

Chartist

SOCIALIST CHARTER MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

CONTENTS THIS ISSUE INCLUDE

- Bengali Ghetto Plan by Ken Livingstone, GLC member for Hackney North.
- Postal Ballots
- Special Feature on Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory
- Vladimir Derer on Campaign for Labour Party Democracy
- On the 'Arab Revolution' by Geoff Bender
- P.A.C. on H-Block - Hell on Earth
- Torture & Amnesty Report
- Are NF the main threat?

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PHOTO: Angela Phillips (IFL)

The EGA occupation

campaign takes off

THE SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN For A Labour Victory is beginning to take off. To date, the campaign, which was launched just three weeks ago, has now obtained sponsorship from one Constituency Labour Party (Hackney North & Stoke Newington), over 25 Labour councillors, with a promise of many more; three prospective parliamentary candidates—Ken Livingstone (Hampstead), Ted Knight (Hornsey) and Jane Chapman (Dover & Deal), Trades Council leaders in Hounslow, Twickenham and Lambeth, and well over 150 Labour Party activists.

The campaign appeal statement has been sent to over 500 CLPs and

over 50 Trades Councils in the last week. The cover letter appeals for sponsorship from CLPs, trade unions, campaign bodies and individuals who are in broad agreement with the aims and platform of the SCLV. Most immediately it calls for as many people who support the general aims and platform to attend the working conference on July 15 which will discuss the future activity and organisation of the campaign.

THE CONFERENCE

Tickets are now available for the conference (75p) and resolutions are invited up to July 10 with proposals for the campaign. Several Labour campaigns—Campaign For Labour Party Democracy, the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, Gay Labour Group, Labour Against The Immigration Acts, for example—have been approached to organise workshops at the conference.

It is hoped that these particular issue campaigns will become an integral part of the work of SCLV and help service the constituencies and individuals with literature and leaflets in the propaganda work up to the General Election.

A new Steering Committee will be elected from the conference to organise the work of SCLV, which it is planned will involve establishing local SCLV groups, sending speakers throughout the country and promoting the aims of the campaign generally.

Over 30 Tribune MPs have been written to, as have the Labour and socialist press—*Labour Weekly*, *Tribune*, *Militant*, *Labour Leader*, *Socialist Challenge*, *Socialist Press*. To date, the *Chartist* and *Workers Action* are supporting the campaign.

If you want to come to the conference or want more information about the campaign, write to SCLV, 182 Upper Street, London N1, or 60 Loughborough Road, Brixton, London SW9.

Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

Conference
Sat 15th
July, 1pm
Essex Rd
Library,
London.

Election Campaign: TIME FOR SOCIALIST FIGHTBACK

A GENERAL ELECTION in October now looks a racing certainty. Liberal leader, David Steel, since ending the Lib-Lab pact, has threatened to vote with the Tories on a 'no confidence' motion if an election is not called in October. Callaghan himself looks set to enter the electoral stage for several reasons, not least of which is the Steel threat.

* On the face of it, Callaghan's austerity measures have 'worked'. Inflation is down. "Forget the unemployment, look at the Government's 'achievements'", runs the Government view.

* No successful nationwide attack has been made on Phase Three of incomes policy and most union leaders—despite what their conferences may say—support a Phase Four.

* The political soothsayers' Opinion Polls show Labour neck and neck with the Tories.

* Finally, Labour all but held its own during the recent council elections and in the Hamilton by-election, the Labour candidate registered an almost unprecedented 4 per cent swing. An even bigger victory than the Hull by-election in 1966 which Labour won after only two years of Wilson's 'white-heat' administration of British capitalism—without the crisis of today.

UNITY

It is in the light of these developments that Labour Party activists have launched the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV). The Campaign aims to build on the deep-seated desire for unity against the Tories under the reactionary policies of Thatcher and her dinosaurs to ensure a massive Labour vote throughout the country.

By MIKE DAVIS

But SCLV aims for a Labour vote with a difference. In short, a vote fought for in as many areas as possible on socialist policies and against the record of the Labour Government's pro-capitalist administration.

The Campaign looks to the many new sections of immigrants, youths, women and lower paid workers, who have been thrown into struggle over the last few years, as the life-blood for the Campaign if allied to the already existing socialist militants in the ranks of the constituency Labour Parties.

INSPIRATION

Socialists for a Labour Victory take inspiration from the 80,000 strong Carnival against the Nazis, the Asian, West Indian and anti-fascist demonstrations against racist violence and murders, women who have organised against fascism, rape and attacks on abortion, the courageous hospital workers at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital for women (with their latest victory reprove against closure) and Hounslow hospital and the Grunwick and Trico workers.

As the Campaign Appeal says, "We believe a Socialist appeal could not only bring out the vote but bring new people into the Labour Party to fight for socialist policies and for the implementation of pro-

gressive policies many parties have adopted To the traditional Labour voter we offer evidence that the Labour Party stands far removed from the middle class supporters of big business and ruling class arrogance which the Tories represent. We will demonstrate that the traditions of struggle of the labour movement—so often forgotten in office—are still defended and fought for in the party."

HARD LABOUR

Callaghan and Healey will be fighting on the miserable record of the last four years 'hard labour', where prosperity is always just around the corner. The SCLV condemns this record as a break from the 1974 election pledge to execute a "major shift in the balance of power and wealth in favour of working people and their families". Instead, the Campaign appeal reminds us that the Labour Government "has in the last four years presided over a 10 per cent cut in workers' wages; it has used troops to break strikes; it continues to implement racist immigration legislation; it continues a bloody war of aggression in Ireland to sustain the sectarian 6-County state; and it presides with astonishing complacency over a 1½ million unemployment queue."

As for the Parliamentary Tribune left, supposedly 80-strong, the SCLV Appeal says they have "simply failed to offer an alternative to the right wing leadership of the Party. It has failed miserably to fight, throughout a period of four years—

when there has been an urgent need for left wing, class struggle politics and for a fight against the right wing."

MANIFESTO

Already Callaghan is trying to dispense with this year's Party Conference scheduled for Blackpool (Wembley Conference Centre has been booked for a weekend jamboree), and draw up an Election Manifesto over the heads of the Conference and National Executive Committee.

The *Guardian* of 22 June reported, "The fear is that Mr Callaghan is already setting up his own campaign committee at Downing Street at several removes from the official party campaign committee based on Transport House. A real conflict is now shaping up over the way the Manifesto is to be constructed."

And if Callaghan is well removed from Transport House, the latter is equally removed from the policies and needs of the hundreds of CLPs and millions of Labour supporters.

It is in these conditions that the SCLV assumes a vital role. The provisional steering committee has called for a Manifesto based on socialist conference policies and the common ownership Clause Four of the constitution drawn up by the NEC.

Above all, as the Campaign Appeal stresses, "We must combine political preparation for a fightback against right wing Labour leaders with a drive between now and the elections to keep the Tories out."

Scargill backs conference

YORKSHIRE Miners' President Arthur Scargill has sent his "best wishes" for the success of the SCLV conference on July 15th, and saying he "will report the details of this meeting to our next Executive or Council meeting".

He says he cannot speak at the SCLV conference because of a prior engagement.

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Chartist

SOCIALIST CHARTER MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

Editor: M. Davis, 60 Loughborough Road, London SW9 (01-733 8953)

THE JULY 3/4th CONFERENCE of the co-ordinating committee of anti-fascist and anti-racist groups attracted over 200 delegates from all wings of the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement. Yet it dissolved in chaos as various sections of the movement attempted to assert the primacy of their particular interests in the struggle against racism and fascism.

On April 30th the Anti-Nazi League mobilised 80,000 people against the National Front. On July 8th the ANL will be discussing the way forward for these people at its first ever conference. There can be little doubt that the same issues which divided the ARAFCC/CARF conference will be raised here.

Is it inevitable that unity in the anti-fascist struggle at this stage can only be obtained by agreeing to submerge political differences and political debate in the interests of a lowest common denominator, anti-fascism? How much is unity on this basis really worth?

UNITY

The *Chartist* does not really believe that an enduring unity can be built in the anti-fascist movement without a thorough thrashing out of the issues raised at the ARAFCC conference. Yet clearly an integrated programme which challenges all the forms of division which the fascists utilise will take years to develop and can only be the product of years of struggle on a number of fronts against the fascists. To ensure such a struggle continues a minimal basis for unity is necessary and a forum in which priorities on broader issues

can be debated is also needed.

So what then should be the basis for unity and where and when can which issues be thrashed out. The absolute rock-bottom basis for any kind of united front against the fascists must be "No platform for fascists". In the welter of street activities and mass mobilisations for the various local 'carnivals' and other 'cultural' events being organised by local ANL branches the need to stop the fascists marching should not be overlooked. Neither can the anti-fascist movement afford to rely on state bans which have had a disastrous effect on anti-fascist mobilisations which have dwindled over recent months.

As a letter in the anti-fascist paper *CARF* points out, "At the Ilford by-election the picket was about 2,500. At Brixton the opposition was less than 1,000. On May Day the opposition was nil."

This last occasion was not even covered by a state ban but came the day following the ANL Carnival and no attempt at mobilisation was made by any of the existing anti-fascist organisations. Clearly, the added strength which the ANL has brought to the anti-fascist movement *must be applied where it is needed.*

But what of the issues raised at the ARAFCC/CARF conference by the Women Against Racism and Fascism (WARF) groups, by the Gay Activist Alliance, by trade union delegates and members of various political organisations, and by the black delegates?

Correctly, the WARF groups and the Gay Activist Alliance insisted that reactionary prejudices are not created by the fascists:

they exploit those which already exist. Correctly, they insisted on the special forms of sexist ideology and relations which are deeply rooted in fascism — defence of the family, white women as breeders of the master race confined to the home, the importance of the male bond of fraternity, the intensification of patriarchal attitudes expressed in support for the *fatherland* and the leader.

OFFENSIVE

Correctly too, the gay comrades stressed the need for an ideological as well as a physical struggle against these aspects of fascism. Yet in linking the question of racism and fascism with that of sexism, for instance, in the resolution which the conference carried by calling for support for the campaigns against 'sexism, racism and fascism' they tended to play down the specific character of fascism which makes it unique amongst the other species of reactionary flora which inhabit the hothouse of reaction.

Also, in section G of this resolution, supported by the WARF delegates there seemed to be the implication that violent confrontation with the fascists was the preserve of straight males and an expression of male aggression and 'machismo'.

No doubtless there have been elements of this in some of the set-piece left versus fascists battles. Doubtless the Sophie Laws account of the sexism of the anti-fascist picket in York is far from atypical. But it would be a political defeat tantamount to betrayal to renounce the use of

offensive force against the fascists because of the impurity of motives of those involved in applying it.

Mass offensive demonstrations against NF mobilisations remain one of the most powerful weapons in the anti-fascist arsenal and to the extent such mobilisations are organised and genuinely collective affairs, there is absolutely no reason why force should be the monopoly of straight male 'heavies'.

At present, the NF is not, nor likely to become, the sort of organisation which can take on and defeat the organised working class. Rather it is the vanguard of a wave of reaction which aims its particular fire at particular identifiable oppressed groups in society.

This is not to deny its fascist character. As David Edgar has pointed out — at the conference and in his pamphlet — the NF bears all the hallmarks of the genuine article. Arguments concerning 'the ultimate aim' of fascism miss the point if they obscure who are its immediate victims. Even the correct argument that attacks on gays or immigrants etc are a prelude to attacks on organised labour can at times take on an opportunist twist if it is implied that such attacks would be alright if they were not such a prelude.

There can be no doubt that black people in Britain are the first target of the fascists. Hence the backing for labour movement support for the initiation and maintenance of black self-defence in areas where racial attacks have taken place is infinitely more relevant than demands for trade union or workers' defence squads.

But racist attacks are not the

sole prerogative of the NF. The state through the immigration laws and the 'sus' provisions of the Vagrancy Act also threatens the freedom and rights of black people in this country. The failure of the ARAFCC/CARF conference to discuss these issues sparked off an angry response from the relatively few black delegates present.

OPPORTUNITY

Yet the development of the ANL on a minimal anti-fascist basis gives the local anti-racist, anti-fascist bodies the opportunity to emerge from a defensive holding operation against the fascists to go on the offensive *against racism*. The more experienced militants in the local committees should lead the way in fighting for repeal of existing and — and opposition to proposed — controls on immigration (which allows for united action between opponents of all controls and those not yet won to this position). Campaigns should be launched too, against 'sus' and all forms of police harassment of black youth.

The ANL could not yet take up these positions without disastrous fragmentation, wrangles and splits. The local committees must set an example to the best militants in the ANL who wish to go beyond simply telling people the NF are Nazis. Where local ANL branches can be won to these positions they should attempt to raise these issues with other ANL supporters.

Slowly and surely, anti-racist and anti-fascist militants must attempt to explain these issues to the new wave of anti-fascist militants in the ANL without precipitating splits through premature ultimatums.

By COLIN ADAMS

The past month's coverage of the North of Ireland in the British news media has concentrated on the Amnesty International report and the row over censorship which accompanied its publication. It is important for British socialists to examine the background to these events and to come forward with proposals to further the cause of the Republican movement in Ireland.

The Amnesty report concentrated on allegations of torture and mistreatment of suspects held at the Castlereagh interrogation centre in Belfast. Amongst those adding their views to the mounting protests last year were solicitors in the North and even police surgeons.

Amnesty finally agreed to send over a three-person investigation team which collected evidence at the beginning of December last.

Amnesty International is, of course, a well-respected organisation which has had considerable access in its revelations of torture and brutality worldwide.

However, despite the many protests in the past over torture in the North of Ireland, Amnesty had never before investigated them. It took a lot of pressure to force them to send over a team, a sign of their caution in examining events too close to Britain.

The report was delivered to the Northern Ireland Secretary, Roy Mason, in March this year, but was not published. One can only speculate at this time-lapse, because nothing was heard of the report until Castlereagh claimed its inevitable victim with the death of Brian McGuire in May.

PROTESTS

The renewed protests clearly meant that Amnesty could wait no longer, and, after widespread leaking to the media, the report was published on June 13th.

The facts contained in the report have had widespread publicity in



Amnesty Report highlights British torture

the left press, although the rest of the news media have predictably limited their coverage to generalised conclusions rather than giving examples of the torture used.

In fact, on the day of publication, the early evening news on BBC did not carry any mention of the devastating and horrifying revelations contained in the report. Since then the media have concentrated on "terrorist atrocities", making these main stories where previously they had been tacked on at the end of broadcasts.

It is clear that the role of Castlereagh is to extract, by any means possible, confessions which can be used in the Diplock no-jury courts to send people down. In the past these "confessions" have led to several people being incarcerated for life, with recommendations of at least 30 years. Now, however, these "confessions" are even becoming embarrassing for the judges over there.

In the very week of the Amnesty report, Judge Chambers dismissed charges against Patrick Kelly, charged with possessing firearms and membership of the IRA. He would not go so far as to say that cuts and bruises found on Kelly's legs, arms and ribs amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment,

but said that they had not been "sufficiently explained" by the prosecution (*Guardian* 17/6/78).

The report enumerates various details of torture of the most horrifying kind, and constant denial of access to solicitors as a matter of policy. Mason's response to the mounting protests has been to endorse the RUC's lie that all the wounds have been self-inflicted.

Although an official inquest has not yet been held, Mason was quoted in Parliament as saying that Brian Maguire's death was definitely suicide. This response seems very similar to that of the South African Security Minister at the time of Steve Biko's death.

The Amnesty report takes up these allegations of self-inflicted wounds. It concludes that in only a few cases were wounds self-inflicted, and then only to stop further pain and degradation at the hands of the interrogators.

CENSORSHIP

Mason's other response to the recent protests has been to clamp down more tightly on the media. Although Mason publicly denies open censorship, his meetings with top people in broadcasting have been well-documented. All BBC reporting of the six counties has to be vetted, and he has made vigorous

protests over various programmes going against the official version of events. The culmination of this policy was the resignation of Colin Thomas, a BBC producer, over interference in a programme he was making, and the banning of the IBA of the "This Week" programme on the Amnesty report.

There are signs that journalists are becoming more aware of the censorship imposed upon them. For the past couple of years a small group of journalists, instigated by Jonathan Dimbleby, has begun to question the media's coverage of events in the six counties.

The National Union of Journalists condemned the censorship of the "This Week" programme. It is important that more journalists are made to think not just about coverage of the North, but generally about their role in the media. A further encouraging feature was the attitude of the technicians to the IBA's ban.

When told that, in place of the scheduled programme, they were to broadcast a comedy programme, they refused, walked out, and left the screen blank. This was backed by their union. Hopefully this can be built on, and has implications beyond the coverage of Ireland, bearing in mind the probability that

the National Front will be given broad-casting time at the coming General Election.

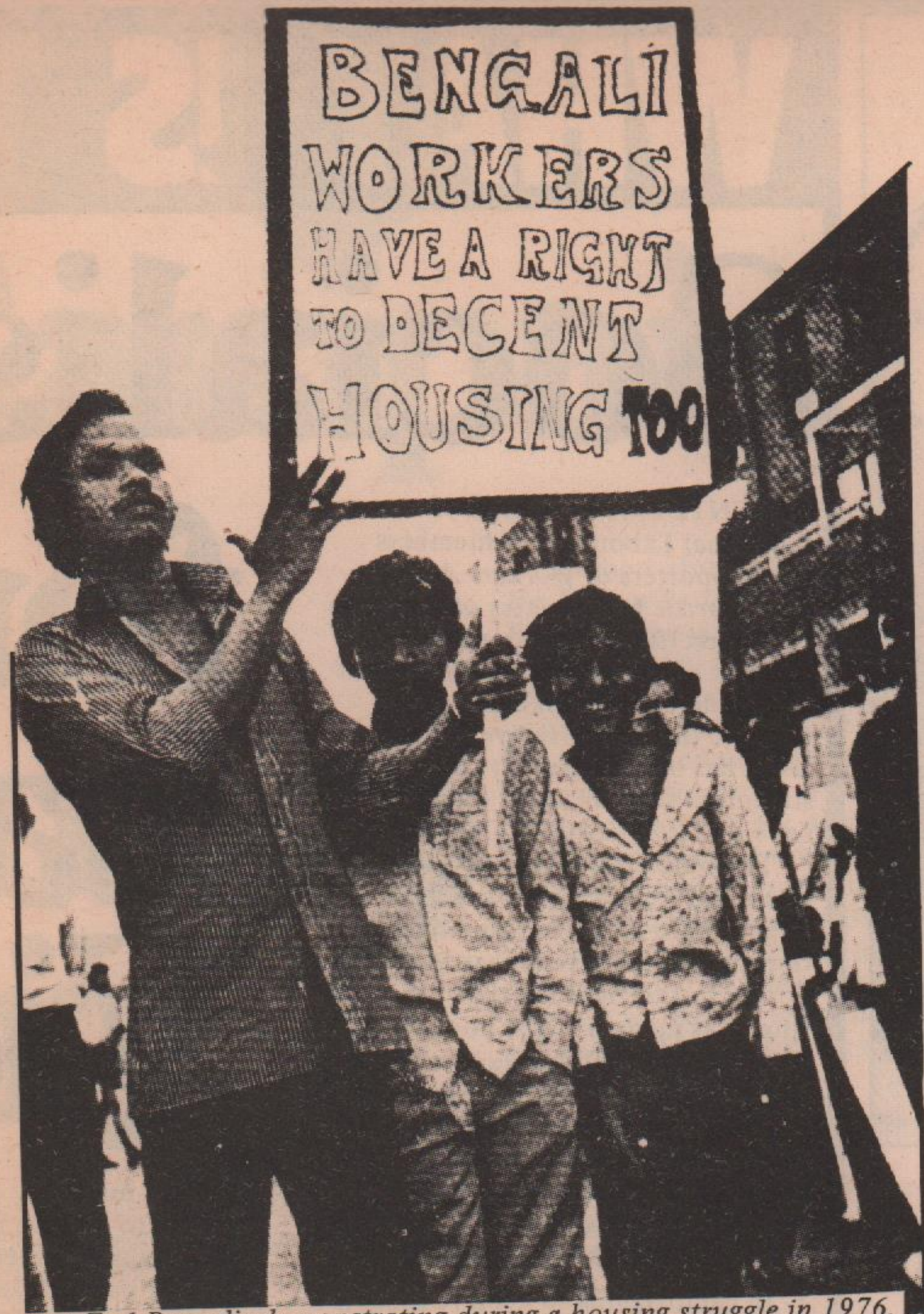
Finally, the Amnesty report called for a full, public inquiry into the allegations. This is vital, because Amnesty were limited in time and resources. The basis for such an inquiry has already been laid by the International Tribunal on the British Presence in Ireland.

It is important that CLPs and Trade Unions sponsor the Tribunal and pressurise the Labour Party NEC to recognise it. Mason's private inquiry under Judge Bennett is simply not good enough.

Previous such inquiries (eg Widgery) were just excuses to white-wash the real issues at stake. Mason's inquiry will only deal with general police procedure. He says that all allegations of torture should be reported to the DPP, but this is the last thing that those who have suffered will do.

It is clear from the Amnesty report that Castlereagh must be closed down, that cases based upon confessions should be thrown out, and that all those sentenced in the past on such evidence should be acquitted. Now is the time to raise these issues, and other related issues such as political status. Trade unionists and LP members must be made aware of the situation in Ireland and there is no better opportunity to do so.





East End Bengalis demonstrating during a housing struggle in 1976.

Bengali ghetto plan

IN THE FOLLOWING article KEN LIVINGSTONE, GLC member for Hackney North, puts forward his views on the controversy surrounding the housing of Bengalis in East London. He reveals interesting inside information which exposes how some Labour members work hand in hand with the Tories. The *Chartist* view is broadly sympathetic to cde. Livingstone's, but we would stress we stand four-square behind Bengali demands for collective rehousing wherever they wish and for maximum support for defence organisations they form against racial attacks.

THE LONDON EVENING papers and the so-called quality press have reported the decision of the Greater London Council to scrap the Bengali ghetto plan as a 'low keyed' bipartisan debate. What they have not reported is that the scheme started as a 'bipartisan' approach to the 'problem' of rehousing those Bengalis who are squatting in Tower Hamlets.

Squatting, moreover, in GLC owned property which is in an even worse condition than some of the private rented accommodation owned by the millionaire Tory GLC leader, Horace 'Cutler Home' Cutler.

Due to the inherent racial basis in the housing allocation policies of the GLC there has been a gradual concentration of black families as well as homeless families in the older, neglected estates of the GLC in areas of east and south east London.

Many of these estates have already got a minority of white tenants, and it is these estates which have suffered most from cuts in GLC maintenance.

During the last few years more and more Bengalis have been forced to squat in a few condemned blocks of flats near Brick Lane, due to the refusal of many councils to accept responsibility for homeless Bengalis and also to eviction by private landlords.

RACISTS

The previous Labour housing chairman, Tony Judge, had offers made to a few Bengalis, but on some estates the National Front organised racists to bar the estate, and rather than use the police to install tenants on NF-organised estates he started to look at alternatives. When the ghetto story broke he rushed off a letter to *The Times* endorsing the policy and saying that Labour would have had to do the same.

When the Tories won control of the GLC they started a policy of sending Bengalis only to a few 'safe' estates in the East End where there already were numbers of non-whites. But they still faced the problem of clearing the two squatted blocks.

PRIVATE

Tremlett (the Tory housing chief) called a private meeting with leading members of the Labour group (including Gladys Dimson and Sir Ashley Bramall), one of whom later said that the meeting was confidential and therefore could not be reported to other Labour members.

Away from these secret

discussions the GLC officers asked for written authority for "earmarking blocks of flats or, indeed, a whole estate if necessary, for their [Bengali] community, provided the existing tenants wish to move away and could be given the necessary transfers".

This recommendation was by chairman's action rather than reported to committee, and passed to the opposition housing spokesperson with a covering letter which said that as the policy had been agreed to by the Labour leaders it was assumed that we would not oppose it. To make matters certain it was passed to the Labour Party assistants at 4.45pm on the Friday before the Bank Holiday.

When I approached one member who had been present at the confidential meeting with the Tories I was told that the policy was the only practical solution. Others who had been present merely complained that they understood that the policy was to be dealt with administratively and should never have been put on paper in this form.

Faced with this situation I gave a copy to *The Observer*, but to my amazement, once the story appeared in the press, everyone who had been at the 'private' meeting agreed that it was all a terrible mistake. No-one had intended such a policy and they blamed the officers for misunderstanding them!

AGREED

When the policy was discussed in open council the two parties agreed without dissent a motion barring any ghetto policy. This was supported by every member who had been present at the meeting!

But the policy will continue in another form. This time the limits of the ghetto will be the whole of E1 and the Bengalis will still not be getting a full choice of GLC accommodation. They have committed the 'crime' of squatting and are therefore directed to accept one offer of accommodation only. If they refuse they will be evicted.

The Bengalis and all minorities must demand an equal choice of housing to break out of these deprived areas—as they have done at a mass meeting in Spitalfields on Tuesday June 13th.

The final lesson for the Labour Party is that it should forbid its members to attend secret meetings with the Tories to form 'bipartisan' policies!

WHY POSTAL BALLOTS ARE BOSSES' BALLOTS

By PETE TOWEY

When one looks at the present composition of the executive committee of Britain's most powerful union, the AUEW, it is hard to realise that just a few short years ago it was under the domination of the left (or at least what was regarded as left). Now it is totally dominated by the right — and a highly reactionary right at that.

There is only one "left" remaining — the somewhat eccentric maoist Reg Birch. The factors which have brought about this drastic setback to the interests of the working class are many and varied.

Volumes could be written as to the appallingly inadequate politics, strategy and tactics of the Broad Left. But if a turning point could be singled out it must be when the right wing (with a bit of help from the bourgeois courts of course) managed to get postal ballots made compulsory for all elections of national officers.

Since that date the right has had triumph after triumph, culminating in the victory of Duffy in the presidential elections this year.

HOSTILE

Most militant trade unionists are hostile to the postal (and often the secret) ballot for the simple reason that experience has shown time and time again that such ballots tend to favour the right wing.

However, militants in the unions must be prepared to offer a consistent argument for opposing postal or secret voting, or the ruling class and their press can have a field day, offering such opposition as evidence that the Left are enemies of true democracy who are trying to prevent membership from having real control over their union affairs.

This propaganda from the ruling class can strike a deep chord in the thinking of many working people — after all, the workers fought long and hard for the right of one man, one vote (and even longer for the right of one woman, one vote).

The demand for a secret ballot in parliamentary elections was one of the famous "six points" of the Peoples Charter — and a necessary one in view of the intimidation which the ruling class employed (and would no doubt employ today if it could) against any one of their opponents who identified themselves in an open ballot.

BASE

So ruling class propaganda for postal voting and compulsory secret ballots has a strong base to build on

— parodying the workers' correct defence of a hard won reform. The postal vote can be presented as an extension of democratic rights. The democratic right that it is presented as extending is of course an example of that species of "democracy" which is elevated from the real world into the sphere of pure abstraction — it is always presented as an *individual* and not a *class* right.

One of the ideological bedrocks of the bourgeois world view is based upon presenting rights in these terms, the relation between employer and worker being presented as a relation between *individuals* each of whom have equal rights as individuals and who, therefore, can strike a just and equitable mutual bargain.

To Marxists, of course, this appearance of a free bargain is just a phantom of the real relationship. As a *class* the bourgeoisie control all the means of production, whereas as a *class* the workers are obliged to enter into a productive relationship with capital in order to survive.

Clearly any notion of free and equal individual "bargains" between exploiter and exploited is an absurdity. We, therefore, would see the right of secret balloting in parliamentary elections as a gain for our *class*, not for us merely as *individuals*.

PRESUPPOSES

The advocacy of secret ballots for elections *within* the working class movement presupposes the desirability of one section of the workers not knowing how others have voted, and that therefore one section of workers has different interests from others. This automatically reduces any feelings of class solidarity.

This is why in potential strike situations employers (and union bureaucrats) often attempt to force or persuade workers' representatives to hold a secret ballot. By accepting their arguments, workers' representatives would be accepting a potential divergence of interests amongst the workforce. Any meeting which regards itself as a collection of *individuals* is automatically more predisposed to oppose decisions in favour of *collective* actions, such as striking, etc.

Of course, in some circumstances a secret vote may be

desirable — for example if militant workers risked victimisation from right wing bureaucrats, but this should be for those militants to decide in the circumstances. The important point is that secret balloting should only be considered where there is pressure upon workers from outside the working class. Workers themselves should have nothing to hide from each other.

ATOMISATION

The issue of the postal ballot, as opposed to the secret workplace vote, raises even deeper problems for socialists in the trade union movement. The treating of the working class not merely as individuals in the workplace but actually in *the home* takes the atomisation of workers even further.

The worker is completely isolated from the situation he or she is being asked to decide upon. Particularly in modern post-war society, with its cultural emphasis on the personalised ghetto of the nuclear family each home becomes a fortress against solidarity where the bourgeoisie can, they hope, hold the working class in fragmented isolation. The workers behind their closed doors are cut off from the influence of their workmates.

DEBATE

Unlike workplace or branch meeting votes, there is no opportunity for debate or discussion of the issues, and in the case of elections of officers, no opportunity to hear criticisms of the views of the candidates. The ruling class, however, has the worker's ear even in the privacy of the home — the press, the radio, and the TV, can churn out their propaganda for the right wing with no chance of any alternative case being fairly put.

Socialists and militants in the trade union movement should oppose the postal vote. Decisions which affect the mass of the workers should be taken by the workers as a *mass*. Socialists should fight for all elections to take place at branch meetings, where attendance itself guarantees at least some degree of commitment to the movement and interest in the matter for discussion.

Militants should ensure that in all elections the fullest possible discussion and debate can take place, and above all take every step to ensure that the ruling class keep their noses and their wallets out of our decision making.

Anderton must go!

By YVETTE LUPTON

Tameside Trades Council has mounted a campaign calling for the sacking of Greater Manchester Police Chief, James Anderton.

The campaign was set up following Anderton's masterminding of the now notorious police operation in Hyde last October, when he openly assisted and supported Martin Webster, leading member of the National Front, in his lone march through the town centre. It has since been revealed that Anderton has purchased Armalite rifles and sub machine guns, with Home Office approval, for possible "low intensity operations". Such weapons have not remained in their packing cases. Just two weeks after the events in Hyde a military-style exercise was staged in Collyhurst, a working class district of Manchester. Without any prior warning to local residents, police officers were sent running through the streets, armed with guns and live ammunition, and deliberately misleading people into believing that the area was under attack from "terrorists".

These happenings challenge the traditional view about what exactly is the function of the police. The task of keeping the peace in civil society in reality centres on maintaining capitalist stability against any internal threat from the left.



As capitalism slides deeper into its crisis, the police, equipped and trained to use force against people involved in what are supposed to be lawful activities, can and do engage in army-style manoeuvres against the civilian population.

As for Anderton himself, he is a man who looks to the future. He is anxious to be seen, not purely as someone concerned with the humdrum administration of police work, but as a man with a vision. In his spare time, as a methodist lay preacher, he uses the pulpit as a platform for his reactionary opinions. Back at his job he tries to put his ideas into practice. Under his direction, pub landlords, newsagents and homosexuals have all been harassed by raids and searches

as the police try to enforce Anderton's own twisted standards of morality. Doctors in Manchester now face prosecution if they perform abortions by menstrual aspiration — a safe and straight-forward method which is carried out in very early pregnancy.

From his pulpit, Anderton the moralist tells of his vision for the future. He calls for the restoration of "discipline" and "christian values". He plays his part in the crusade by calling for the introduction of compulsory identity cards and finger-printing of the entire adult population. In addition he looks to a time when people with what he calls "subversive" ideas would be punished by long-term imprisonment. He obviously considers the establishment of "thought police" as an integral part of the christian gospel. The Chief Constable of Greater Manchester wields immense power. He openly declares his opposition to the hard-won democratic rights and freedoms of the working class.

The Labour Government, by supporting the likes of Anderton, particularly when it allows the provision of arms to the mini-dictators who hold such powerful positions, once again demonstrates the anti-working class nature of its own policies.

WHAT IS THE Socialist

for a Labour Victory

RECENTLY, A NUMBER of individual Labour Party members and supporters of *Workers Action* and *Chartist* held a series of meetings to discuss the need for a united socialist campaign in the likely event of a General Election being called towards the end of the year. The result has been to launch an appeal statement for a *Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory* (SCLV).

The objectives of the SCLV are essentially to ensure a massive Labour vote in the forthcoming General Election, to defeat the Tories, but to fight for that Labour vote in as many areas as possible on the basis of socialist policies and against the anti-working class record and policies of the Callaghan government. While these are provisional objectives, throughout the campaign *Chartist* supporters will seek to further the following aims.

1. In campaigning to achieve a massive Labour vote we aim to defeat the Tories under Thatcher and Joseph, whose election would mark a serious step backwards for the working class and oppressed in Britain.
2. In keeping the Tories out, the victory for the labour movement will reside not simply in the re-election of a Labour government, but more importantly, the battle for class consciousness and socialist politics will be stepped up and sharpened. In conditions of Tory victory a flurry of left rhetoric—even from the likes of Callaghan and Healey—and apolitical

anti-Tory militancy can only hamper the fight to achieve the necessary Marxist consciousness (a break from reformist politics) and revolutionary transition to socialism.

3. It is crucial that the SCLV provides a co-ordinated and national socialist alternative to the 'rally round the flag', 'build on the government's achievements' line which will emanate from Transporthouse and the corridors of Westminster.

4. In providing an organised alternative focus we aim to open up the political debate on the left in Labour Party at such a time when the pressure is on to cease discussing and sink into simple electoral vote catching. We aim to show the Lab

Labour Victory will fight for a Labour vote on the basis of that policy, and of a fight within the labour movement and Constituency Parties to make that policy a reality: to transfer party policy from paper resolutions into a living struggle against racism.

Joe Ashton's recent anti-National Front broadcast brought in a record number of applications for Party membership. We are convinced that an anti-racist, anti-fascist campaign for a Labour victory will play a major role in defending and improving the position of immigrants and their families in Britain and dealing a blow at the fascist National Front.

GAY RIGHTS

Another section of the population under attack in recent years has been homosexuals. Gays have been attacked by police and fascists, lesbian mothers witch-hunted in the press, and *Gay News* prosecuted. The Tory emphasis on law and order would doubtless mean further attacks.

The Gay Labour Group organises freely inside the Party; support for its demands and activities would be part of the work of the **Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory**.

These demands are of vital importance for the struggle for socialism; and that struggle can be taken forward by a militant fight for a Labour victory.

But a socialist campaign for a Labour victory cannot restrict its attentions to this country. The Labour Party should take an international stand against the interests of NATO and the IMF, and side with the struggles of the oppressed throughout the world.

Last year's Conference voted support for the liberation movements in Southern Africa — this must be implemented. We should also organise support for those fighting the repressive military regimes in South America, in Iran and elsewhere, and take up the case of the working class and democratic opposition in those countries which call themselves socialist. Democratic rights are too important for us to leave to the right wing.

Finally, we must call for and work for the withdrawal of the 15000 British troops in the Six Counties of the north of Ireland, and support the right of the Irish people to national unity and self determination.

What will our **Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory** look like?

It will be the most enthusiastic, energetic call for a Labour vote that our movement can produce, combined with a drive within our movement for socialist action to take us beyond the politics of state monopoly capitalism.

We would not aim to substitute ourselves for the existing party bodies, the local parties and the innumerable campaigning bodies on the left of the party. Rather, as far as possible we would aim to supplement their work, providing leaflets, speakers on specific topics, platforms for speakers from other bodies, and so on.

We would hope to be able to work alongside local



Supporters of NEC meeting.

agents, could such campaigns Democracy, Socialist Environment Association, Women's Campaign, Party Race, Chile, other organisations, which some We will theatre group Racism to be In short, socialists a Labour victory opposition believe that provide the ism.

It is the a to settle a guarantee in an undog our difference while working attempt to en its work voters and represe



80,000 on ANL Carnival — scope for the Campaign

Below we reprint extracts from the launching appeal statement and platform for a **Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory** (SCLV). Complete copies are still available from the Campaign address or from 60 Loughborough Road, Brixton, SW9.

THE 1978 LOCAL election results clearly reveal the important role which socialists have to play in securing a Labour victory in the forthcoming General Election.

Despite the cynicism which the policies of the Labour Government have fostered, the local elections make clear that to large groups of the electorate the Labour Party is not the Labour Government.

In Scotland the reactionary SNP tide was rolled back. In Tameside (Greater Manchester) the Tory backwoodsmen (and women) were removed. In many Labour areas polls were higher than they had been in 1974. In several key London boroughs, notably Haringey, Lambeth and Brent, the strenuous campaigning of the local parties' left wing played a major role in securing Labour victories. In the east and Inner London boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Islington, the very real threat of seats being won by the National Front was crushed and Labour returned in the overwhelming majority. Not only did Labour retain control of these areas but it did so with an increased poll.

Party loyalists can take encouragement from the election results. Labour Party socialists will too. But for socialists the picture is more complicated.

THE GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

The record of this Labour government is a grim one, judged according to the interests of the working class (not to speak of any sort of advance towards socialism). In March 1974 the Labour Government was elected on a promise in its Manifesto of a major "shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families". In the last four years it has presided over a 10% cut in workers' wages; it has used troops to break strikes; it continues a bloody war of aggression in Ireland to sustain the sectarian 6-County state; and it presides with astonishing complacency over a 1½ million unemployment queue.

It has allowed a continued build-up of the police specialist forces to fight picketing; should the Tories return with their policy of confrontation with the unions, they will take control of these forces intact.

FIGHT FOR SOCIALIST POLICIES

It follows from this that socialists must put forward, and campaign for within the Party and the labour movement, policies which really answer the needs of the working class in this period of acute crisis of British and world capitalism. We must prepare the labour movement and the working class for self defence in the period after the election — whichever party is the winner.

We must combine POLITICAL preparation for a fightback against right wing Labour leaders with a drive between now and the elections to keep the Tories out.

The lessons to be drawn from the Local Elections offer great encouragement to such a project.

Firstly, it seems clear that a whole section of 'traditional' Labour voters, despite their distaste for the policies of the Labour Government, are fully alerted to the dangers of a return to Toryism, either locally or nationally.

In addition there would seem to be an increased public recognition of the significance of the differences between the left and right of the Labour Party — if only on the level of distinguishing between the Party and its activists and Conference on the one hand, and the government on the other. If the Left were visible and fighting, this would be a major boost.

GUT FEELING AGAINST THE TORIES

Even where this is not the case, the overall feeling among the traditional Labour voters would seem to be 'they have done their best ... now we must unite to

Campaign Appeal

the record of this one, has to be defended from a Tory opposition which is intent on following the past years' scandalous cuts programme with its own savage attack on hard-won reforms such as the welfare state and council housing, with another Tory union-bashing campaign, and with a stirring up of the muddy waters of racism.

A second lesson to be noted is the role of immigrants, or women and of youth in helping to ensure a Labour victory. The council poll took place three days after the 80,000 strong Anti Nazi League carnival in East London; and one has only to live in this normally sensitive, racially conscious part of London to appreciate how it affected the political views of youth, immigrants and others over a whole range of issues.

Among these people there is now a widespread readiness to look at political and social problems in a new way. In many cases, attitudes on previously taboo issues like women's rights and homosexual equality have been placed under review. Previously firmly rooted prejudices are being challenged.

There is in these developments, many of them taking shape outside the Party itself, great scope for rejuvenating the Labour Party and the labour movement — if socialists can organise themselves to fight effectively to re-arm the movement with socialist politics, and to replace the reformist policies and leaders that have produced the last four years of counter-reformist Labour government and a largely passive labour movement tied down by a lack of effective alternative policies to those of the Government.

To women the threat by the Tories of massive further cuts in education and welfare services are particularly important.

Labour's scandalous record here is a millstone round our neck. But socialists know and should say that struggle and mobilisation on a massive scale by the labour movement could have stopped the Labour cuts — and can still reverse them.

DEFEND ABORTION RIGHTS

The continuing threat to abortion rights and more general attacks on health care for women which could be expected from the Tories make a Labour victory important. The Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, however limited, are important gains for women which would not have come about under the Tories. The stand of women Labour MPs was instrumental in defeating the Benyon and James White abortion Bills; the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign carries on that struggle and at two successive conferences of the Party 'Free abortion on demand' has been passed as Party policy.

There can be no doubt that the struggle for women's right will suffer a setback under a Tory regime. But if the benefits of a Labour victory are to be realised, there must be a strong socialist current in the Party which makes the rights of women a major plank in its platform.

To immigrants and black people settled in Britain, the last few years have brought a frightening growth of the right, and the cynical adoption of racist policies and demagoguery, which have spread like a toul stain from the crank edges of politics to the point where they are the stock-in-trade of the 'middle ground' of British politics.

Thatcher's TV pronouncements, the Speed Report and the refusal of the new Tory-controlled Hillingdon council to house homeless immigrant families are indications of the attitude of a future Tory Government to Britain's black population. So are their proposals to the Select Committee — which, shamefully, were agreed to also by the five Labour Members.

Whilst the PLP as a whole has been little better on this issue than the Tories, there is still a strong anti-racist current in the Party. It can be a basis for a serious campaign to drive the racists out of the labour movement.

In 1976, Conference adopted a policy for the repeal of the '68 and '71 immigration Acts, the banning by the labour movement and local councils of the National Front from meeting in public buildings, and support for black self defence. The **Socialist Campaign for a**

Campaign

our? ory?

Party is a place where the socialist policies needed to take the labour movement forward can be democratically discussed and argued throughout an election campaign. As Ken Livingstone, the first prospective parliamentary candidate to sponsor the campaign has said, "The real problem is trying to get the Tribune MPs involved and prevent them from simply retreating into their constituencies".

5. It is also necessary to show that the Labour Party is not just or primarily the Parliamentary Labour Party. The Labour Party is the thousands of CLP members, most of whom have never been in the cosy parliamentary chambers of Westminster.

To show also that the policies of the Labour Party are decided at Party Conference, and wherever they mean a struggle and advance against capitalism, for example policies against the racist Immigration Acts, for abortion on demand, for active support for the South African liberation movements, against spending cuts, for nationalisation etc. they have been ignored and trampled on by the faction represented by the Cabinet and the Parliamentary Labour Party. We aim to develop this cleavage so that all representatives are answerable to CLP members—not to parliament.

6. *Chartist* supporters also aim to increase the knowledge and awareness of the policies of the existing Labour campaigns, for example, LPYS, LARC, CLPD, GLG, LATIA, and promote their work.

7. Perhaps crucial to the future of the struggle for a Marxist tendency in the labour and trade union movement will be to enthuse and politically equip the thousands of disenchanted Labour supporters, and radicalised youth, immigrants and women. We aim to involve both the disillusioned and the radicalised by showing that Labour Party members have socialist answers to the crisis of capitalism which stand opposed to the class collaboration of Callaghan's high unemployment, cuts in living standards, appeasement to racialism, rejuvenate capitalism policies.



ARC lobby July 1977 Labour Party

pillars, trade union delegates, as well as signs as the Campaign for Labour Party Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, Socio-cultural and Resources Association, Educational Association, Socialist Medical British Peace Committee, Working Charter, Gay Labour Group, Labour anti-fascist groups (such as the Labour Relations Action Group), the LPYS, Liber-Solidarity Campaign, Anti-Apartheid and organisations supporting a labour victory on points of agreement exist.

also explore the possibilities of using Music for Socialism and Rock Against

we wish to use all means available to us as Labour Party members to ensure a victory at the next election, despite and in Labour's governmental record. We it is the left wing of the party which can greatest reserves of energy and enthus-

activity of the left of the party, which wants to work with capitalism, which is the best way to a Labour victory. We would seek to work in a democratic and non-sectarian way — to debate issues openly with other party members together in the common cause. We will draw new forces into the party to strengthen and help break down the barriers between politics and daily life.

THE PRESENT PHASE of the battle for democracy within the Labour Party is fast approaching its climax. The next annual Labour Party conference will decide the crucial issue of re-selection for some years to come. Labour Party members have to make up their mind whether they want their elected representatives to be more accountable to the party, or whether they prefer the *status quo* albeit in a modified form.

When delegates left conference last year they may well have thought this issue was already settled.

Sixty-seven CLPs had submitted to conference an identical proposal for ending the present practice of automatic re-adoption of "sitting" Labour MPs and make their re-adoption subject to an automatic selection procedure.

A composite resolution urged the same principle. When Ian Mikardo, on behalf of the NEC, asked for it to be remitted, he gave the following undertaking:

".... we shall put down at next year's annual conference all the amendments to the constitution necessary to provide automatic re-selection in the way and in the sense that the sponsors of those 60-odd resolutions want."

In a vote conference endorsed this pledge.

Consequently all the NEC needed to do was to instruct its staff to prepare the necessary proposals.

REOPEN

Instead, at its December meeting last year, the NEC decided to re-open the whole issue. A working party was set up "to examine the controversial question of re-selection". On the working party, opponents of re-selection were in the majority. No representative from the CLPs which submitted the "60-odd resolutions" was asked to serve.

It is not surprising therefore that when the working party produced its "compromise pro-

posals" these were a far cry from the ones contained in the 67 resolutions. The latter asked that whenever a CLP is represented in Parliament by a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party, "normal procedure for the selection of Parliamentary candidates shall be set in motion not later than 42 months after the date of the last General Election."

The working party's proposals instead provide for the normal procedure only after the CLP, at a special mandatory General Committee meeting, has failed to carry a resolution to appoint the sitting MP as the prospective Parliamentary candidate. Further they introduce a minimum period of 18 months after an MP's election before re-selection process may be started.



Anti-clockwise: Joan Maynard, Eric Heffer and Frank Allaun—only NEC MPs to reject sell-out.

from strength to strength with Labour



Party Conference must decide on re-selection.

(Chris Davies, Report).

Campaign for Labour Party Democracy—reaching a climax

THE FOLLOWING is a contribution from Vladimir Derer (Secretary, CLPD) on the aims and progress of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. *Chartist* has always endorsed the aim of achieving mandatory reselection of MPs during the life of every Parliament as a minimum democratic policy and whilst we have differences with some of the tactics of the Campaign we believe all Labour Party members should give its work a high profile. This will certainly be the policy of the Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory. Over the next few issues of *Chartist*, we aim to publish contributions from various Labour Campaign groups to promote both their aims and the united work of SCLV.

WRITES VLADIMIR DERER

mance had been monitored during the previous parliament. A minimum period may thus mean the relative immunity of MPs from rank and file control for a number of years.

Neither does the system suggested by the working party do anything to reduce the damage created by the present re-selection procedure. It is merely likely to increase the number of the "court-room dramas" on the Prentice model, which a routine reselection procedure taking place automatically would clearly avoid.

The working party's proposals gained overwhelming support from members of the NEC, with only Frank Allaun, Nick Bradley, Eric Heffer, Joan Maynard and Emlyn Williams dissenting. To ensure the acceptance of their proposals by conference, the NEC appears to have decided not to allow constituencies to submit amendments.

This is in marked contrast to the procedure followed in 1974 when the NEC's proposals for re-organisation of the Party's structure were under consideration. Thus the conference is to be deprived of the opportunity to vote on the relative merits of the various sections in the NEC's proposals.

RULES

Under the present rules the only way conference can vote for a constitutional proposal submitted by a CLP and not accepted by the NEC, is by rejecting the NEC's recommendation or alternative proposals first. Such alternative proposals may cover a wider area and may be acceptable to conference in some respects even though there is disagreement on others.

The insistence by the NEC that all its proposals on re-selection should be voted on *en bloc* is no doubt intended to make the acceptance of the less palatable ones more likely. This kind of anti-democratic practice must be decisively rejected.

Constituencies and trade unions should insist on their right to submit amendments so that conference has the chance to vote on the merits of each individual proposal. Should the NEC deny them this democratic right the only alternative is to reject the NEC proposals as a whole and vote for the proposal of the 67 identical re-selection resolutions.

NASSERISM AND BA'ATHISM

Twin poles of the 'Arab Revolution'

IN PREVIOUS *Chartist* articles we have attempted to explain the origins of the Zionist state of Israel (see *Chartist* No. 63 and 65) as a contribution to an understanding of the current Middle East situation. In this article we turn our attention to the Arab regimes which surround Israel, especially those which in the fifties and sixties underwent political revolutions.

The Arab world is divided in two: there are those countries, such as the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia where traditional rulers still hold sway, where Islamic traditions and family structures still bind the people to the past, despite oil wealth and petro-dollars, and there are those Arab countries where radical nationalist forces drove out traditional rulers and under various forms of more or less 'socialist' rhetoric, carried through substantial reforms, established single party rule and began a process of modernisation and industrialisation, such states are Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. (Of course, many Arab states do not neatly fit into either category — Libya for example, both underwent a radical nationalist revolution and yet reinstated Koran law in its most barbaric forms.)

POWER STRUGGLE

The origins of the current regimes in Syria and Iraq and Egypt are deeply rooted in both the global power struggle between Western imperialism and the logic of internal development of these countries faced with the establishment of the state of Israel. The political and ideological forms which the process of development in these countries took, at first mere effect, have now entered into the complex web of the politics of the Middle East as a causal factor in their own right.

An understanding of the two movements which expressed the desires and frustrations of the Arab peoples of these countries during the fifties and sixties — Nasserism and Ba'athism is vital for a grasp of later developments and future possibilities.

The roots of both movements are to be found in the terrible defeat suffered by the Arab armies in the war with Israel in 1948. Not only was this an irreparable blow to the establishment of Arab unity but also to the awakening national consciousness of the Arab peoples. Such a blow was bound to be most seriously felt in the armed forces and it was here that the movement for change was to come.

After the defeat discontent showed itself most seriously in Syria. Formerly a French mandate territory, Syria was a republic with a more open structure than the Arab kingdoms, with no foreign troops on its

territory. Prior to 1918 no frontier had divided Palestine from Syria and the defeat had hit Syria hardest. From December 1948 violent demonstrations flared against the regime of the old ruling clique of Shukry Kuwaty. The situation became so troubled that the army was called in to restore order. On March 30th 1949 Colonel Husni Zaim seized power. This was by no means to be the last military coup in Syria or in the other Arab countries. Two military dictatorships followed (from August to December 1949 and December 1949 — February 1954). Elections in September 1954 showed that the Communist Party was the strongest in the Arab world and a new organisation the Ba'ath Party (Socialist Party of Arab Resurgence) had emerged as a powerful force on the scene.

In Egypt the King had been forced in July 1949 to take into his coalition cabinet the bourgeois nationalist Wafd Party. In the elections of January 1950 the Wafd won 228 seats out of a total of 319, thus removing the team held directly responsible for the defeat of the preceding year. The New Wafd government driven by the left-wing of the party took a firm anti-British line demanding the revision of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936. The British, of course, refused. In October 1951, Egyptian premier Nahas Pasha unilaterally renounced the treaty. Anti-British rioting flared and a group of volunteers and police auxiliaries attacked British troops guarding the Canal Zone.

SECRET GROUP

The army restored order and the King dismissed Nahas. That, however was not that. A secret group of officers who had served in the Palestine war, united by their hatred of the organisers and profiteers of their defeat, seized power and drove out King Farouk.

At this stage the opposition of the the old corrupt regimes of the area was restricted to a fairly vague nationalism and a resentment at the defeat of 1948. The subsequent evolution of these countries in both domestic and foreign policies was to take place in a world climate shaped by the Cold War. It was a climate in which Arab attempts to adopt a policy of neutrality between the two great power blocs was constantly interpreted in the West as pro-Soviet a judgement which had the character of a self-fulfilling prophecy.

From 1954 to 1962 the Algerian people fought for independence from France. Elsewhere along the Southern Mediterranean coastline

other states were gaining independence less bloodily. Throughout the third world former colonies were demanding or gaining their freedom. The moving spirit of Arab socialism was independence and national freedom; its social programme seen as a means to that end. Nasser developed his ideology in an ad hoc fashion as a response to international relations. The Ba'athist tradition was different; it was the product of a fusion of nationalist traditions and a social radicalism influenced by the French training of such intellectuals as Michael Aflaq. Ba'athism was hostile to Stalinist 'communism' and extremely unstable in its attitude towards Nasserism and split between its Syrian and Iraqi adherents.

Arab nationalism, and particularly the Nasser cult was to gain its greatest stimuli from its fiercest opponents. First on the 28th February 1955 a massive raid was launched by Israel on Egypt in reprisal for the hanging of three Israeli intelligence network agents who had carried out terrorism in Egypt.

Between that same February and April agreement was reached between Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and Iran and Britain — the Baghdad Pact.



Gamel Abdul Nasser

This was a pro-Western alliance aimed at the Soviet Union. Membership of this pact was to be made a condition for arm sales to the Arab states in the area from any of the western powers. Nasser requiring arms to defend Egypt against Israel and wishing to retain at all costs a policy of neutrality established links with Nehru, attended the Bandung Conference of 'Third World' countries and purchased an arms consignment from Czechoslovakia.

In response to the Baghdad Pact he established links with Syria and Saudi Arabia. Neutralist and pan-Arab sentiment spread. Pro-British regimes found themselves threatened. A popular revolt in Jordan led to the sacking of the British Commander of the Arab Legion. Elections in Syria brought a Popular Front government including Ba'athists and Communist Party members to power. A military pact was concluded between Egypt and Jordan and Syria. The Syrian regime, like Egypt opposed the Baghdad Pact on a neutralist basis while Saudi Arabia did so out of traditional rivalry with the Iraqi monarchy.

Nasser's greatest political coup was to come in the following year. The United States had offered to finance the Aswan High Dam — essentially to Egypt's economic development. However, the offer would have required a loan from the World Bank, hedged round with strings as it was, was opposed by Britain, France and Israel. . . and the US Congress. Nasser had held parallel negotiations with the Russians. Learning that the USSR was unable to finance the project, American Secretary of State Dulles announced the cancellation of the



Egyptian crowds mourn Nasser's death in 1970

By GEOFF BENDER

US offer. Meanwhile, Israeli forces were continuing to harass Egyptian positions in Gaza.

The response of the group of army officers Nasser headed was simple. They announced, on the 26th July the nationalisation of the Suez Canal.

IMPETUS

"There then," as Maxime Rodinson puts it in the book *Israel and the Arabs*, "took place the event which was to engrave the image of Israel in the mind of the Third World. . . an event which was to give the final impetus to the radicalisation to the Arab world: the Suez expedition, undertaken jointly by Britain, France and Israel after a secret treaty signed at Sevres on the 23rd October." On the 29th October the Israeli army invaded Sinai supported by French aeroplanes, and strafed Egyptian convoys, French warships monitored the coast.

On the 30th October and Anglo-French ultimatum was offered under the guise of a peace proposal. Demanding withdrawal of both Egyptian and Israeli armies, it thus granted the Israeli's control over the territory they had conquered while demanding that the Egyptian cede another 16kilometres of their own country. On the 1st of November a United Nations ceasefire was imposed. On the 3rd the Israeli's agreed to comply, but then withdrew their compliance, giving their allies a chance to intervene. On the 5th French and British paratroops were dropped on the Canal Zone. Only the threat of atomic reprisals forced a Franco-British withdrawal. On the 6th a ceasefire was announced.

HOPES

Despite Anglo-French hopes Nasser had not fallen, but Israel had been victorious. The Suez campaign produced the exact opposite of the effect intended. Nasser became a heroic figure who had stood up to the bullying of the Western powers. Israel was confirmed in Arab eyes as the symbol and agent of Western imperialism in the area. Once again, Rodinson sums it up: "In 1952 Nasser had been a nobody; he remained in the background till 1954, while the myth of the Egyptian revolution was symbolised by Neguib. Subsequently his halo was successively brightened by the moves taken in the direction of neutralism, his attack in 1955 on the Baghdad Pact, his presence at Bandung, and his decision to purchase arms from the Eastern bloc. To the West neutralism meant Communism.

To the masses of the East, it meant anti-imperialism." Nasser's stand

over Suez turned the eyes of the Arab masses towards Egypt. "Nasserite movement" sprang up in every Arab country. "Nasserism" represented the aspirations of the Arab masses for independence and modernisation. The fact that Nasser distanced himself from Communism brought him favour with the politically active middle classes of the Arab world. His vague socialism appealed to the Arab masses.

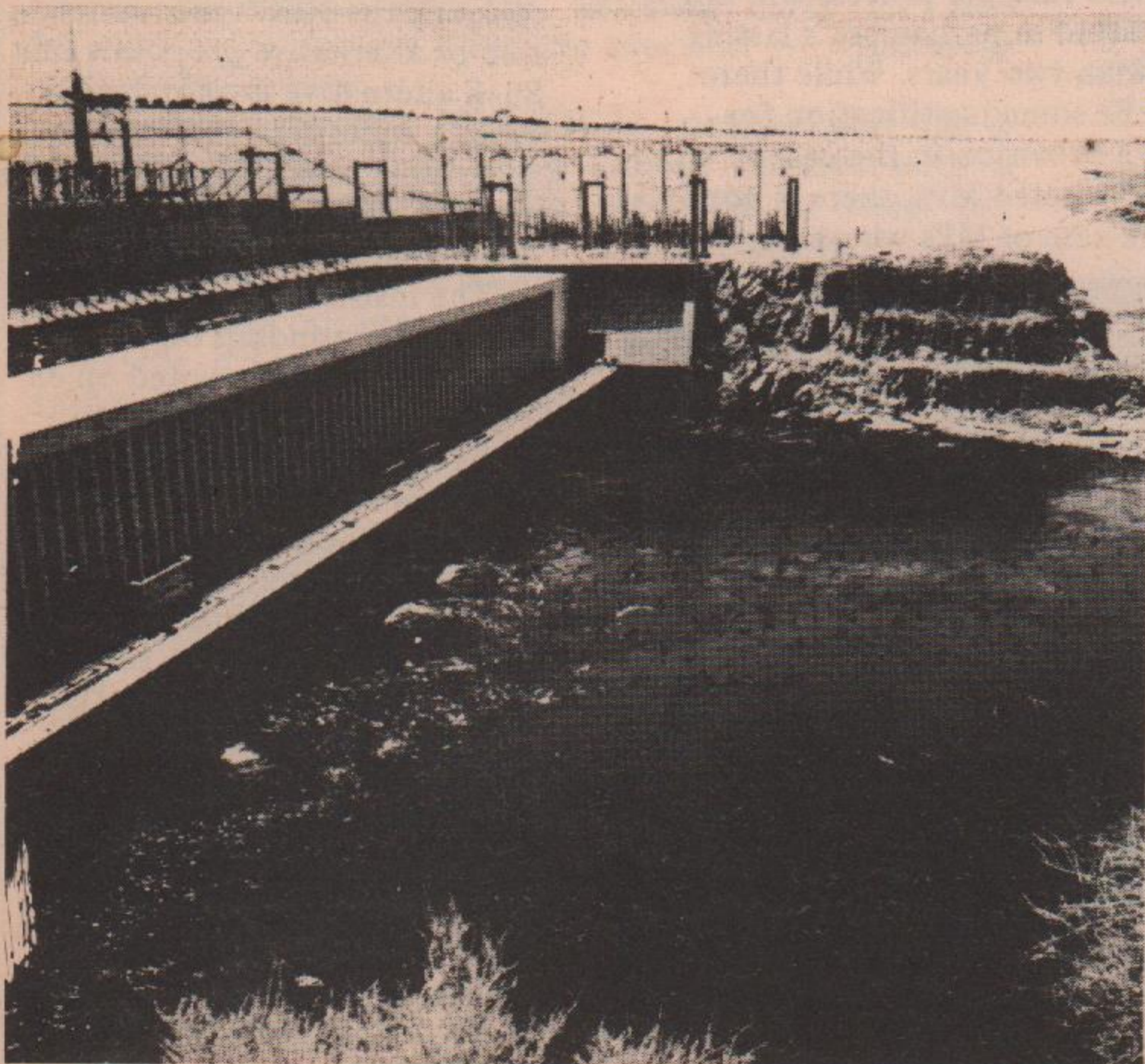
The US, anxious at the decline of French and British influence after Suez, seeing the Arab neutralism and anti-imperialism the invisible hand of the Kremlin were anxious to back up the Iraqi and Lebanese regimes — the most pro-Western of Arab regimes. The Eisenhower Doctrine, proclaimed American right to intervene in the Middle East "against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by international Communism". The response from the Iraqi and Lebanese Governments was favourable. The response from the Arab masses hostile. Rioting broke out in Iraq and martial law was proclaimed. In Lebanon, the following year US Marines intervened in the Civil War.

HOSTILITY

Meanwhile in Egypt and Syria, their neutralism in the teeth of Western hostility was leading them into a closer connection with the Eastern bloc countries. In January 1957 British, French and Jewish concerns were "Egyptianised" and the state played a central role in the financing and management of the the new Egyptian companies, in cooperation with the local bourgeoisie. In Syria from 1955 a policy of reliance on the Soviet bloc was instituted through arms contracts, long term credits and the construction of an oil refinery. Of course, this confirmed in Western eyes, the equation "neutralism" = Communism. In fact, in both cases, Soviet links and the statification of sectors of the economy was the necessary measures for a process of economic growth and modernisation. The Soviet Union too had no desire to establish itself a Soviet satellite in the area. The aim of the Communists Party, Ba'athists and the Soviet Union alike was a sympathetic parliamentary regime in the country.

American attempts to destabilise the Syrian regime failed and Egypt and the Soviet Union emerged as the twin protectors of Syrian independence. A struggle was soon to follow between the social programme of the Syrian CP and the national programme of the Ba'athists.

The choice increasingly came to be seen as either a Stalinist style regime in alliance with the Soviet Union or union with Egypt in a united Arab republic.



The Aswan High Dam

Are NF the main threat?

GENERALS HAVE OFTEN been accused of fighting and preparing for the next war with the weapons and tactics of the previous one. They entered the Crimean War as if it was the Napoleonic Campaign, the Boer War like the Crimean, and so on.

Socialists are often guilty of the same error. They have over reacted to the growth of the NF implying that if drastic action were not immediately taken, the NF would grow as quickly as the Nazis did — from 2.5% of the vote in 1928 to 44% five years later. Concentrating on the NF, they gave insufficient attention to more powerful aspects of racism, such as immigration controls, and to sexism too.

The *Chartist* has always argued that NF marches and meetings be physically stopped and that the labour movement should offer its aid to black self-defence groups in Southall, Whitechapel or wherever. The anti-fascists have had reasonable success in harassing NF public activities and in reducing their vote recently. This is no cause for complacency precisely because the fascists were not that strong in the first place. The main threat to the potential victims of fascism — socialists, blacks, women etc comes from the state, from the National Association for Freedom (NAFF), and from the open and tacit support for racist and sexist actions from most workers.

DEFEAT

The German and Italian bourgeoisie put all their money and efforts behind Hitler and Mussolini. If the fascists had been beaten they would have been utterly lost with nothing further to throw at the workers. Further successes against the NF, even in Hoxton, will be relatively easy, but they will hardly dent the reactionary attitudes the NF feed on.

The crucial factor that drives the bourgeoisie to pay fascist gangsters is not so much the economic crisis as the political crisis that renders 'normal' 'democratic' bourgeois methods inadequate to deal with it. Britain and the USA had almost as much unemployment as Germany in the early 1930s but were hardly challenged from either the Right or the Left.

Defeat in World War I dealt shattering ideological and financial blows to Krupp and the other arms manufacturers and coal and iron barons. They had been most tied to the war effort to defend the authoritarian monarchy that was overthrown by the 1918 revolution and replaced by a parliamentary republic. "Democracy, for us" spat Kirdoff, one of the earliest industrialist backers of Hitler, "represents

By BERNARD MISRAHI

nothing!"

Defeat in war and the humiliating conditions imposed by the victors in the Versailles Treaty such as reparations to France and the forced reduction of the army to 100,000 — were compounded by concessions they had to make to their workers — such as an eight hour day and a measure of workers control.

They would have opposed such concessions in the most prosperous times. They ran their factories as the Kaiser had ruled Germany and as a father should dominate his family. Like their Italian counterparts faced by occupations of their plants by hundreds of thousands of engineering workers, they feared that the alternative to compromise was socialist revolution. They were determined to grab back what they had given as soon as possible.

CONCESSIONS

The couldn't afford these concessions. Demilitarisation in Germany and Italy led to a catastrophic slump in demand for their products. In 1921, the massive Ansaldo and Ilva Italian heavy industry trusts collapsed throwing hundreds of thousands out of work. American aid rescued Germany from the 1923 crisis only to postpone a bigger slump when aid was withdrawn after the Wall Street crash of 1929. These bosses wanted massive economic aid to reinvest and public works to use their materials and an aggressive attitude to the unions that the governments of the day were unwilling to provide. Liberal capitalists who sometimes formed the government preferred a policy of negotiation with the unions — of workers' 'participation'. The Italian and German armies were either too small, unreliable or not in the control of the heavy industrialists.

So they turned to the tens of thousands of demobilised ex-soldiers (mostly officers or NCOs) who found no outlet for their energies or aspirations in post-war society. Fifty thousand were formed into the Baltikum Corps to fight the Red Army in Lithuania in 1919. Fifty thousand! How many fighters have the NF sent to Rhodesia?

Marshal Badogli ordered sixty thousand officers to join Mussolini's fasci (who were composed of similar elements) on being demobbed where they would receive 80% of their former pay. It was these private armies that formed the nucleus of Mussolini's party when it was formed in 1922 and the Nazis in 1923. (The German Socialist Party (SPD) also had a massive private army — the



March 1933: Hitler marches to the Reichstag to take his seat as Chancellor

Reichsbanner — only they never actually used it.)

From the start the fascists had the support of a major section of the bourgeoisie. They never had to go through the stage of rarely being able to organise public activities without massive police protection.

As the fascists grew stronger, the alarmed liberal capitalists believed they could still control them. They hoped to use them to fight the communists, and once they had done that, to disperse them. But the fascists were like gangsters. They gave the orders and dissolved the bourgeois political parties too.

The Italian fascists lunged at the labour movement shortly after the big occupations. The workers involved might have won shorter hours and a measure of workers' control, but there was disillusion amongst those who had fought for more. Ten thousand fascists occupied socialist strongholds like Bologna or the Genoa docks. They burned union offices and socialist headquarters and printshops and murdered militants. Neither the Socialist Party nor Communist Party leaders put up serious resistance. In Germany after 1929 there was similar passivity and incomprehension of the fascist threat. The SPD feared the Communists (KPD) more than the Nazis. The KPD also thought the SPD were worse than the Nazis and were confident that a strong dose of Hitlerism could radicalise the workers.

No fascist party has since received even a fraction of this initial support. Policies of state intervention have

prevented economic collapse on the pre-war scale. Bourgeois democracy — the tradition of reducing workers' living standards with the consent of the workers' leaders themselves — and the selective use of force rather than massive confrontation — has grown much stronger in the prosperous post-war years and hasn't been seriously weakened during the last few years of recession. These traditions are particularly strong in Britain where parliaments have served capitalists fairly well for over a century.

The members of the EEC have helped establish parliamentary regimes in Portugal, Spain and Greece which they feared might 'go communist'. The dominant sections of the bourgeoisie will avoid the unpleasant necessity of backing dictators like the Shah of Iran or Mobutu of Zaire if they have an alternative. In Britain they have several. Economic crisis makes socialist revolution or fascist reaction possible and makes it more difficult for the 'middle ground' to hold sway but it does not make it impossible for non-fascist capitalist solutions to succeed.

Hitler increased his vote mainly at the expense of the right-wing parties. The combined vote of the SPD and KPD (and, oddly, the Catholic Party) remained constant. Disillusion with major political parties might exist today but it is a murmured grumble compared to the violent shifts in political alignment in Germany. Thatcher has shown that she can swing sufficiently far to

the right to avoid being outflanked by the fascists. The Tories are still seen as a genuine party of immigration controls and law and order by the majority of those who support such policies.

A serious recession following the drying up of North Sea oil could change the situation. But the main task for socialists is not to predict possibilities decades in the future but to analyse the situation now and the probabilities for the near future so as to identify the main dangers and work out methods of confronting them.

The state can actually use the fascists to hit its enemies — indirectly.

Fascist activities draw counter marches which can be attacked by the police using new weapons such as riot shields making hundreds of arrests. Other marches can be banned. Compared to Tory, or even Labour, governments the fascists aren't much of a threat. The NF cannot operate, or tighten immigration controls, cut social services or use armies to break strikes. Nor can they successfully prosecute gay newspapers or threaten abortion rights.

Intelligent employers who want strikes broken call in the NAFF not the NF. The NAFF mobilise the full power of the state to protect bosses and rely on the reluctance of union leaders to break the law. Why pay illegal thugs to beat up pickets when one can hire 8,000 police absolutely free.

STRONG

The British state is too strong and the economic crisis too shallow for the NF to be a serious danger over the next few years. After doing the necessary minimum to prevent fascist activities from passing unchallenged socialists must give their attention to these more powerful enemies. They must try to turn the anti-fascist movement into one that is predominantly anti-racist. The same energy must go into fighting the various manifestations of sexism. The nationalism of the Labour Government which demands economic sacrifices 'for Britain' and that of the Tribune Group and the Communist Party which insist on 'import controls to regenerate British industry' might be less vitriolic than the NF. They are more dangerous and divisive because of the wider support they have.

The *Chartist* is confident that many who marched on the ANL carnival are willing to fight racism anywhere. With the active participation of the hundreds of anti-racist committees a really powerful movement against immigration controls and racism generally can be built. The fight against sexism and nationalism might be a little more difficult. But socialists must prepare for coming (and existing) battles, and not concentrate on skirmishes which are more spectacular but against less significant forces.

SAME BLOODY HANDS BEHIND AFRICAN MASSACRES

WHEN IT COMES to distortion, half-truths and undiluted hypocrisy, the British media's coverage of liberation struggles in Africa undoubtedly come top of the league.

In Zimbabwe, hundreds of unarmed Africans are apparently mown down "accidentally", unfortunately enough to be "caught in crossfire" between "security forces" and "terrorists". When refugee camps are razed to the ground and thousands of women and children butchered, as at Kassinga, the press always churns out the usual euphemisms about "hot pursuit operations", against "terrorist camps" and "military targets".

Indeed, if the Fleet Street hacks are short of a few clichés to explain away the odd massacre or two, they can always rely on Rhodesia or South African army press releases — after all, this is their main source of "information"!

When white settlers are killed however, the story is a different one. No "accidents" or "crossfire" this time. No doubt about who is responsible. No

attempt to bury the story in a few column inches on an inside page.

Instead we get the full horror show blasted over the front page with every lurid detail emphasised and pictures to match.

A prime example of this was the recent events in Kolwezi, South Zaire. "The Savage Face of Black Africa", screamed the *Daily Express*, setting off the tone for a deluge of racist lies, portraying the Kolwezi massacre as a product of "drunken", "crazed black rebels", "running amok, raping, pillaging and murdering whites." In contrast to this apparently indiscipline murderous rabble were the French paratroopers with Belgian and British back-up, intervening, rather like the 7th cavalry, to rescue civilians from the slaughter.

In reality, the press made its own contribution to the atrocities by massacring the truth. A different story emerged as Kolwezi "survivors" began to reach Brussels.

● The "rebels" — supporters of the Congo National Liberation Front (FNLC) — were "quite friendly"

until the French paratroopers arrived. In other words the French invasion did not halt a massacre, it prompted one.

- Many of the atrocities were carried out by Mobutu's own troops.
- The FNLC, far from being an isolated band of "crazed secessionists" had considerable support inside Kolwezi.
- More Africans were massacred — by Mobutu's troops — than whites.

Even if every story printed in the British press about FNLC atrocities were true — and most of them probably are not — they wouldn't amount to a tiny fraction of the crimes committed by imperialism in the Congo (now Zaire).

Under Belgian rule millions of Congolese were 'massacred' in the rubber plantations under the forced labour systems, so that Belgian capitalists could have a cheap source of raw materials. The standard punishment for recalcitrant workers was amputation of the hands. When the Congo

became independent in the 1960's, imperialism — in the form of the U.N. and the C.I.A. — intervened to smash the radical, anti-imperialist government of Patrice Lumumba, and place their stooge Mobutu in power.

The pretext for intervention then was to prevent the massacres — in reality hundreds of thousands were killed in the bloody civil war which followed.

Today, the French imperialists who have slowly been replacing the Belgians as the main influence — use the same pretext to intervene and prop up the reactionary Mobutu regime, which, as a result of the FNLC action, was on the brink of collapse.

Mobutu's Zaire is a police state at the service of multi-national mining corporations and the C.I.A. In the last year alone over 200,000 refugees fled into Angola from the brutal regime. The largest recipient of U.S. military aid, Zaire is imperialism's reactionary buffer in the middle of Africa. It is of vital strategic importance to imperialism that it holds on to Zaire — not to speak of the country's vast mineral resources concentrated in Shaba province. That's why even the most 'liberal' capitalist government backs Mobutu to the hilt.

As the African revolution continues to unfold, particularly in Zimbabwe and South Africa, we can expect further incursions by imperialist armies into Africa. The sensationalism that the press used over Kolwezi, will



Mobutu Sese Seko

be used time and time again to whip up a racist, jingoist climate, which facilitates such interventions.

In this context it is imperative for socialists to step up the solidarity campaign in support of the African liberation movements, to expose the lies and distortions of the media and to point out that the killings and atrocities can only be stopped by driving imperialism out of Africa.

By Frank Hansen

H-BLOCK LONG KESH HELL ON EARTH

The following article has been sent to us from the Prisoners Aid Committee. We welcome the opportunity to further publicise the brutal treatment of Irish Republican prisoners at the hands of the British State.

AT THE PRESENT time, out of the thousands of political prisoners held in British jails in England, Scotland and the North of Ireland for offences against the British State in connection with Ireland, over 300 people receive treatment which contravenes international law as laid down in the Geneva Convention.

These people are the 300 or so men "on the blanket" in Long Kesh "prison", which really resembles nothing so much as a German Second World War Lager, with the same barbed wire, huts, army patrols with dogs, sentries armed to kill on seeing an escape attempt (and people have been killed trying to escape.)

Six prisoners are also "on the blanket" in Crumlin Road remand jail, Belfast, a few miles away from Long Kesh. In addition some 25 women prisoners are kept in solitary confinement in Armagh jail. All of these are undergoing the most degrading hardships for one reason: they are demanding, and being refused, POW status to which they have a right under the Geneva Convention. They are refusing to be branded as criminals.

The conditions in which the men prisoners languish in Long Kesh H blocks and Crumlin Road are as follows:

CONFINED

They are confined to their cells all day, 24 hours, seven days per week, 365 days per year. The only exception to this solitary confinement (one man or two per cell) is the 45 minutes per week for Sunday mass.

Because they refuse to wear prison clothes or do prison work, which would mean acceptance of ODC status ("Ordinary Decent Criminal" status in the barbarous parlance of the warders), they wear nothing but a blanket. Thus everybody knows them as the "men on the blanket". The prison authorities jeeringly refer to them as "streak-

ers", but as we shall see, there is nothing to joke about.

They are not allowed any exercise or recreational activities. Their bedding is removed from their cells during the day. A bright light is kept shining all the time, reflecting on the whitewashed walls of the cells. No food parcels are allowed, food is served stale and cold.

Practically no visits are permitted. They have no cigarettes, newspapers, books, radio, TV or board games. Their only distraction is a Bible. One man was punished for making chessmen out of the meagre supply of lavatory paper allowed - three sheets.

All infringements of the rules may lead to the man being put in the special punishment block, on a diet of bread and water for as many as 30 days.

Recently, in protest at the filthy wash basins handed out to them, the prisoners have refused to "slop out", that is empty their chamber pots into an outside lavatory. The warders refused to provide buckets for doing this within the cells and as a result the cells are awash with urine and excretion. "Loyalist" prison orderlies who refused to slop the Republican prisoners' cells out were themselves put on the punishment block. The warders have taken to hosing the H blocks down with high pressure hoses, and the cells are now ankle deep in urine, excreta and water.

Of course, many ailments have made their appearance: blinding headaches and eyesight troubles (from the lack of fresh air, the bright light reflected on the white walls and the acrid stench), causing many men now have to wear glasses. Chest and kidney complaints are frequent, as are rashes, peeling skin and scabies in the hair. All suffer from extreme cold. There is no proper medical attention, and beatings are frequent.

Well might Karl Marx exclaim, one century ago: "No nation treats its political prisoners as badly as

Britain". He was referring, among others, to the Fenian prisoners of the late 19th century, whom he defended.

The first man went "on the blanket" in September 1976 and since then over 300 have joined him. This means that some prisoners have been kept like this for over a year and a half!

IRONY

The irony is that the British authorities actually conceded what they called "Special Category" status in 1972 to Irish political prisoners in the North of Ireland, after it had been forced from them by a hunger striker carried out by Billy McKee and 30 others in Crumlin Road. This was in fact recognition of political or POW status.

This was later seen to be a blunder and "Special Category" status was taken away in March 1976, in line with the policy of "criminalising" the struggle in the North of Ireland.

"Special Category" status meant that the men could wear their own clothes, did not have to do prison work, had no direct contact with the warders, since it was accepted that the latter could only communicate with the prisoners' own commander. They had food parcels, many visits and unlimited mail. If this sounds familiar to those of us brought up on the heroic exploits of British POWs in German camps of the Second World War, it is not surprising.

Except that when a Briton was shot trying to escape he was held as a hero, and the German guards seen as



protest outside Downing Street

murderers. Well, men have been killed attempting to flee Long Kesh. But no British protest for them.

The fact is that the British government does not recognise Irish Republicans as POWs. But they obviously are, as the Independent MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, Frank Maguire indicated when he stated after a visit this May to Long Kesh. "British troops have been awarded medals for war service in this country, so they must be at war with somebody".

POW STATUS

The 1949 Geneva Convention states that "All persons involved in international and internal conflicts, included those convicted as rebels... have basic rights including the right not to be subjected to outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment".

A recent protocol added to the document of the Convention says that forces acting under responsible control to carry out sustained and concerted operations have the right to POW status and an amnesty at the end of the conflict. This has the force of international law and includes war of colonial domination, alien occupation and fighting versus racist regimes.

It is therefore abundantly clear that the British government is contravening international law, by any interpretation. And this is why the Prisoners' Aid Committee is demanding POW status and an amnesty for all Irish Political Prisoners.

MARCH Sunday 9th July

These are to be the demands of a march/demonstration organised by the PAC for July 9, 2pm, starting at Hyde Park.

The PAC asks all concerned people to come to this march and in the meantime raise the issue in their local political or TU group to raise support. The situation of these men is so bad now that any delay may see yet further deaths amongst Irish republican prisoners.

ALL OUT TO OPPOSE RECRUITMENT TO AN ARMY OF OCCUPATION IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND

There will be a poster display and distribution of appropriate leaflets (use ours or bring your own) outside the Earls Court army show on Saturday July 15. Please assemble at Warwick Road entrance to Earls Court underground station at 12 noon (the show runs from Wed. July 12 to Sat July 29 inclusive).

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A full Party conference must be held

Resolutions are beginning to pour in now for Annual Conference. Callaghan would dearly love a stage-managed parade-of-stars jamboree instead of a democratic discussion of policies. There must be no repeat of the 1974 shambles. Resolutions such as the following from Hackney South & Shoreditch CLP must be discussed - especially in the wake of the most recent racist murder in East London of Ali Eshaque following the violent attacks which claimed the lives of Altab Ali and Kenith Singh.

"Conference condemns, and calls upon the NEC and the Labour Government to repudiate the terms and proposals of the Report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration Nationalities Green Paper.

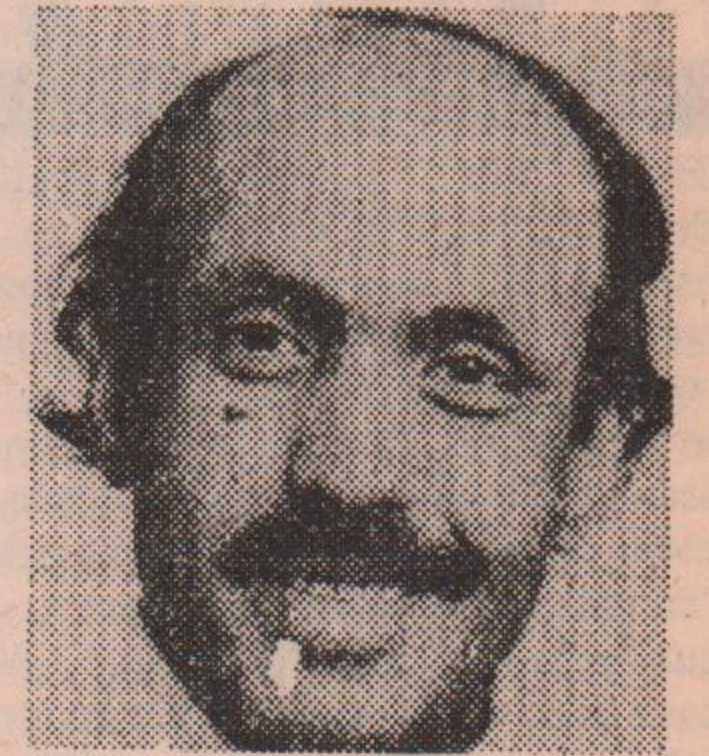
While recognising that racism is a product of capitalist society, Conference believes that the continuous and increasing violent and murderous attacks on black and Asian people have been caused partly by this Report and recent inflammatory speeches of racist politicians which together have served to make racism 'respectable'.

Conference condemns the failure of the Labour Government to repeal the 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts which was demanded by Composite 41 of the 1976 Annual Conference. Conference believes that it is essential to end all immigration controls and to oppose any future controls since they automatically play into the hands of racists and fascists by falsely identifying immigrants as a 'problem' and by suggesting that the ills of capitalist society are somehow caused by black and Asian people. Conference affirms the right of all workers to sell their labour unhampered by restrictions of national boundaries.

Conference further re-affirms the decision of Composite 41: a) to repeal all racist legislation; Conference notes in particular that S.4 of the Vagrancy Act of 1824 has been used against large numbers of young blacks in particular; b) to prevent fascists from having any public parade or platform from which to pour out their poisonous propaganda; c) to give active Labour Movement support to ethnic minorities who form self-defence organisations in face of racist attacks.

Finally Conference welcomes the anti-racist campaign launched by the NEC but demands that it be extended to cover the above policies. All channels should be used to promote the maximum unity in the campaign, including the production of leaflets in immigrants languages, broadcasts on TV and radio and support for local anti-racist organisations."

● Mr Ali Eshaque



Selection battle in Stockport South

THE ABSOLUTE CONTEMPT with which the leaders of the Labour Party view the rank and file activists in the constituencies has been made nauseatingly clear in the events which have been taking place in Stockport South. Here, the local party have been engaged in trying to select a candidate to replace their present MP, Maurice Orbach, who has decided not to contest the next election. The selection is taking place amid a welter of accusations about his possibly corrupt involvements in the shady business world of the late and unlamented treasurer of the Socialist International, Eric Miller.

The 'hero' of the selection saga is Callaghan's wonder-boy sidekick, Tom McNally, one of the PM's political advisors, who after being rejected by the Labour Party members in Vauxhall, Kettering and Huddersfield, is now attempting to foist himself (with more than a little help from his powerful friends) on the luckless membership in Stockport South.

Last month the constituency drew up a short list of six potential candidates which did not include



McNally: 'machinations'

McNally. The reaction of the right wing was swift. There followed a barrage of press attacks on 'left wing extremists' in the party (ie. rank and file activists), which has now been joined by that well-known supporter of Labour Party democracy, Reg Prentice (*Daily Mail*, 22/6/78).

McNally's supporters also organised the busing of delegates - some of whom had never before attended a constituency meeting - to the selection meeting, where they managed to block the procedure. The

Party must now begin the selection procedure all over again.

The left in Stockport must learn the lessons of what has happened. Like many 'broad left' groupings in other bodies, there has in the past been a tendency to substitute organisational manoeuvres for proper political work, and the results are that many of the less committed delegates are easy prey to the right's campaign - a campaign which seems to have more in common with the Tammany Hall style politics of the US Democratic Party than the labour movement.

McNally has been pushed as 'the only man who can win the seat', 'the man with the right connections', and even as 'a good Catholic lad'. Never a mention by his supporters of his politics.

It is not surprising that McNally's camp do not mention his politics (which are of the same anti-working class nature as his mentor, Sunny Jim). What is vital is that the left centre their fight back on this very basis. Only the most thorough political debate can save the party from the likes of McNally.