike of 1984-1985, there is a long unbroken line of women of this stamp.

They are the salt of the earth.

Dulcie Yelland was one of that stalwart sisterhood, and in this biography Charles Yelland has fashioned for her a moving and enduring monument.

AS I SEE IT

BY TOM OWEN

Bruno and the bear

I WATCHED the Bruno-Tyson encounter with the expressed intention of undermining the rationale for this barbaric game and hopefully furthering the cause of its abolition.

We have banned dog fighting, bear baiting and cock fighting and other forms of animal cruelty.

And yet man-fighting is promoted, spectacularised and given the status of a Super-bowl event, a Wimbledon Final or an Ascot Meeting.

In fact if boxing shares anything

with these other equally corrupt entertainments, it is that only the charmed circle of performers are allowed the money-making exposure that will buy the much fought-over viewing time.

The Bruno-Tyson spectacular dished out on the spot by SKY and relayed about 15 hours later by the 'straight' channels still provided for me a riveting view.

You forget the dirty desperate and violent selection procedure for this event. You forget the intrigue, corruption, sheer physical pain and danger of boxing.

You forget because like all 'contact sports' boxing has its higher skills and strategies and because of your adolescent enthusiasm in a culture that made heroes of men who could double their weekly earnings in the quarries and pits by breaking the jaw of some cynical spent-out fairground prize-fighter.

I admired and then worshipped Cassius Clay when he 'moved like a butterfly and stung like a bee'.

I kept it to myself. My political sympathies were with Dr Edith Summerskill (a Labour MP who campaigned tirelessly for the abolition of boxing as a cruel sport).

The event which made me eventually break from boxing and its mystique was the defeat of Mohammed Ali at the hands of Joe Frazier in 1971.

It was a bleak, bloody and

monotonous affair. It was what the media-moulded punters in the audience and their ideologues wanted to prove, that a top athlete with intelligence as well as skill, who had refused to fight an imperialist war and aligned himself with the oppressed, could be defeated by one of his own kind.

I shared a sense of disgust with a girl-friend's father, a tool-room engineer. I know little of his fate, but I remember the fight as an unlikely point of sympathy and agreement.

As for the gladiatorial TV spectacle-event itself, I must admit to a moderate rush of excitement.

I also was surprised by how far my critical faculties and disillusion with the game forced my attention to the sordid aspects of the events.

Greying connoisseurs of the game like Harry Carpenter et al setting the scene - Union Jack tee-shirts and flags disported by wealthy young skinheads and intro-logos of one armed bandits welcome to Las Vegas - inevitably give you a sense of distance.

Bruno's entrance was designed to be cool - impressive.

He flexed his over developed muscles, shrugged his mighty shoulders and eventually, as Harry Carpenter said, 'stared Tyson straight in the eyes'.

Tyson, on the other hand looked like his reputation, a street fighter.

The term 'pugilist' seems more than appropriate, a shaved head, an economically muscled body and a lethal if mixed-up mind. He is a young professional who literally shows his scars ... one on his head, one across the jugular and at least two in his back.

Bruno showed none of these signs of boxing out of the ghetto, he just rippled until he confidently entered the ring.

Harry Carpenter announced on Tyson's entry that he was at home, in the office where he did his business.

Bruno did not have to do much business, he only had to survive and earn two million quid without brain damage.

As far as that was concerned he did not do so bad. He clouted Tyson in the first round after coming back from the dead.

He tripped his way until exhaustion point in the fourth and had enough sense to take a beating that would end this mis-match with a towel thrown in by an anxious manager.

Bruno later apologised to the 'British public' for losing the match and winning two million pounds.

He said that Tyson was too quick on the feet, too quick with his hands and a lot smarter than him.

He said it was 'cricket' several times. By that I assume that he meant it was fair.

The Satanic Verses

AMIDST the furore of the 'Rushdie Affair' one of the many casualties, as well as truth, has been the novel itself. What I mean by this is the availability of the book and commentary and assessment of what it says and how it says it.

The slick, philistine dismissal is that the book is unreadable but that 'he must have known what he was doing!' The ex-Stalinist novelist and art critic, John Berger, goes a step further and condemns the book as being 'irresponsible' and accuses Rushdie of 'playing at God'. A book like the Koran should not be parodied or challenged but revered because it is a source of revelation and a guideline for the way millions of people run their lives. In short it is Holy writ.

One of the more thoughtful pieces was by the Palestinian academic Edward Said (The Observer 26 February 1989) who attempted to explain why a cosmopolitan writer like Rushdie, who works through a variety of cultural traditions and forms, should have provoked such a storm within the Islamic world with this particular book. He quotes from an essay of Rushdie's which outlines the author's political and literary intentions:

'If writers leave the business of making pictures of the world to politicians it will be one of history's great and abject abdications.

'Outside the whale there is the unceasing storm, the continual quarrel, the dialectic of history. Outside the whale there is a genuine need for books that can draw new and better maps of reality and make new languages with which we can understand the world'.

Said concludes that indeed Rushdie and the book are 'in history, the world, the crowd, the storm'. Part of the storm is, as Said explains, the fact that many oppressed people have responded to the novel as another attack on them by imperialism. What Rushdie sees as oppressive and reactionary can be perceived differently at certain stages of development by oppressed people.

A legalistic religion like Islam provided not only consolation but a bare minimum set of laws which can be seen as rights and a solution to injustice. These are set within a repressive framework which demands total submission to the faith as divinely ordained and revealed truth.

A similar point about the 'religion of the oppressed' is made in Socialist Worker (23 February) but taken much further. They say that what the Iranian mullahs are doing is analogous to the attempts of the Scottish Presbyterians and English Puritans of the 17th century in welding together a national unity and ideology.

This becomes the nub of the argument for Marxists and does bear on our analysis of Rushdie's work.

We say that this is not the epoch of national unities but of the crisis of Imperialism and of proletarian revolution - what Trotsky defined as the age of permanent revolution.

A grasp of this is the key to the understanding of Rushdie's work on a political and ultimately artistic level.

Just as imperialism constantly penetrates in to all areas of economic activity, breaks down national boundaries and makes national economics a thing of the past, so 'national' cultures, however deeply rooted in past regional or ethnic cultures, find themselves torn out of context, redefined, restated and exploited on an

The Satanic Verses.
By Salman Rushdie.
Viking Penguin,
£12.95.

international level simultaneously with other forms. Rushdie for example, writes his novels in English. The style and form of his novels are not drawn from the literary traditions of either Anglo-Indian or 'colonialist' writing.

On the contrary he draws on the linguistic discoveries of the Latin American 'Magic Realism' writing of Marquez, Fuente and Allende etc.

This kind of writing would provide attractive models for a writer like Rushdie. There are many parallels. Latin American, like Indian culture is historically and ethnically multi-layered - Inca, Indian, southern European etc. and shares a common experience of colonialism and Imperialism.

It is virtually impossible, as Rushdie admits through one of the characters in Satanic Verses, to define a truly national Indian art and the same certainly applies to Latin America.

Rushdie's style and the literary form of Satanic Verses draws on the achievement of an extremely flexible genre, a stream of consciousness narrative which re-works myths, legends, actualities in simultaneous and complex time sequences. (The first modernist masterpiece of this kind of writing was Joyce's Ulysses, and that fell foul of the puritanism of the British ruling class until its legal publication in the mid-sixties).

That the novel and not the art of advanced technology like the cinema and television, should cause such a spectacular crisis may seem ironic.

In an important sense this art form developed by the rising bourgeoisie is the most appropriate literary vehicle for such a profound confrontation with fundamentalism and revealed religion.

This is because from its inception the novel was at great pains to conceal its fictional nature.

It presented itself in the form of memoirs, diaries, letters, early investigative journalism, all carefully manipulated literary devices to establish its authenticity, realism or 'literalness'. It has at its heart a similar but secular impulse as the scriptures which claim to be 'literally' 'the word of God'.

The literal reading of the scriptures becomes the yardstick of life, in this case the reading of the novel.

The core narrative of 'The Satanic Verses' is an ambiguously fictional account of the origins of Mohammedanism. The ambiguity lies not just in the status of the account (is it fictitious?) but in the perceived motives of the protagonists.

Mahound (a thinly disguised name for the prophet) seeks revelation as to how to proceed in his struggle to establish a monotheistic,

paternalist religion. Gabriel, the archangel with whom he has to wrestle, prefers to be an observer than a participator when it comes to worldly matters and is deeply insecure.

So the first set of revelations concerning female duties may well have been inspired by Sathain (Satan).

To make matters worse, Mahound is illiterate and has to employ a Persian scribe, a Salman Farsi, who, as he becomes more and more disenchanted with the opportunism of the Prophet in suiting his revelations to his own pragmatic needs, begins to improvise on the text.

This is the central 'blasphemy' of the novel, but its implications are also made central. The break from polytheism involved the overturn of female deities, in this case Al Lat, Al Uzzar, and Al Manat, who represented the Sun, Venus and Fortune.

Rushdie quite rightly grasps that what is involved here is a fundamental change in the relationship between human beings, between men and women which the Koran then codifies in the section 'On Women'. It is this that gives the novel its 'power to offend'.

I said that the 'Jahilia' or Mecca passages represented the core legend. The main 'characters' are symbolic trajectories through time and space to contemporary London and Bombay.

The two central figures, Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, re-work the ambiguous conflict between good and evil. The conflict is presented as ambiguously as in the English, Christian, literary mythology of Blake and Milton.

Both heroes are born again after a fall from a jumbo jet blown up by fundamentalists. The satanic hero becomes a goat-like mutant humiliated by racist immigration officials and police.

The angelic Gabreel, who was formerly an Indian film star specializing in 'theological' roles moves through a nightmarish London of crooks and charlatans as a chronic paranoid-schizophrenic. One of his 'good works' is to fly a fanatical Imman back to his own country to lead a 'revolution'. The people make enormous sacrifices and he, swollen and inflated with megalomania, consumes the rest of them.

Undoubtedly the Iranians must have been offended by this sequence, but there is nothing of comfort for British Toryism either. Britain is a nightmare of free-marketeers, hired actors, pimps, warring youth cults and corrupt radicals; a nation state on the edge of the apocalypse. The novel moves to its final confrontation in the Bombay of the national bourgeoisie, Rushdie's homeland, as well as that of his 'real time' protagonists.

The book is about much more than their 'crisis of cultural identity' and their uncertainties. It is a passionate work of apostasy and iconoclasm which does attempt to define humanity in nascent or potentially internationalist cultural form.

The achievement is not complete, the language often collapses into turgid obscurity and the inventive processes collapse into fantasy fiction. But all this seems a necessary part of the sluicing away of what Marx called the 'old crap'.

Tom Owen

News briefs . . .

Suicide or Poverty

FOUR Korean girls, the eldest thirteen, took rat poison in a suicide pact. One girl died and the other three sisters are in a serious condition. They did it so their poverty-stricken parents would have more money to live on.

Concorde Cracks

BOLT hole cracks were recently discovered on one of British Airway's Concorde's. The skin faces twice as many variations in temperature during each flight as a conventional jet - cooling as it climbs, heating up at supersonic speeds, cooling again as it begins to descend and warming up again near touch down. The manufacturer, Aerospatiale, asked BA and Air France to modify the bolt holes after 5,500 flights.

No Equality

THE EQUAL Opportunities Commission has recently released figures which show that despite the introduction of the Equal Pay Act six years ago, womens pay is on average 25 per cent less than that of men in male dominated jobs. Discrimination cases were said to take too long, are too complicated and require large sums of money - £10,000 upwards for the simple ones.

Standing strain

LEG pains can be caused by the surface you stand on, according to researchers from the University of Michigan. They tested the comfort of eight different types of flooring - ranging from concrete to matting on 14 Ford workers who had to stand throughout their shift. Concrete caused the most discomfort in legs, feet and backs, although the workers complained of feeling more tired when standing on the softest flooring.

Death on the rock

THE FAMILIES of the three IRA members shot dead by the SAS in Gibraltar are taking civil action against the government alleging unlawful killing. They said, on the first anniversary of the deaths of Mairead Farrell, Daniel McCann and Sean Savage, that action would start in the Northern Ireland High court within six weeks. Niall Farrell, brother of Mairead, said the families had new evidence which made them confident of eventually winning the case. The High Court move is aimed at exhausting all legal avenues in the UK before taking the case to the European Court.

Legionnaire alert.

COOLING towers at the Science Museum and Imperial College in London have been shut down following a legionnaire disease alert.

A 62 year-old telecommunications worker from the college and a security guard from the museum were last night confirmed as being ill with the disease. A swimming pool in Bexley, South East London, was closed down after legionnaires bacteria was found in a shower head at a sauna suite during routine council tests.

DOWN WITH ID CARDS!



BY ALAN CLARK

FOOTBALL fans have responded swiftly and angrily to the government's proposals for ID cards, forming new organisations which are outrunning the old supporters clubs.

Workers Press spoke to Mick Suter, from the organisation 'Campaign Against ID Cards' which has 200 members from Charlton, West Ham, QPR and Millwall football clubs.

'We want to get much bigger - to do this we must link up with the much larger FSA (Football Supporters Association), which is also fighting the ID card system,' said Suter. 'We are getting an excellent response from fans and supporters with our leafleting campaign.'

'The other week a 30,000 signature petition was handed in to the House of Commons by footballers Gary Mabbut of Spurs and Garth Crooks of Charlton.

'What we really want,' said Suter, 'is for the PFA (Professional Footballers Association), to support us and call a strike of the players, but Garth Crooks, the PFA Chairman says this would be counter-productive. We don't agree.'

'What we must do now is go to each club, see the PFA representative and get their support for a strike,' he said.

He told Workers Press, 'At Millwall last year there were only two arrests at each home game, but these arrests include, for instance, ticket touts outside the gate. These are added to the total and presented as trouble at Millwall, which it clearly is not.'

'The Campaign knows that the introduction of ID cards will lead to more trouble, not less. The card system will not be able to cope with the rush of fans just before the kick off, this will lead to frustration and fighting

amongst opposing supporters,' he claims.

'Luton Town, for instance, has had a card system for a couple of seasons. The entrance fee was also increased, and these two things have led to a drop in gates. They have tried to supplement

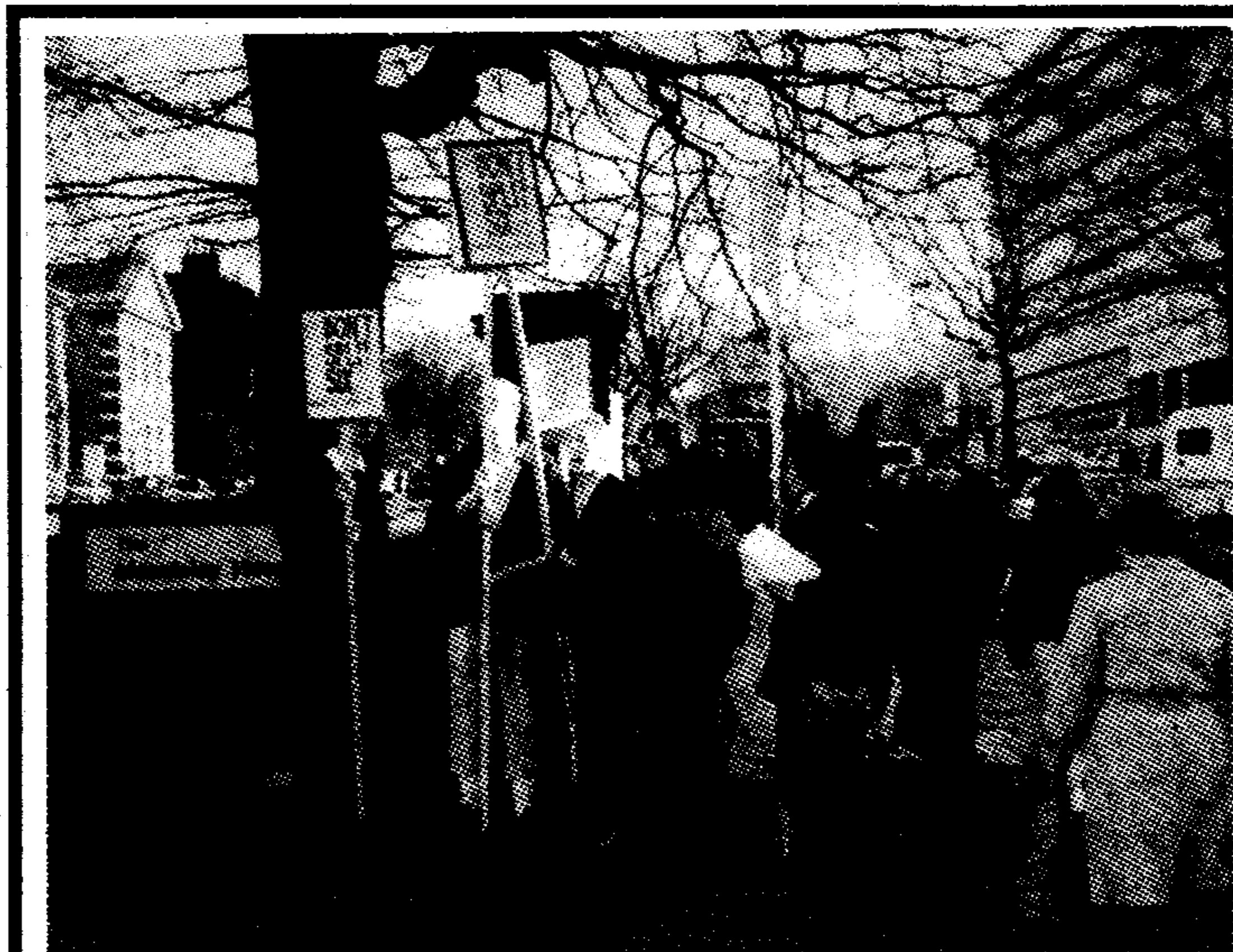
this with executive boxes but this will only attract those who have the money to pay for them. They are not the real supporters of the game,' he says.

'There is no doubt that some clubs would be in great trouble, and would possibly have to close, especially if they put the cost of bringing in the ID system onto the price of the gate. This would drive away the fans in droves,' claimed Suter.

'The supporters, the clubs and the players are all against the introduction of the system, but the Tories are still pushing ahead with it.'

'Everyone knows that it is a front, and that she wants to bring it in for everyone.'

Groups opposed to the ID system are now calling for links with the Labour Party and a national demonstration at the beginning of next season. They are also calling on fans and supporters to lobby their own MP.



Patients from the Maudsley Hospital's Ward 6 picket against proposals to break up their ward as part of the hospital's re-organisation plans.

The patients are demanding an inquiry into Ward 6 and its

future in innovative treatment of problems like depression and schizophrenia.

They are also demanding the right to be consulted over their treatment, and they may form a patients union.

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