

Socialist Challenge

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WHAT A BLOODY NERVE!

So for the umpteenth time in the umpteenth year we are told the country is in crisis.

From the Daily Mirror to the Daily Express the stories are the same.

From Margaret Thatcher to Michael Foot the warnings are the same.

They say the country is being held to ransom by the unions.

They say working people are selfish and greedy. They say the power of the unions must be curbed.

They say trade unionists threaten the sick and elderly. They threaten to use troops against strikers.

They say sacrifices are essential if the economy is to survive.

WHAT A BLOODY NERVE!

■Selfish? Lorry drivers are paid a basic wage of between £50 and £53 a week. Last year the transport and trading industry made a profit of £437,000,000, an increase of 18 per cent.

■Greedy? The wage rise the drivers of oil tankers have just won is worth between £3 and £4 a week. In 1978 Royal Dutch/Shell had a profit of £3,670,000,000 and British Petroleum one of £2,186,000,000.

Page One Comment

■Too powerful? The reason local and central Government cannot 'afford' to pay its manual workers a decent wage is because of the high interests paid on money borrowed. The basic wage rates of workers in the public sector is between £40 and £45 a week. Last year the banking industry made a profit of £1,250,000,000.

■Sacrifices? Last year Lord

IRAN'S VEILED OPPRESSION



Inside: Tariq Ali on Islam
Next week: Women in Iran



Jim Callaghan spent the weekend in Guadeloupe. Others weren't so lucky

Grade, a director of Associated Television, was paid £210,000. CCP Pocock of Shell Transport was paid £113,000. Sir David Steel of BP was paid £96,502. W R Price of Vauxhall was paid £101,842. Rowland Wright of ICI was paid £96,363.

The rich and the powerful talk about 'the crisis'. The crisis for a lorry driver is the weekly food bill, the crisis for a hospital porter is the electricity bill, the crisis for a refuse collector is the gas bill. The crisis in the country is the CRISIS OF INEQUALITY.

**The crisis is
the crisis
of inequality**

EDITORIAL

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Election fever

THE crude anti-union offensive by the Tory press, coupled with Thatcher's union-baiting, indicates that an election cannot be too far away. The Tory calculation is based on the mounting tide of industrial unrest which threatens the ability of Labour to pose as a government which can keep the workers in their place. The lorry and tanker drivers followed the Ford workers; the rail drivers are making militant noises; and Callaghan's economic and social policies could receive the final blow in the event of a public sector strike.

Labour politicians are aware of the fact that strike-breaking, while popular with the City of London and the International Monetary Fund, is not the best possible way to win votes. Even trade unionists not known for their militant views are likely to be alienated by the use of troops to deal with the public sector strike — not to mention states of emergency. The last politician who invoked a state of emergency was Edward Heath, a fact which cannot have escaped Callaghan, Healey and their colleagues.

The strategy of the Labour government has hitherto been based on the following logic: the measures we propose are tough, but they are equitably applied. We all have to tighten our belts, because the system is facing a crisis. The only option is the Tories, who will be infinitely worse and will preside over a return to the Thirties with longer dole queues, means tests, anti-strike legislation, etc. These arguments have been accepted by a large majority of trade unionists and workers for the last four years. One reason why they have been accepted is because the mass of workers genuinely see no alternative.

This situation is now beginning to change. Slowly but surely a new mood is emerging. If the hysterical attacks against the lorry drivers fail, then the stage will well and truly be set for a confrontation between the public sector workers and the government. That is why Callaghan might try to defuse the situation by calling a spring general election.

But the fact remains that no mass political alternative to Labour's present policies exists. One reason for the delayed response to government policies has been the cringing class collaboration of the trade union leaders over the last years — rewarded, in Scanlon's case, with a peerage! This failure has been closely connected with the political abdication of Benn and Foot as left social-democrats.

Benn carefully refused to organise any fight against the Labour government. He felt that it was more important to remain in the Cabinet than to lead a fight inside the Labour Party. The result has been that Callaghan has been able to disregard completely the view of the Labour Party on all issues where the latter is in disagreement with government policies. All the indications are that party activists are in a state of serious demoralisation, and real membership figures are continuing to decline.

Labour's election manifesto is being carefully vetted by Callaghan and his cohorts. But what about those who will go knocking on doors and driving old-age pensioners to the polling booths? Have they no say at all? Clearly a delegate conference should be called to discuss Labour's election manifesto. Socialists in the Labour Party should draft an alternative to that which is being prepared by the leadership in order to demonstrate that socialist measures could begin to resolve the crisis in our favour.

In the event of a public sector strike before the elections, union activists must ensure that the intervention of the troops is not able to defeat the strike. An emergency TUC Congress should be called with the express purpose of defending the public sector workers and organising national solidarity.

What Labour's policies demonstrate is the necessity to fight back on every front. We do not believe that such a struggle can only be carried on inside the Labour Party. Nor do we believe that the task of revolutionaries can simply be to enter, for all practical purposes, a united electoral front with Labour against the Tories. We have, wherever possible, to offer a socialist alternative at the polls.

The decision of the Socialist Workers Party leadership to disregard their conference decision and not to put up candidates is an impressionistic response to the present political situation. Socialist Unity candidates have already been nominated in a number of constituencies. A national conference of Socialist Unity has been organised on 3 February to discuss our election intervention. We urge all activists likely to be involved in our campaigns to attend.

THE FIRST WORD

Haulage industry

A lorry load of...



THE October 1978 report of the Price Commission into the road haulage industry suggested a picture of chummy tranquillity in the sphere of industrial relations:

'The fact that the typical firm in the industry is a small one, and that even the large firms are organised into small units, contributes to a family atmosphere in which mutual accommodation of differences is possible.

'In such a situation, where employees are only in small groups, and even then mainly working beyond the control of the depot, they will themselves seek to settle problems amicably with their employers rather than involve a trade union.'

The report goes on to note that 'the number of days lost through industrial disputes in the industry as a whole has been relatively small'. So it seems strange that it is conflict in this self-same industry which is now

said to be threatening the whole fabric of decent society in Britain.

But two statistics summarise why the lorry drivers' strike is now supposedly threatening food supplies, newspapers, and countless manufacturing industries.

On the one hand, 85 per cent of total tonnage transported in this country is moved by road; on the other hand, the basic wage of the drivers varies from £50.09 to £53.35. This means that drivers who work no overtime take home less than £35 a week.

The employers, in the form of the Road Haulage Association, have offered an increase on the basic rate of 12.5 per cent. Increases in benefits would bring the offer up to 15 per cent, but the drivers are claiming an increase on the basis of 20 per cent.

Forgetting the headlines in the Tory press about 'holding

the country to ransom', 'state of siege', 'mindless militancy', and the rest, the case for the drivers is completely reasonable.

As the Price Commission report testified, 'average hourly earnings...have remained significantly below those for manual workers in industry as a whole'.

The RHA has been quoted as saying that it cannot increase its offer because of the government's pay policy. It says that the Price Commission has already criticised the industry for its pricing, and the Commission has recommended they should not be allowed to put their prices up by more than the general rate of inflation.

Accordingly, argue the employers, if they pay more than they have offered and cannot increase their prices to cover the increase, bankruptcies will follow.

In fact this argument is spurious. What the Price Commission does say is that 'costs within the industry are generally greater than those which ought to be incurred by efficient suppliers.'

For instance, the report criticises the industry for 'the general lack of interest among all but the largest firms in the positive promotion or selling of their services and in general forward planning of their business'.

Elsewhere in its report the Price Commission notes that lorries often lie idle, that the vehicles are often empty on return journeys, and that firms to which goods are delivered often increase the cost themselves by having out-of-the-way depots or very

restricted delivery times.

The situation is made worse by the proliferation of companies in the industry; as the report says, 'the professional road haulage industry is fragmented into a very large number of small units'.

So what characterises the road haulage industry is a lack of planning, inefficiency, and low wages. Even profits are not particularly high.

And yet here is an industry which controls 85 per cent of its market and is so large that it employs 275,000 people.

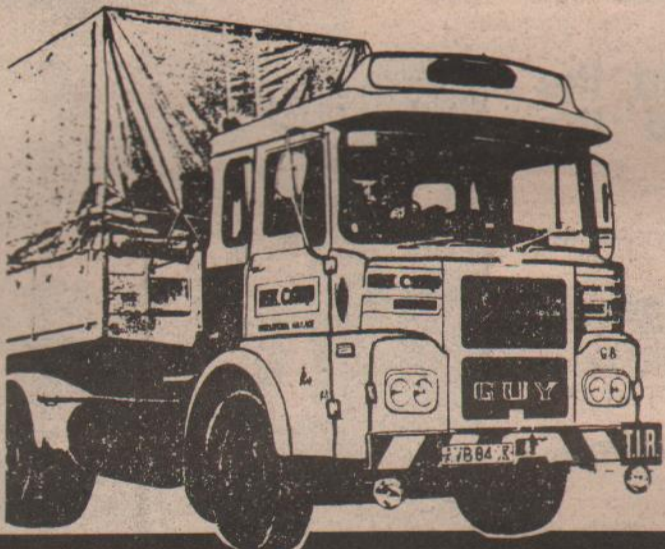
Seen in this light the lorry drivers' strike goes beyond the immediate issue of a justified wage increase. The industry as a whole is a good illustration of what is wrong with the way this society is conducted.

It is not that 'the country is being held to ransom', but that private enterprise inevitably means waste, inefficiency, and near chaos.

If there was a centralised road haulage system, if there was planning on a national scale of the transportation of goods, if there was a common wage structure for the industry as a whole, then conditions would improve remarkably.

It would mean, for instance, that a lorry which took goods from London to Glasgow would not come back empty. It would not mean that 'the average vehicle is working for only one-third of the week', as the Price Commission reports is happening today.

All such waste could be done away with if there was one road haulage company that was planned on a rational, efficient, co-ordinated basis. If, in other words, the industry was nationalised.



SOCIALIST CHALLENGE TRADE UNION CONFERENCE 2 Our alternative to Callaghan

- *The Lucas Experience, with Phil Asquith (exec. member, Lucas Combine)
- * Workers Control in Iran, with a speaker from the Iranian workers movement.
- * Closures and Workers Control, with Carl Brecker (Hounslow Hospital Occupation Committee)
- * And more! (All speakers in a personal capacity)

Saturday 24 March at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham

Tickets £1 from SC Trade Union Conference, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

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

- * I am interested in more information about activities in my area.
- * I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.

Delete if not applicable]

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper St London N1.

OUR POLICIES

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

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

- * To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.
- * To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles. Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

Iran's new government frail and unconvincing

SOMEHOW everyone expected it to happen more dramatically, but it does seem finally that the Shah is going.

Quietly, ignominiously, leaving a regency council behind him; no bullet between the eyes, no swish of the blade or twang of the gallows rope; but he is going nevertheless.

For the Iranian people, however, the battle has hardly begun. In the coming days and weeks they will face increased intervention from the Western powers.

By Richard Carver

THE new Iranian government of Shapur Bakhtiar is frail and unconvincing. Despite — or maybe because of — the US administration's fulsome support, it has the backing of no important section of Iranian society outside the Shah's immediate entourage.

Half the Pahlavi clique has disappeared already — to its Beverly Hills mansions and its Alpine ski resorts. The Shah will join them soon leaving Bakhtiar with the slenderest of support.

The military is at best half-hearted. Key members of the tough faction in the army have resigned, led by General Oveissy, the 'Butcher of Tehran'. As has so often happened, an utterly loyal imperialist-trained army has proven less agile in its political allegiances than its masters.

The removal of the military regime and its replacement by these civilians is a success for the opposition. But the new government's commitment to the entire apparatus of the Pahlavi state makes it unacceptable to the masses.

Earlier this week they gave overwhelming support to two successive 'days of mourning' or general strikes, called respectively by the National Front and Ayatollah Khomeini.

To hear its leaders talk now, one would think that the National Front had been the most intransigent anti-monarchist party.

The reverse is true. It has always left the constitutional question open and until quite recently its leaders were in touch with the Shah. Only the pressure of developments on the streets kept them from reaching a deal.

It is an index of the Front's bankruptcy that until last week Bakhtiar was its deputy leader — the same Bakhtiar whom they are now all clamouring to condemn.

The Front sees a government of its own leaders as a possible successor to Bakhtiar. In Paris, Khomeini too has a governmental slate in mind.

What none of the major spokespeople for the opposition have raised is the prospect of a constituent assembly — in other words that the regime which follows the Shah should be determined by the masses who overthrew him.

The only other practical options are that some religious

or capitalist interest group will seize government for itself. At best it would then ask the people to ratify an already existing state of affairs.

The fight for a constituent assembly — and alongside that

dictatorship, are backing Bakhtiar and are looking to improve relations with his possible successors.

Diplomatic and political manoeuvres are accompanied by less savoury techniques of persuasion: an increase in CIA agents in the country and the despatch of a naval task force.

A British naval frigate has already investigated the logistical problem by docking at Abadan on a 'mercy' mission, taking off some 400 British nationals. A US intervention still cannot be ruled out, under the guise of defending the large American community in Iran. The Pentagon is anxious that

worried by the impact of the Iranian revolution. Most obviously this has affected oil supplies to politically sensitive imperialist client states such as South Africa and Israel, as well as to most major Western countries.

Imperialist strategists and socialists alike should be pondering the impact of Iranian events on Turkey. The Iranian upsurge was clearly part of the reason why Turkish right wingers have launched their attack on the country's Moslem Shi'ite left.

The left is linked to Iran by religious and national consi-



Prime Minister SHAPUR BAKHTIAR

for a workers' and peasants' government — is the most effective way to stop such manoeuvres.

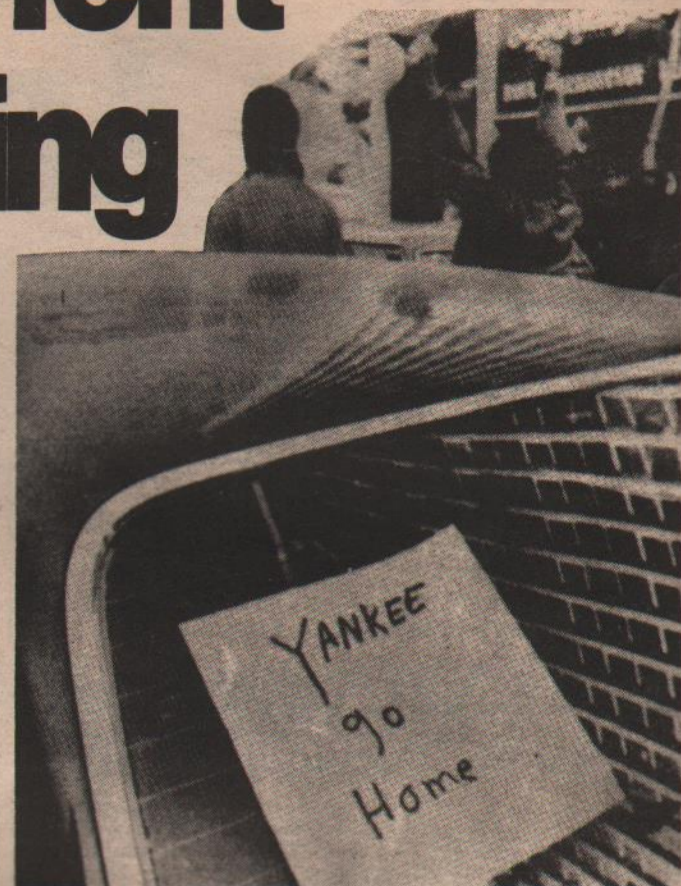
It is against this eventuality that the imperialist powers are stepping up their intervention in the region. The Americans have muted their overenthusiastic support for the

it gets it right this time after the traumas of Vietnam and Angola. The White House apparently now regrets not having given more open support to the Somali regime in its war with Ethiopia last year — a taste of things to come?

Already imperialism is

derations: both the Shi'ite faith and the Kurdish minority straddle formal territorial boundaries.

This pattern is duplicated elsewhere. Iran has Baluchi, Afghani and Arab minorities and it shares its Kurdish minority with Iraq as well as Turkey.



Iran demo called for 3 Feb

By Steve Potter

DISCRETION proved the better part of valour last week when the Queen finally called off her visit to the Shah of Iran. One of the considerations uppermost in her mind must have been whether the Shah would be there to receive her.

The Queen's decision is part of a retreat by the major imperialist powers from their previous total support for the continuation of the Shah's dictatorship.

This has proved necessary as the masses have demonstrated their complete opposition to any government, military or civilian, formed under the Shah.

The dominant concern in imperialist circles is the internal stability of the country — seriously threatening the ability of the Iranian regime to continue as cop in the Gulf and Middle East generally.

The other irritant is the continuing disruption of the world's oil supplies provoked by the oilfield workers' embargo on oil for external consumption.

The only sure way to counter the manoeuvres of the imperialists is by building the broadest and most vigorous solidarity action in the imperialist heartlands.

Only in West Germany has such mass action occurred on anything like the necessary scale. In the USA, solidarity

actions have been confined to vanguard actions by Iranian student groups.

In Britain, despite a growing ginter

In Britain, despite a growing interest by workers in the ports and the arms industry, and vocal but ineffective protests by the left of the Labour Party, mass action on the streets has not so far mobilised any more than a couple of thousand marchers on the streets, largely drawn from the Iranian student movement.

At least part of this can be attributed to the lack of unity in action on the British left. A major opportunity to overcome this problem has arisen with the forming of the ad-hoc committee originally aimed at stopping the Queen's visit.

Formed by the Communist Party, International Marxist Group, Socialist Workers Party, and Workers Action, the committee has the support of the Committee Against Repression in Iran [CARI] and the alliance of Iranian student groups in the Iran Solidarity Campaign.

The committee has decided to go ahead with its 3 February demonstration, which gained the endorsement of the National Union of Students at its conference in December.

On that day we must make sure that Carter and Callaghan are warned: Imperialist hands off Iran! Iran!

Demonstration

SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRUGGLE IN IRAN

Saturday 3 February, 1.00pm, Trafalgar Square

Supported by National Union of Students

Organised by 'Stop the Queen's Visit Ad-hoc Committee'

Two views How to defend the Iranian revolution

DEMONSTRATIONS in solidarity with the struggle in Iran have been a feature of nearly every weekend in Britain. Yet the numbers involved are still pathetically small in relation to the scale of events in Iran.

At least part of this problem is attributable to the lack of unity on the far left in coordinating solidarity activity for Iran. The largest demonstrations so far

have been called by the Iran Solidarity Campaign and the Committee Against Repression in Iran.

We publish below a debate on the way forward in building a united solidarity campaign — a campaign which as part of an international movement can be a massive boost to the struggles of the Iranian masses.

workers in the arms industry, won national unions and the Labour Party conference to this position.

It is a fact that the Committee Against Repression in Iran has been the leading force in these activities and has promoted this view of how a solidarity movement should be built. This work has been built over a period of years.

Over these years a number of Iranian student groups have been involved in CARI and have left because they disagreed with this orientation. The writers acknowledge the problems of sectarianism in the Iranian student movement.

Unfortunately the 'Iranian Solidarity Campaign', whatever its other merits, is not immune from this sectarianism. In its capacity as the organiser of the 9 December demonstration, it excluded CARI and the International Marxist Group from its mobilising committee and then went on to prevent CARI placards from being carried on the demonstration and a CARI speaker from addressing it.

We assume that the SWP dissociates itself from these practices.

This view of how a solidarity

campaign should be organised is reflected in its structure, in which named participation is confined to Iranian student organisations — organisations of a particular political view.

Under these circumstances we think we are entitled to conclude that the ISC, while representing political forces inside the Iranian student movement, cannot be regarded as fighting to build a genuine solidarity campaign.

We suggest that the SWP and the ISC should come out firmly in favour of a broad-based solidarity movement aimed at the British labour movement, that they actively participate in building CARI, and that any of the necessary changes to the basis of CARI be put forward at its forthcoming conference.

An impressive degree of unity has been gained in the fight to build the 3 February demonstration. We hope that any bad feeling aroused as a result of our bad error in reporting the NUS Conference will be dissolved in mobilising the maximum possible turnout.

STEVE POTTER [for Editorial Board]

SWP

IN YOUR report of the NUS conference decision to affiliate to CARI you write that the 'Socialist Worker Student Organisation proposed to affiliate instead to the loose coalition of Iranian student groups called the Iran Solidarity Campaign.'

This is untrue. It was a SWSO delegate who moved the main motion including affiliation to CARI, and the defeated SWSO amendment called for affiliation to the ISC in addition to CARI.

Having made that (rather substantial) correction it may be of some interest to Socialist Challenge readers to know why we moved that amendment.

We in the SWP and SWSO want a united movement in solidarity with the struggle in Iran. But you don't get that by blinding yourself to the divisions that exist and glibly proclaiming one organisation to be the solidarity campaign.

Like it or not (and we certainly don't) the heritage of past factional struggles has left CARI with the support of only one significant tendency (supporters of the Fourth International) among the Iranian left in Britain and with a depressing legacy of ill-will from the great majority of politically active Iranians in Britain.

Of course some of this hostility comes from groups which refuse any co-operation with 'revisionists and Trotskyists' and hence rule out co-operation with virtually any of the British left. There is not much we can do about that apart from patiently argue with individuals and hope that the mass movement will provide an even more powerful argument.

But the groups supporting the Iran Solidarity Campaign are not like this. They have actively canvassed and welcomed support from the British left.

We in the SWP felt strongly that their initiative was worth responding to seriously and we think we were proved correct when, on the 9 December demonstration they called, 3-4,000 marched on the biggest demonstration in solidarity with the Iranian struggle held in Britain to date.

Yet Socialist Challenge ignored it. You avoided

mentioning it beforehand. Amongst three pages of coverage on Iran you failed to report it in your subsequent issue.

And, despite the fact that the organisers specifically invited the IMG to participate in the demonstration, you apparently did not think it worthwhile to sell Socialist Challenge (with a front page on Iran) on a march including over 2,000 Iranians.

In doing this, and in your supporters voting against NUS affiliation to ISC, we think you are adding fuel to the sectarian divisions among the Iranian left in Britain.

Of course that does not mean that ISC is the solidarity campaign. Its most severe limitation you have pointed out. That is its sectarian attitude to CARI (its refusal to give them a speaker, etc.) and we have argued and will argue with them that they are wrong in this.

As for the other criticism you mention, 'the vague political basis of the campaign', we think you are off the mark.

ISC has criticised CARI's limiting itself to a struggle against repression, and with the enormous mass struggles in Iran and the increasing possibility of the Shah's imminent downfall we think they are right in thinking that a solidarity campaign must go further than this.

Hopefully the rising mass struggle will also do something to heal the sectarian divisions produced by isolation. The SWP will try to assist in this process by supporting all valid initiatives of solidarity whether they come from ISC, CARI or some other organisation.

That is why we tried to get NUS affiliation to ISC and CARI. That is why we supported the ISC demonstration on 9 December and sent a contingent on the CARI demonstration the following weekend. It would be a help if Socialist Challenge acted likewise.

Forward to a united demonstration in solidarity with the struggle in Iran on 3 February. Though quite what the centre of that solidarity will be will be determined by the rapidly moving pace of the mass struggle in Iran!

PETE GOODWIN (SWP International Organiser)
EINDE O'CALLAGHAN (SWSO)



Socialist Challenge

SOCIALIST Challenge agrees with the SWP that we want a united movement in solidarity with the struggle in Iran. But Pete Goodwin and Einde O'Callaghan don't explain what sort of solidarity movement must be built.

It is clear that such a movement must be a long-term, permanently organised campaign. The mass movement in Iran will ride over even the most ferocious repression in pursuit of its objective — the overthrow of the Shah.

At the same time, without the Shah, capitalism in Iran is seriously threatened and with it the whole of imperialist domination in the Middle East and the Gulf. So the imperialists will be equally unrelenting in the efforts, with or without the Shah, to derail or smash the mass movement.

The best assistance we can render to the Iranian people is to build a broad-based solidarity

campaign centred on the theme 'Imperialist Hands off Iran' — whether that means today demanding the breaking of all links with the Shah's regime or tomorrow demanding an end to intervention, open or covert, against the mass movement in Iran.

Any such campaign has to be firmly directed towards the British student and labour movement, to get mass action on the streets, boycotts in ports, embargoes on the movement of military equipment, and to win support in general for the struggle of the Iranian people.

Such a campaign must therefore be open to all those forces in the labour movement who are prepared to take action to this end.

It is possible to take such action now. Solidarity movement speakers have spoken to mass meetings of dockers, begun collaboration with

WHAT'S LEFT

5p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3pm Saturday before publication. Payment in advance.

BRICK LANE Bop with Belt and Braces. Benefit for arrested anti-racists. Sat 13 Jan, 7.30pm. Bar. Adm: £1 waged, 65p unwaged. Dame Collet House, Ben Jonson Road, E1. Nearest tube Stepney Green, and walk through White Horse Lane. Organised by Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee and ANL.

CHILE Day Conference on Sat 20 Jan, at PCL, Oxford St, London. Speakers: Joan Jara, H Schember, A Christie. Workshops on socialist economic planning, education, popular culture, women. Evening social. Details, registration: Cathy Moss, NUS International Dept, 302 Pentonville Rd, London N1.

MEMORIAL meeting for Malcolm Caldwell. Tues 23 Jan, 7.30pm at Holborn Assembly Hall, Johns Mews, London WC1. (off Northington St at NW corner of Gray's Inn and Theobalds Rd).

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE now has a stock of attractive hessian bags with two designs: in black, fight racism; in red, womens liberation symbol. Cost: £1 from our offices or £1.25 by mail (inc p&p).

'FIGHT RACISM' T-shirts. Good quality white cotton with red design. Cap sleeves or regular short sleeves. Medium or large. (Sizes are on the small side — if in doubt order a large). £1.50 from our offices or £1.75 inc p&p.

PICKET GARNERS: Main pickets every day, noon to 3pm and 5.30 to 11 pm at 399 Oxford St., London W1 (opp. Selfridges); 243 Oxford St. (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 56 Whitcombe St. (Leicester Sq.). Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donations urgently needed as strike pay is only £6. All donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm 84, 12-13 Henrietta St., London WC2. 01-2401056.

THE STRUGGLE for a revolutionary programme: debate between the Revolutionary Communist Tendency and the Spartacist League. Fri 12 Jan, 7pm at Essex Rd Library, 115-117 Essex Rd, London N1. Angel tube.

LONDON Revolutionary Communist Group meeting. The Fight Against Racism. Speakers from Brick Lane, Garner's, RCG. Tues 16 January, 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Adm: 20p.

MANCHESTER Revolutionary Communist Group public meeting. Remember Bloody Sunday — PoW Status for Irish Prisoners. Wed 17 Jan, 7.30pm, Longsight Town Hall, Stockport Rd.

SOCIALIST translators needed for material in Spanish and Portuguese from the Latin American left. Please contact: LAF, PO Box 50, London N1.

DESIGNER required to work for Socialist Challenge/ FI Litho.

Must be politically committed.

Knowledge of printing and production techniques, especially platemaking, an advantage.

Apply in writing to FI Litho, 328/9 Upper St, London N1

or ring 01-359 8288.

A letter to some Muslims in Birmingham

Politics and class struggle in Iran

Dear friends:

Last November you distributed a two-page leaflet after a Socialist Challenge meeting I had spoken at in Birmingham.

The leaflet was headed: 'On the Question of the Iranian Struggle: Islamic Revolution or Materialist Hypocrisy?' It presented a critique of the Marxist position on Iran and devoted itself to answering the points I had made in my speech.

You argue that:

(a) the Iranian revolution is due to the love of the Iranian people for Islam

(b) 'the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky are based on class-hatred and materialist belief and thus alien to the Iranian people';

(c) it is in the teachings of the ayatollahs and mullahs that the Iranian people's aspirations for an Islamic revolution and Islamic state will be fulfilled.

You speak in the name of 'Islamic revolution' and declare your open hostility to socialists who are also involved in the Iranian struggle. You claim, somewhat arrogantly, that socialists are 'misled people' who are not interested in what the people desire. The people of Iran desire Islam.

Before dealing with your points in detail, it is worth re-stating what, in our opinion, the Iranian struggle is all about. What is its dynamic and its ultimate goal?

Over the last twenty years the social weight of the urban working class has increased dramatically in comparison with neighbouring states. Class divisions and class contradictions have become more acute.

How can you doubt that Iran is a society divided by class? How do you explain the existence of parasites who live in unbelievably luxurious conditions in Tehran while a few hundreds yards away there are people who live in the most abject poverty?

They are all Iranians. They are mainly Muslims. Many capitalists regularly prostrate themselves before Mecca in the hope that their god will protect their privileges.

You could say that this latter breed are not true Muslims, they are imposters. But on what basis will you decide? The teachings of Islam itself (especially the Shiite version) are full of ambiguities which can be interpreted to justify both resistance and collaboration with authority.

The poverty-stricken masses retain their religious beliefs to escape from the horrors and miseries of everyday life. The

rich remain religious the better to safeguard their material interests.

Religion performed a different function hundreds of years ago, but in our century it has become the backbone of reaction. Today we have before us many examples of 'Islamic states'.

We have the Wahhabi fundamentalists who govern Saudi Arabia in the name of Islam. Is that barbarism to be reborn in Iran? Or there is the 'enlightened despotism' of Libya.

The struggle in Iran began as a struggle for democratic rights. This united the overwhelming majority of the people.

In this struggle we all fight together to bring down the Shah. You shout 'Death to the Shah' holding the banners of Islam. We chant the same slogan with the red flag in our hands.

But ask yourselves why it is that US imperialism supports the Shah. Is it because he is 'anti-Islamic'? Is it because they fear the rise of Islam? If that were so, how do you explain that Saudi Arabia is one of the oldest allies of the United States in the Middle East?

No, the reason the Americans fear the fall of the Shah is because they are aware that establishing political structures to keep Iran safe for capitalism is not going to be an easy process.

The awakening and radicalisation of the working masses has created tremendous expectations. If the government that follows the Shah cannot satisfy the people then there will be more upheavals.

The ayatollahs do not represent a coherent political alternative. The discredited bourgeois politicians have failed in the past. It was precisely the lack of an alternative opposition that made the religious leaders the only major focus of dissent.

The struggle in Iran is thus motivated not so much by a 'love of Islam' (even though the majority of Iranians are Muslims) as by a hatred of the Shah and all that he represents.

In that sense the teachings of Lenin and Trotsky are very relevant. For their followers say to the working masses: only you and your class are capable of liberating Iran from the stranglehold of capitalism and imperialism. Only the victory of your class will ensure the real independence of Iran.

That is why the construction of a revolutionary workers party is an important priority.



The teachings of the ayatollahs and mullahs, which you claim are the real answer, offer no practical solutions in fact to the real needs of the masses.

What is an 'Islamic' state? What would be its class character? Who would own the means of production and especially the oil wells? Who would decide, and on what basis, the international alliances which Iran would need?

Let us take one question to illustrate your dilemma. Islam eschews interest on loans. So are Iranian banks going to be forbidden the right to charge interest?

If they are, then they cannot function as the financial institutions of capital. Our answer would be to nationalise them immediately. You would call that 'communism'.

There are, in reality, no consistent political or theoretical positions that can be derived from Islam. The logic of capital will force even the most ardent Islamic nationalists to take sides in the struggle that will develop after the fall of the Shah.

The Islamic movement itself will suffer further political rifts and divisions, precisely because a belief in Islam does not lead

automatically to the same political conclusions.

You are quite correct to point out the disgusting role of China and the Soviet Union in supporting the Shah over the last decade. You then use this to discredit the very idea of socialism.

It is true that these states and their cynical manoeuvres have antagonised and disillusioned millions of people. But we are Trotskyists. Our political current has fought against these policies now for more than fifty years.

So throwing Brezhnev and Mao at us is the equivalent of us saying 'Well, the Shah is a Muslim', and hurling him at you!

We stand for proletarian internationalism. We believe that the interests of workers throughout the world are one and indivisible. We argue that unless the workers seize state power over the next decades, capitalism will become more and more barbaric.

You claim that capitalism and socialism are 'Western ideologies'. This is false. They are both international ideologies, but with a crucial difference. One represents the interests of the ruling classes and the other the oppressed

masses.

Islam, no more than Christianity or Judaism or Hinduism or Buddhism, offers no solution.

We do not deny for a single moment the role of the Islamic opposition, and Khomeini in particular, in fuelling the mass upsurge against the Shah and refusing to accept any compromise which retains the monarchy. It is what follows this which will decide the immediate future of Iran.

And as we are approaching the 21st century, it would be somewhat foolish to attempt to derive our future from a distant past whose echoes continue to fade.

To summarise:

1. We believe that the struggle in Iran, despite the predominance of democratic slogans, has a clear class character. The recent strike wave has made this abundantly clear.

2. We believe that the future of the Iranian masses does rest on the ability of their most advanced sections to construct a party that will be based on the teachings of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. We are trying to construct such a party at this very moment: the Iranian section of the Fourth Inter-

national.

3. The ayatollahs and mullahs have been able to play an important role because the repression, the collapse of the bourgeois oppositions, and the bankruptcy of pro-Moscow and pro-Peking groups made them and their mosques the only centres of opposition.

But already this is beginning to change. The fall of the Shah will shift politics further away from the mosques. This is not just desirable. It is virtually inevitable.

In conclusion we can do little more than paraphrase Lenin's remarks to Indonesian communists in 1919. The latter had explained that the peasants were loyal to Sarekat-i-Islam, a progressive Muslim organisation. They were loyal to God.

Lenin advised Indonesian communists to work with Sarekat, but said: 'Tell them that when they go to heaven they should be loyal to God. But here on earth the International Executive Committee of the Communist International is more powerful.'

Yours comradely,

Tariq Ali

HOME NEWS

Racist murder in Hackney

Community demands black self-defence

MICHAEL Andrew Ferreira, a 19-year-old West Indian, was murdered by white racists in Hackney, East London, in the early hours of Sunday 10 December.

By Martin Meteyard

This was the fourth known racist murder in the area in the last eight months. And this time the black community reacted in a big way.

After a week's leafleting on the streets more than 200 people — most of them black — turned up to a meeting at the local All Nations Club. Not only was there a lot of anger — but loud calls for organised defence.

These were so insistent because the events surrounding Michael's death had thrown a clear light on the role of the

police and their lack of concern for the lives of black people.

Michael arrived bleeding at Stoke Newington police station at 2am after being stabbed. But the police took their time calling an ambulance, which didn't arrive till 2.45am.

They were obviously more interested in finding out what black youths were doing on the streets at all than in the fact that Michael was bleeding to death. He was finally taken to St Leonard's Hospital where he died.

As a result of the mood at the meeting on 21 December, a further meeting of black people

only was called for 27 December, which decided to set up the Hackney Black People's Defence Organisation.

The basis of the BPDO is that:

1. Only black people can ensure their own defence.
2. This means mobilisation of the local community.
3. Defence and its organisation is a political question which involves defence against not only the National Front (whose headquarters are now in Hackney) but also the actions of the police, judiciary, and the whole establishment.

The need for this was shown



MICHAEL ANDREW FERREIRA

when the three men charged with Michael's murder appeared in court. They were refused bail not because of the seriousness of the charges, or because their release would encourage further attacks on the black community, but because the police said this was the only way to ensure their safety!

The BPDO is now leafleting Ridley Road market every Saturday and also organising a petition to demand the release

of Michael's body — which is still being held by the police.

When his body is finally released, it is planned to turn the day of the funeral into a mass day of mourning for all the victims of racist attacks.

It was in Hackney that the first strike against racism took place on 17 July. It is this sort of action that the BPDO and the local anti-racist movement intend to build.

British Oxygen management out for revenge

By John Ross

THERE is no doubt as to the British Oxygen Company's New Year resolution: to make up for its defeat in the last two years' wage deals by attacking union organisation.

Coming back from the holiday on 2 January, workers at BOC's Hackney depot found the lorries iced up and dangerous to work. Although fifteen were eventually got back on the road, three were found still to be hazardous by the union safety representatives.

However, from 30 miles away the management representative, Paul Draper, declared them fit and ordered them taken out. When the workers rejected this the management overturned all dispute procedures and withdrew the gate cards of six workers, including TGWU senior shop steward John Walsh.

The decision of the entire night shift to walk out in support of the suspended men was backed unanimously by a mass meeting of the depot next day.

This type of attack by management has a long history at BOC. Ritual calls for everyone to 'muck in' are matched by their determination to contest claims for injuries received doing it.

One driver is still paying legal costs to BOC — a judge threw out his case after his leg was broken and calf muscle ripped out by a gas bottle which broke loose from an old lorry in monstrously bad winter conditions. They 'proved' his liability by test driving a brand new lorry over the same route in June!

John Walsh has now been suspended and reinstated by industrial action three times in five years. Management are once again trying to hit back at the militant Hackney depot for the role it played in waging the fights for higher pay in the last two years.

They hope to open the door for riding roughshod over safety agreements, tearing up union procedures, and victimising the leading union militants in BOC.

The Hackney workers, however, are out solidly for the implementation of all safety regulations, the reinstatement of the victimised workers, full payment for time lost in suspensions and strikes, and the defence of their union organisation.

National strategy lacking in journalists' strike

by Geoffrey Sheridan

A NATIONAL strategy is what is lacking in the five-week-old strike of provincial journalists, say militants who have learned with considerable disappointment of the concessions being offered by their union leaders.

The demand for an across-the-board £20 increase has brought unprecedented unity and determination from the provincial journalists, whose local representatives reported at a meeting last week that morale remains high.

But the Newspaper Society, the employers' organisation, has shown no sign of improving on its latest 13.5 per cent offer, and in their anxiety to get around the negotiating table, the National Union of Journalists executive has said it would reduce pickets to a token number if the bosses agree to talk.

Although over a hundred local newspapers have been stopped, the majority of printworkers continue to follow the instructions of their union leaders to work normally.

Picketing therefore plays a crucial role, and militants notched up two important successes last week.

A mass picket at Leamington on Thursday, on which 40 or so local trade unionists joined 20 journalists, persuaded NGA printworkers to halt the Courier Press newspapers.

The same result was achieved

by a mass picket of the Surrey and South London News Group, owned by the Newspaper Society's chief negotiator.

'Sympathy from NGA members has grown,' says Howard Hannah, chairperson of the NUJ's North London branch, which brought several papers to a halt before the strike was made official.

'We're now looking to a mobile mass picketing squad which could spread the Leamington experience through the Midlands,' Hannah adds.

His branch was one of the first to condemn the suggestion of a reduction to token pickets, taking the view that this could only confuse both journalists and printworkers while allowing essential supplies to be stockpiled.

Over £300 has been donated to the North London branch's strike fund as a result of a visit to an industrial estate. It is by seeking this kind of support from other workers against the Government's pay policy, not by concessions to the employers, that the journalists' strike can be won.

'We are faced with the problem of having no effective day-to-day leadership of the strike,' says Howard Hannah. 'Various chapels have been pushing for a national action committee elected from the rank and file to be in charge of the dispute, with regional sub-committees.'



PICKETS stop a delivery van at the Uxbridge plant of the giant Westminster Press newspaper group. To find out where help is needed on a picket near you, ring the NUJ on 01-278 7916.

The Times — an invisible struggle

WHILE the presses at The Times continue to remain silent, those of Times Challenger will shortly start rolling.

The unions battling against the lock-out at Times Newspapers are planning to produce an eight-page paper, largely devoted to putting over their case to the workers' movement.

This has been one of the few positive moves in what otherwise remains a phoney peace.

Much of the energy of the

print unions NATSOPA and NGA is being taken up with finding their locked-out members temporary jobs on Fleet Street.

The danger is that with no clear fight-back taking place, this dispersion of the workforce could easily lead to demoralisation and a permanent loss of jobs.

At a mass meeting last Thursday, NATSOPA officials announced that there is to be a rally and Fleet Street march on 25 January, and a conference for trade union delegates on 10

February.

But solidarity cannot readily be built for an invisible struggle.

If the management which has suppressed two national papers is allowed to continue to publish its regional newspapers without resistance from the unions; if the enormous assets of the Thomson Organisation are considered inviolable, and if there is no serious attempt by the unions to nail the bosses' press freedom, then Thomson could win in the end.



Pamphlet: On Trotskyism and the Fourth International by Phil Hearse. Invaluable reading. 30p plus 10p p&p from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, London N1.

Photo: ANDREW WIARD (Report)

LEFT UNITY — WHAT THEY SAY

LAST week we published an appeal for left unity jointly agreed by the International Marxist Group and International Socialist Alliance. We asked for people to send in signatures.

Some have arrived in the post this week together with two letters from socialists explaining why they have decided not to sign.

These letters raise important issues in the progress towards revolutionary unity.

That's why we have decided to open the pages of Socialist Challenge to a debate round this issue. Comrades from the IMG and ISA will be given space to reply.

Appeal has 'hollow ring'

THE major part of the statement on revolutionary unity provides an important summary of the principles on which we should work together locally and nationally. However, the final attempt to crystallise the call for unity in three national projects has a hollow ring about it, especially in the case of Socialist Unity and 'a united revolutionary youth movement'.

The final declaration, which after all will give practical shape to whatever unity occurs, puts me off signing the statement. But because I believe in the intention behind the overall statement I want to explain my misgivings in the hope that they might influence the next steps you take.

The first national project on rank and file movements is already part of the basic political statement, as are a number of other areas of national work such as the socialist feminist movement, the ANL, etc. At this stage I think national projects should be left at the level of these general commitments.

Agreement to support Socialist Unity election campaigns and to build a united revolutionary youth movement are inadequately discussed among the wide layer of revolutionaries open to united work that they would seriously limit the possibilities of unity.

Take Socialist Unity: it's true that Socialist Unity campaigns did bring together some of the signatories of this statement at a national level, and in some localities. But since the initial by-election and local election successes there has been no lasting impact, if any, in the localities; at least no public evaluation.

Its stated objectives were to stimulate class struggle alliances, not to make revolutionary propaganda for a few weeks. Is there any evidence that it has begun to do so?

Furthermore, as an attempt to build something broader



than a revolutionary electoral intervention, it is crucially affected by developments within the Labour Party which influence the electoral allegiances of class struggle militants.

These allegiances vary considerably from locality to locality depending on the Labour Party's relation to local government, the traditions of the local labour movement, etc.

While it is very important to fight for a socialist alternative in terms of national and international policies, it is entirely unrealistic to argue that its electoral expression could take a uniform national form at this stage.

You might agree; in which case it seems extremely premature, in a basis of unity, to plump for the unproven Socialist Unity as the single agreed basis for electoral activity.

So for different reasons the

commitment to build a united revolutionary youth movement. On the face of it, a good idea.

But when one thinks of the difficulties facing all attempts to get a revolutionary youth movement off the ground in the past, when one thinks of the rarity of any historical precedent for such a project, it seems extraordinarily glib to include this as a condition of joint activity.

The IMG have no doubt discussed this thoroughly but there's been little public discussion.

Surely by including these commitments to two specific national projects in the unity statement you've got the process of revolutionary unity wrong way round. Especially when the revolutionary left is so diffuse, and involved in such a variety of unco-ordinated local and national projects and

Appeal signatories

JOHN BANGS, executive of the Socialist Teachers Alliance.
PAT CROSS, Hull Working Women's Charter Campaign, past Socialist Unity candidate in Hull council by-election.
ROBIN BLACKBURN, New Left Review Editorial Board, IMG.

ROD DAVEY, shop steward, TGWU 9/12 Passenger branch, Leeds.

JOHN BELL, UCATT member, past member of Editorial Board of **Building Worker**.
CHRIS ARTHUR, independent socialist.

HARRY WICKS, a founder of the British Trotskyist movement.
LIZ CURTIS, independent socialist.

TONY GRAHAM, editor of **Socialist Teacher**.
JILL HALL, ex-SWP candidate in Ashfield by-election.

SUE WATKINS, recent full-time organiser of the National Abortion Campaign.
VIV LACEY, ex-member of CPSA executive.

ALASTAIR RENWICK, independent socialist.

JAN PARKER, socialist feminist, NUS women's committee, and Women's Left Caucus.

CHRIS POTTER, member of Ealing/Hammersmith/Hounslow Area Joint Union Committee, member of the past Hounslow Occupation Committee.

KEN JONES, national convener of the Socialist Teachers Alliance.

JIM POPE, **Revolution** editorial board, Glasgow Revolution group, Sham Army.

LARRY HERMAN, Glasgow UTOM.

PAUL GALLAGHER, Socialist Unity, Glasgow.

MICK ARCHER, executive member, National Union of Students.

DAVE WHITELEY, general secretary, Wandsworth NUT.

LIZ CURTIS, independent socialist and Committee for a Free Ireland.

ALASTAIR RENWICK, independent socialist, Committee for a Free Ireland.

All the above in a personal capacity.

campaigns.

Wouldn't it be better to base local and national joint work on the general statement and then, after a period of such 'unity from below', establish some national conference from which more specific national projects could come.

In the meantime these local alliances and joint work in national movements could be strengthened by more open discussion about the sort of revolutionary organisation we are trying to build and about the problems with the Leninist model; discussion based not only on the classical experiences of building revolutionary

parties in the early part of the 20th century but on the new forms of organisation which are being formed through the women's movement, through the rank and file trade union movement, through local socialist meeting points like socialist centres, and so on.

I thought the final part of the statement, asserting a commitment to a united revolutionary organisation, as if we all knew and agreed what that meant, was insufficiently sensitive to these problems. It could therefore tend to preclude comrades who consider them important.

HILARY WAINWRIGHT

It's utopian

IN the days of CND demonstrations, members of one of the organisations of the left used to stand on the pavement with leaflets headed 'Why We Are Not Marching'. I hope this doesn't read like the same sort of exercise.

Put briefly, my reasons for

not signing the 'Appeal for Joint Work' are as follows:

1) Revolutionaries are surely capable of co-operating in trade union struggles, the women's movement, anti-racist activities, etc. without first requiring a 3,000-word programmatic explanation.

2) It is hard to see who will be persuaded by the Appeal to engage in joint work with the signatories, and would not have done so anyway.

3) The document does little to clarify what kind of work is to be done. Some readers may suspect (quite unjustly, of

course) that the authors tend to the not uncommon belief that in drafting a programme setting out a number of objectives one is already working to achieve them.

4) The Appeal is utopian, in that the series of aims is unrelated to any analysis of the existing consciousness and organisation of the working class.

5) The reliance on the crude old slogans of 'trade union bureaucracy' and 'rank and file' (a grossly oversimplified dichotomy even in the days of the Profintern) encourages a belief that the receptivity of the work-

ing class to socialist politics and revolutionary struggle is blocked principally by the sinister manipulations of a corrupt officialdom.

This assumption has been responsible for quite enough disastrous strategies on the left in the past half century. I can't help believing that re-thinking some of the analyses and theories which have failed us in the past is a more important task than issuing declaratory programmes.

RICHARD HYMAN

Socialist Feminist conference

THE SECOND national socialist feminist conference is planned for 2 March in London.

Arrangements for the conference are going well and a general framework for the discussion has been agreed, the emphasis of which will be towards action, it is hoped.

This would of necessity include an evaluation of socialist feminist ideas and organisation up to now. Most importantly, this involves looking at the present situation within British society and internationally.

The examination of the current situation has been broken down into four main areas for discussion:

***Social policies**; including education, welfare, legal changes, health, taxation, etc.

***Economic conditions**; including employment, training, low pay, domestic labour.

***Struggles in communication**; including media, art, alternative practices.

***Reproduction and sexuality**; control over our bodies, including lesbianism, fertility, pornography, rape.

The success of the conference depends on the active participation of groups and individuals.

The planning group would like to hear from anyone contributing material for workshops, in the form of papers or offers to introduce discussions, even suggestions for what workshops there should be.

Practical help is also needed for food, stewarding and accommodation. All papers for the conference should be in by 31 January typed on A4 stencils.

Offers of help, papers, or requests for further information to: SocFem Conference Planning Group, 27 Villa Rd, Brixton, London SW9. Registration forms from: 39 Parkholme Rd, London E8.

Reclaiming the night

WOMEN will not put up with violence and fear any longer. This will be the message of a national anti-rape demonstration called for 20 January.

On Hallowe'en last October a Reclaim the Night demonstration through Soho was attacked by the police. Several women were injured and some 15 arrested.

The national demonstration has been called jointly by the defence committee for the women attacked on Hallowe'en and by the National Union of Students.

Women students have been organising against assaults that occur on campuses. At Sussex University, for example, they demanded public telephones, more lighting, self-defence classes and security guard protection.

At the last NUS conference the strength of opinion on the issue ensured the success of a motion calling for the union to arrange and support a national Reclaim the Night demonstration.

The march will leave Leicester Square, London W1 at 6.30pm on Saturday 20 January.

LABOUR AND THE

THE DEMANDS of the public sector unions have been building up for some time and the negotiations now taking place are of great political importance. While defeat or victory at Ford could only marginally affect Labour's electoral prospects, the public sector is absolutely vital in terms of Labourist politics.

Callaghan and Healey are perfectly aware of the political impact of a strike by refuse collectors, sewage workers, hospital porters, and so on. Public sector workers from the very start confront the state and the government in office.

The state's posturing as an 'impartial mediator' is virtually excluded. The enemy is the government of the day. Thus traditional syndicalism is, on its own, insufficient. The struggle waged by the unions in question has to develop political perspectives and implement workers' control.

For instance, it is perfectly possible for hospital workers or elected committees to determine who is admitted and who is not. It is quite feasible for the refuse collectors to keep certain areas clean.

In other words, the function of striking under workers' control has the objective of uniting all sections of workers behind the strike.

At the same time, the Government knows that to send in the troops to operate the sewers or clear the rubbish will appeal to the City of London but could lead to a crushing electoral defeat because of abstentions or even temporary switching of votes. Thus Callaghan will go all out to try and avoid a strike.

The union leaders are not keen on a strike either. They would prefer concessions which they can sell to their membership or use to divide their members. The question is whether the Labour Government can afford any real concessions without totally damaging its credibility on the wage restraint front.

Thus the threat posed by the public sector becomes crucial for Labour. It could affect both the choice of date for the General Election and its outcome.

PATRICK SIKORSKI looks at the build up for the day of action on 22 January.

The opening shots will be fired on 22 January

Despite the pay policy being battered by workers at Ford, British Oxygen, and by the bakers, provincial journalists and now by lorry and tanker drivers, the Labour Government is determined to make its policy stick with the public sector manual workers.

As soon as the first formal offer of 5 per cent was made to hospital ancillary workers early last month, the leaders of the unions involved called for a national day of action.

On Monday 22 January there will be a march from Hyde Park to the House of Commons and a rally in Central Hall, Westminster.

Local authority manual workers, hospital ancillaries, water and ambulance workers are all united around a common claim for a £60 a week minimum wage.

If this claim is won, two million workers and their families will be lifted out of the poverty trap — £60 a week would at least restore their wages to 1974 levels.

There is little doubt that public sector workers are in an angry mood. But for the day of action to succeed in pulling out more than just the most militant sections, the union leaders have to take positive steps.

So far the leaders of the Public Employees Union, the Transport Union, the Confederation of Health Service Employees and the General and Municipal Workers Union have done

no more than call the day of action.

No trains have been booked to bring workers to London. There have been no tours of the branches building for the campaign, and there are no plans for what happens after 22 January. The problem facing the union leaders is that they are caught between their loyalty to the Government and the militancy of their members.

They have no alternative to the kind of policies put forward by Callaghan and Healey, so they want to avoid a head-on confrontation, especially as this is election year.

Alan Fisher, in particular, has to make some show of leading a fight, partly under pressure from his members and partly because he has his own reputation to maintain.

Fisher built NUPE as the largest and most dominant union in the public sector largely through his own left talk. He can't afford to let this completely slide, but he is far from being willing to lead a really militant fight.

What Fisher really needs is some kind of deal with the Government which will save him face and be acceptable to Callaghan and Healey.

As a step towards achieving such an agreement, Fisher has taken a turn away from the policy adopted at the NUPE conference for a £60 minimum wage. He has started talking about demanding comparability with other industrial workers who have an average weekly income of £80.

Basnett of the GMWU is calling for comparability with other workers doing similar work, but such a demand

would not be suitable for NUPE, many of whose members are in traditionally low-paid work both within and outside the public sector.

At the same time as taking up this apparently more militant demand for approximately £80 a week, Fisher has been talking about such an agreement being phased in over two or three years.

Certainly without an all-out national strike, which Fisher has not been building for, there is no way that the Government would pay out such an increase in one instalment.

Fisher seems to be looking for an agreement like that awarded to the firefighters and to the police. This would mean that public sector manual workers would see nothing like a £60 minimum wage in the present round of pay bargaining.

There is another complication in this plan, which is that the Government

would want certain guarantees in return for such an agreement — virtual promises not to strike or take other forms of disruptive industrial action in defence of jobs, conditions, or living standards.

Union leaders are already engaged in backroom talks with ministers over such an agreement for the health service. An outright attack on fundamental trade union rights is being dressed up as a 'Code of Practice' to ensure that 'vital' services are maintained.

The stated aims which Fisher concurs with are to prevent hospital stoppages which 'pose threats to life' and 'put the unions in a bad light with the public'. Such an agreement would set a precedent for the whole public sector; nearly every service that it provides could be seen as 'vital'.

Public sector workers are not



TONY BENN tries to pull his socks up. But as the picture reveals, they're too short.



MOSS EVANS, General Secretary TGWU

Average weekly earnings of male full

- NHS ancillary staff
- Local authorities, England and Wales
- Local authorities, Scotland
- Water
- All manufacturing industries
- All industries and services
- Sources: New Earnings Survey and DHSS

Gap in average earnings between full-time and in all industries

Year	Earnings gap, local authority manual workers
April 1970	—£
April 1971	—£
April 1972	—£
April 1973	—£
April 1974	—£
April 1975	—£
April 1976	—£
April 1977	—£
April 1978	—£

Source: New Earnings Survey, updated by

The table shows that since 1970 successive the earnings of local authority manual workers between the contents of their pay packets workers.

Only in 1971, following the 'dirty jobs' difference between local authority earnings

	Difference between manual workers	All manual workers
Total difference	£31.3	£
Total due to differential hours	£10.99	£
Total due to differential grades	£16.3	£

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE TRADE UNION DAY SCHOOL

on
Rebuilding the Left in the Unions

Saturday 17 February 1979

Open to all supporters of Socialist Challenge in the unions.
Details of venue to follow.

CARS CONFERENCE
Saturday 20 January
Birmingham

Is the car industry viable?
Is there a workers' alternative?

This is a vital conference for all militant car workers to exchange views and information and to hammer out the socialist alternative to the bosses offensive in Ford, Leyland, Chrysler, Vauxhall. Called by CDLM.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR



strongly organised — shop stewards structures are a relatively new phenomenon — and the Government's proposals could rob them of the little industrial strength that they have gained.

To prevent the Government getting its way, the potential of 22 January must be exploited to the full — ideally it would be the beginning of strike action for the full claim.

In each of the unions, strike co-ordinating committees are needed. These could be set up from meetings which plan and organise the action for 22 January, and they should be firmly under the control of the membership through mass meetings.

If strike action does spread and develop then militants should fight for committees on a cross-sector, inter-union basis to be set up.

Such committees could effectively answer the problems raised around emergency cover for 'life and death' services — by taking responsibility for these decisions themselves.

If the Government wants to retain any credibility for its pay policy, then it must keep the wages of the public sector workers close to 5 per cent. If it can't

control the workers it pays itself, then it will have no credibility whatsoever.

Other public sector workers not involved in the immediate claims, such as local government white-collar workers, teachers and civil servants, should try and get their union branches to support the day of action.

If the whole public sector could be organised to fight to win now there would be a great chance for success.

But the union leaders will have to be pushed by the rank and file. They are blinkered by the same narrow parliamentary perspective as the Labour Government and so have no choice but to sacrifice their members living standards to the fifth year of 'responsibility in the national interest'.

Democratically run cross-union strike committees and Pay Action Committees could answer some of the questions about who suffers in a public sector strike and provide a forum for raising an alternative to the Labourism of the trade union leaders.

The arguments that wage rises will mean cuts in services and higher rates must be countered — the fight must be for an end to all cash limits and for a sliding scale of public expenditure.

Lorry drivers—a dress rehearsal

By Brian Hearse

THE FEROCITY of the press response to the lorry drivers' strike is extremely instructive. 'Miles of Misery', 'Britain Under Siege', 'Enough', were the headlines which adorned the front pages of the popular press.

The aim of the press was clear: the strikers were responsible for the crisis. The TV news added a new twist. It virtually implied that the strikers were responsible for the bad weather conditions. It encouraged hysteria and panic buying.

And indeed there were scenes reminiscent of Weimar Germany in some of London's suburbs as people jostled and pushed to make sure that they had bought the last packet of frozen Brussels sprouts. Manchester was worst affected and some rather nasty scenes took place outside supermarkets.

The demands of the drivers are eminently reasonable. Even the Transport Union leader, Moss Evans, stated that they had a watertight case. The haulage firms involved have stated that it is Government policy which is preventing them from settling.

So here we have yet another example of firms using the excuse of the Labour Government's policies to prevent free wage bargaining from taking place. That is why we say that all talk of a state of emergency is merely an indication that Labour has reached an impasse.

But that is not all. It is obvious that the ruling class is seriously worried at the possibility of a public sector shutdown. It is determined to avoid a clash. Both political parties are competing with each other to show how tough they can be.

A constipated-looking Merlyn Rees, putting on his best 'Irish troubles' look, talks on TV about a state of emergency. Margaret Thatcher talks about banning strikes in the public sector; not paying social security to strikers where there

has been no secret ballot; and taxing social security payments.

All this talk will be multiplied a hundredfold if there is a public sector strike. What should trade unionists do in the face of such an offensive?

Their traditional response has been to argue that they are simply fighting for the living standards of their members. But this is no longer a simple thing. It involves a political clash with the Government. Therefore a political alternative needs to be mapped out.

To take one example. When troops are used to maintain 'essential services' it is workers and their representatives who must insist on deciding what is essential or inessential. This has already been done by the Texaco drivers. They have already determined to supply oil to hospitals, but not to industry.

The trade unions are in the best position to organise these actions. First locally and then nationally.

The public sector workers should be prepared to fight for the right to decide these questions so that there can be no excuse left to bring in the troops. In that sense, the example of Moss Evans is not a good one. Evans' position seeks to institutionalise the traditional social-democratic division between politics and economics.

'I'm just carrying through the decisions of the labour movement. It's Callaghan's job to run the economy.' But if the running of a capitalist economy is awkward because of the wage claims? Then one becomes an ostrich, according to Moss Evans.

All public sector workers should carefully observe the current political and ideological offensive being waged against the lorry drivers. For they will be its next victim. And if that is the case then surely something more needs to be done than wait passively till it's their turn.

They should seriously consider breaking the isolation of the lorry drivers by joining in the struggle. That would strengthen both groups of workers and defeat Callaghan's salami tactics: isolate and get them one by one.

... manual workers in April 1977

	£
	59.11
	58.80
	59.10
	75.60
	74.20
	71.50

... Survey for ancillary staff

... manual workers in local authorities and services

	Females
60	—
10	—£1.20
20	—£0.60
90	—£0.10
10	—£0.30
20	—£0.54
.00	—£1.17
.70	—£2.20
.06	—£1.25

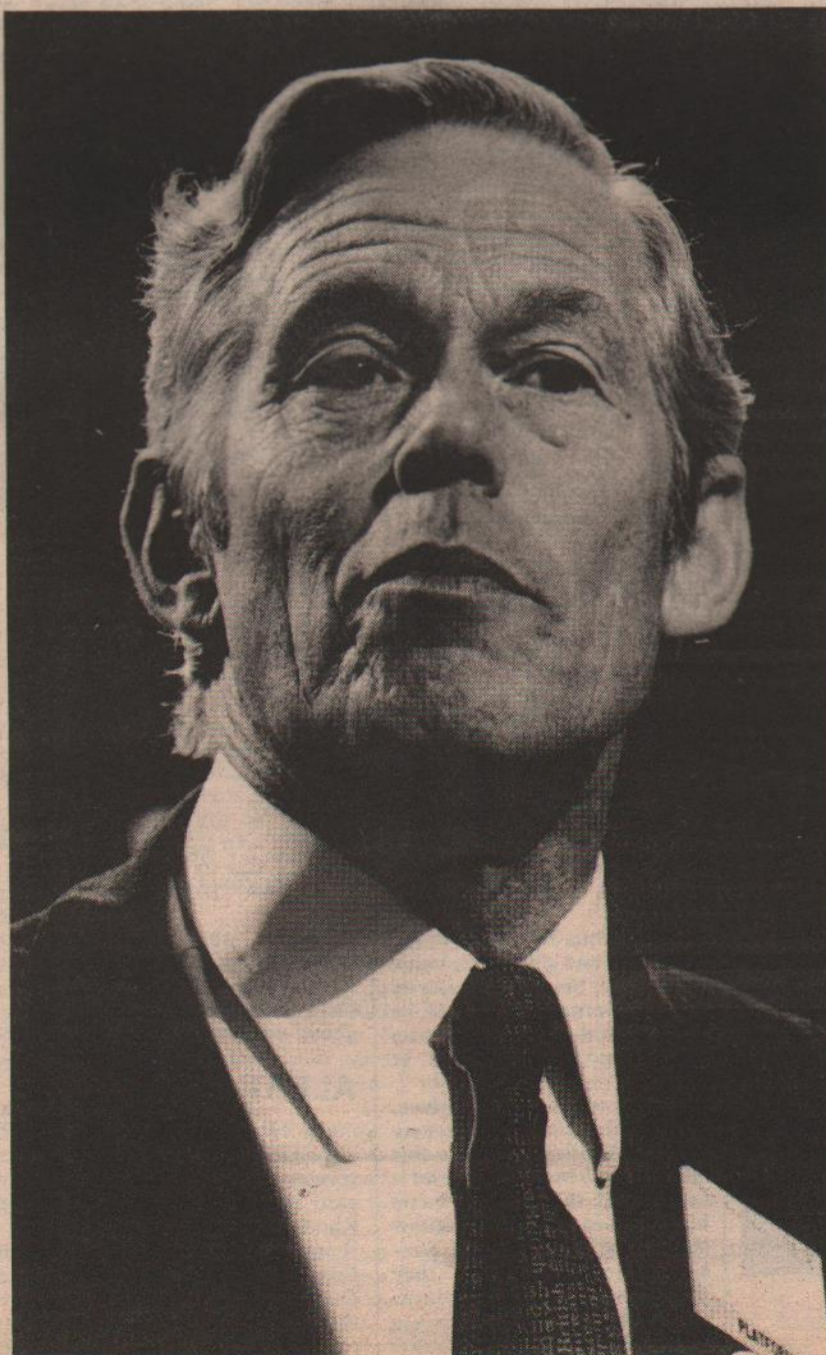
... Index of Average Earnings

... government pay policies have depressed ... and widened the gap in cash terms ... and the average pay packets of manual

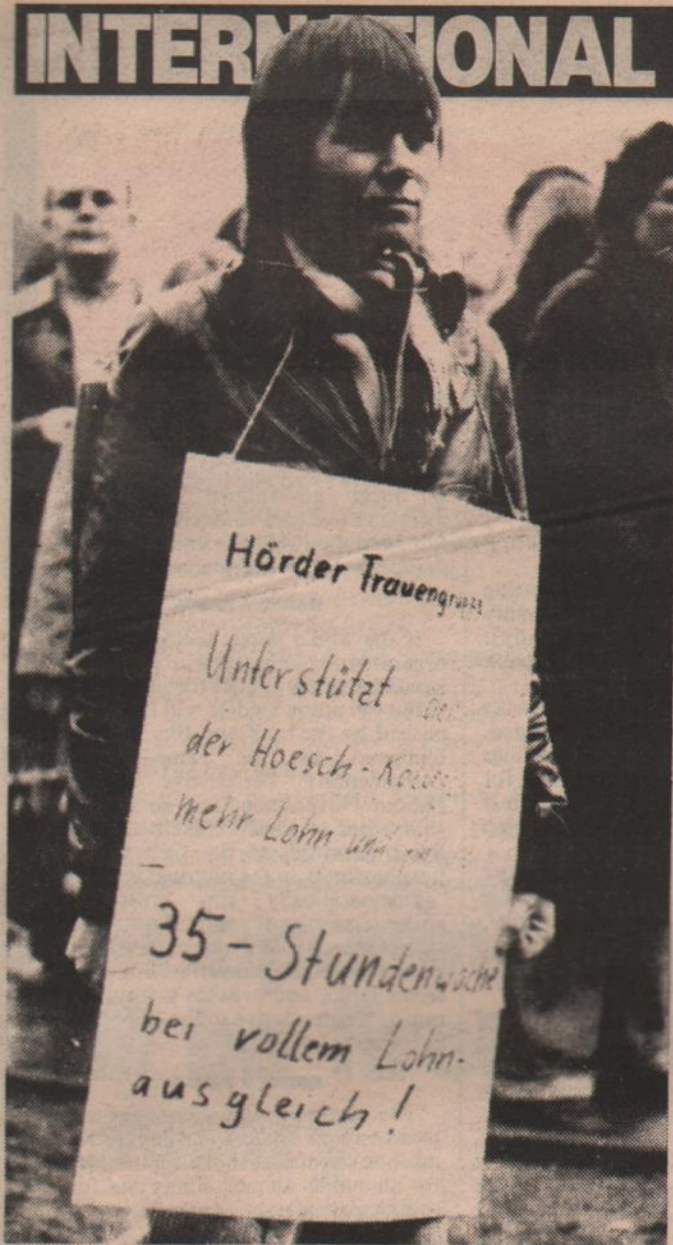
... strike, was there a reduction in the cash ... and average earnings for men.

... male and female earnings

	Local authority	Engineering manual
1.7	£20.4	£25.3
3	£10.2	£8.0
5.7	£3.2	£11.6



ALAN FISHER, General Secretary NUPE



THE West German steelworkers' strike has just ended. One important development was a move to involve women. In Hörder, for instance, a women's group started a street petition in support of the strike after an interview with a striker's wife in the local paper attacking it. Together with the strike leadership they then organised a meeting for the strikers' wives, and have organised the joint collection of funds for the families. The women also attended the mass meetings, as shown in our picture.

35 hour week How the workers can create jobs

THE 35-HOUR WEEK is rapidly becoming a standard feature of union claims throughout Western Europe.

It was recently at the heart of the first strike by German steelworkers in the Ruhr for 50 years.

By Martin Meteyard

The demand for a shorter working week, with no loss of pay and no speed-up, has become so important because of the steady rise of long-term, structural unemployment.

Employers like Times Newspapers are using the economic crisis to try to trim the workforce by introducing labour-saving technology.

Such moves are the other side of the German 'economic miracle'. In steel, for instance, no fewer than 36,000 jobs went in 1975-77. Now the workers have had enough.

The vote for strike action in the Ruhr was 87 per cent, and they cheered Rudolf Judith, a leader of the IG-Metall union when he recalled the co-operation of pre-war steel bosses with the Nazis.

'One really has the impression here', he said, 'that the employees are regarded in many plants as unnecessary ballast...when the economy is becalmed, they can simply be

thrown overboard to lighten the ship.'

The workers' demand for a 35-hour week, as well as a 5 per cent pay rise, aims not only to preserve jobs but to create new ones. Because steelmaking is a continuous process, a reduction in the working week would force the employers to take on a 'fifth team' to keep production going round the clock.

Such 'job-creation' — imposed by the working class — is badly needed in West Germany, where unemployment is 4.3 per cent and would be much higher but for the shipping of tens of thousands of immigrant workers back to their countries of origin.

In Belgium mass action has already won reductions in hours without loss of pay. Almost 25 per cent of the workforce — in the petroleum industry, gas, electricity, banks, multiple stores, and public services — is now covered by such agreements.

In Britain, too, the demand for a 35-hour week has been included in most of this

autumn's claims. But the union leaders' failure to campaign for this demand has tended to mean that it is the first thing to go.

It was supposed to be a central part of the Ford claim. But there was nothing about it in the final settlement. And the Post Office Engineers' struggle for a 35-hour week was sold out.

Yet this demand is an elementary way of uniting the working class around an alternative to the capitalist scourge of unemployment — not only in Britain, but throughout Western Europe.

The European capitalists are increasingly operating on a multinational level. The takeover of the Chrysler plants in Britain by Peugeot is just one example.

The way to stop them using the workforce of one country against that of another is joint action together.

ACTION

The need for such action has even been recognised by the European TUC, which organised an international day of action against unemployment last April. In Italy, Greece,

Belgium and Spain this was marked by strikes and mass meetings lasting two or three hours.

In Britain, however, all the TUC did was to go and talk to the government about the need for economic growth. That must have been a great consolation to the more than 6 million unemployed in the Common Market countries!

CO-ORDINATE

We are now seeing efforts to create new West European institutions which can co-ordinate the capitalists' attempts to solve the crisis at the expense of the workforce. One step in this is next year's European elections.

This is both a challenge and an opportunity for the workers movement. The European elections can be used as a focus to put forward the idea of a different, socialist Europe — one run by working people themselves in their own interests.

This would be immensely aided by common action for the shorter working week against unemployment — including active support for all those like the West German steelworkers who go into struggle around this demand.

Crossroads: long-running racism

By Richard Carver

THE people of Crossroads, on the outskirts of Cape Town, are the latest to suffer the vagaries of the South African system. These squatters set up their camp because of the economic imperatives of apartheid and are now threatened with eviction at the whim of the same monster.

The authorities issued eviction notices to all residents last May. Since then there have been many police attacks in which hundreds have been arrested and at least one man killed.

Government representatives have said that 'every method available to the government will be used to make them move' and Crossroads residents face a long struggle to keep their homes.

COMMUNAL

The first of the 20,000 squatters arrived in 1975. They were men who were attracted to the city to work but did not want to be separated from their families.

Instead they erected their own homes on waste ground, to live the social life they chose.

The ward committees of Crossroads exercise a considerable amount of communal control.

But the decision to live as

families in Cape Town, the heart of 'white' South Africa, is too great a challenge to the regime's racial policy. It undermines the legal fiction that blacks are citizens of 'homelands' in the rural areas and simply migrate to find work.

The homelands policy absolves white government bodies from any social responsibility for blacks, as well as undermining the political identity of black people.

A Crossroads social worker described the eviction thus: 'It is the logical application of the

ruling political and economic system. It is an example of what happens to South Africans deprived of political, economical and legal rights — deprived of rights as human beings.'

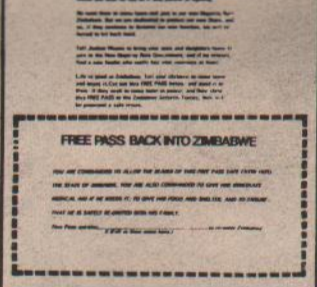
SUPPORT

★ Send telegrams of support to the Crossroads Residents Committee, Cowley House, 126 Chapel Street, Cape Town, 8001, South Africa. Contact the Crossroads Action Campaign c/o 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.



Bulldozers move in to clear out Crossroads squatters.

THE PEOPLE OF ZIMBABWE WANT YOUR SONS & DAUGHTERS TO COME HOME



THIS is the text of the Rhodesian propaganda leaflet: We the people of Zimbabwe have shown ZPRA our strength. We have shown you what we can do if they persist in fighting.

We want them to come home and join in our new Majority Rule Zimbabwe. But we are dedicated to protect our new State, and so, if they continue to threaten our new freedom, we will be forced to hit back hard.

Tell Joshua Nkomo to bring your sons and daughters home to join in the New Majority Rule Government, and if he refuses, find a new leader who really has your interests at heart.

Life is good in Zimbabwe. Tell your children to come home and enjoy it. Cut out this FREE PASS below, and send it to them. If they wish to come home in peace, and they show this FREE PASS to the Zimbabwe Security Forces, they will be promised a safe return.

Zimbabwe: free pass to nowhere

By our Botswana correspondent

IT HAS been officially established that since 27 December 1966 Rhodesian forces have violated Botswana's north eastern border more than 31 times.

They have attacked homes and abducted and killed people in a clear attempt to terrorise the people of Botswana into refusing help to likely freedom fighters and to force them to move away from the border area.

Most inhabitants have moved away from the 500 kilometre border, leaving behind their bullet-ripped walls and ghost villages.

ALERT

On 19 November the Botswana Defence Force was put on special alert. In blatant disregard of territorial integrity, a Rhodesian military aircraft was flying over the towns of Selebi Pikwe, Francistown and Dukwe, where it happens that three of the main Zimbabwean refugee camps are established.

To drop bombs? After the recent raids on Zambia and Mozambique and the Rhodesians' obvious disregard for human life, it would come as no surprise.

But no, this time they were dropping leaflets urging refugees to return to enjoy what was described as peace and freedom under majority rule.

DESPERATE

This shows just how desperate the interim government has become. The refugees have already shown that they are aware of the realities of the situation in Rhodesia by leaving the country en masse and in many cases volunteering for the guerilla forces.

They know only too well that the 'Free Pass Back Into Zimbabwe' means a free pass to almost certain death, curfews, vicious dogs, tank patrols and constant raids.

The Rhodesian government has now resorted to accusing Botswana of physically preventing the refugees from returning and has even asked Britain to intervene.

Cambodia: 'the adolescent revolution'

WHAT underlies the fighting in Cambodia? A round-table discussion with journalist Jean Lacouture and historians Daniel Hemery and Georges Boudarel — all active in the Indochina solidarity

movement — was recently organised by the French revolutionary daily *Rouge*. We reprint excerpts from their contributions.

The book by Jean Lacouture which has just appeared ['The Cambodian People Must Survive!'] refers to the 'madness' of the Cambodian leadership. Isn't that a bit abrupt?

Jean Lacouture: What I have tried to explain is why the Cambodian leaders parted company with socialist reason.

The victors of 27 April 1975 suffered from an extreme weakness of cadres and of revolutionary implantation. A revolution is most prone to excesses when it feels weak and threatened, with little support among the people.

The Cambodian revolution was an improvised revolution, even though victory was achieved seven or eight years after the organisation of the resistance. The resistance still remained very local, basically limited to the forests.

So there was a real upsurge — of the old mole, if you like — which was extremely brutal and unrestrained.

One can explain many of the actions of the Cambodian leadership by the feeling of improvisation, of isolation, the youth of the cadres and the fighters, the victors' feeling of floundering in a hostile sea.

Another basic explanation is that the Cambodian leadership had always been in the shadows of the Vietnamese, had suffered from it, and was determined at any price to come out in opposition to the orientation of the Vietnamese leadership.

Very sharp conflicts were already apparent in 1954 and 1973 over the strategic choice between negotiating or carrying on fighting. From 1973 there was even the physical liquidation of Cambodian cadres who had spent any length of time in Vietnam and were thought to support the Vietnamese strategy.

Daniel Hemery: The key which allows us to understand what has been happening in Cambodia is in my opinion the struggle for power. For the power of the Red Khmers was very weak and local.

It seems to me that they had a very serious competitor: Sihanoukism. The monarchy had immense prestige. If the struggle against Lon Nol succeeded, it was because the peasants were mobilised in the name of a royal myth.

In 1975 there was a struggle for power. The Red Khmers weren't at all sure of themselves. They probably mobilised the young poor peasants, but that was a fragile base — all the more fragile in that the Vietnamese supported Sihanouk at the time.

It seems to me that there lies the explanation for the mass terror.

Georges Boudarel: It is clear that when the coup against Sihanouk took place in 1970, the Vietnamese were the first to



Cambodian youth dig clay to make bricks

support him.

It is a fact that three-quarters of Cambodia was liberated at the end of 1970. But the Red Khmers had nothing at all. It was the Vietnamese who were at Battambang. They controlled Cambodia.

It was then that the return took place of the thousand Cambodian cadres who had been evacuated to North Vietnam in 1954.

But the situation evolved against Sihanouk. The slogan inside Cambodia was to become: against the third force, i.e. Sihanouk and the Vietnamese-trained Communists, the former Issarek

Khmers, those who fought alongside the Vietminh in the struggle against French colonialism.

The Vietnamese say that they could have intervened had they wished to, and that's true. They were in Cambodia in 1971 and they left; they allowed their own comrades to be killed, they allowed the leadership to be taken by those who now turn against them.

Jean Lacouture: One could not expect much revolutionary discipline from the Cambodian militants, who had only just left the forest — kids of 14 or 15, who knew no other life than the American bombing and the

machine-gun stuck in their hands.

It was an adolescent revolution — a revolution of kids, illiterates, and it wasn't their fault.

The leadership, however, was formed in what was very largely an internationalist framework. But it went back to nationalism.

Never has a revolution, a government been so nationalist. We saw it recently when floods ravaged Cambodia as they had Vietnam and Laos. Pol Pot refused all foreign aid. It's unprecedented, to refuse

food and medicine for the people because it comes from abroad. Proletarian or any other kind of internationalism has been rejected as never before.

Daniel Hemery: I would like to come back to the historical roots of the Cambodian revolution. The Cambodian communists didn't have thirty years of clandestine activity behind them. It was a very recent movement.

The special status of Cambodia in Indochina meant that all the colonisers extracted were taxes. The repression there was less harsh.

Thus the intelligentsia developed consciousness very slowly. They were isolated, even in 1965 — a few hundred only.

The Cambodian peasantry was not impregnated like the Vietnamese peasantry by the communist movement. There was a nihilist aspect to the Cambodian revolutionaries. Think what would have happened with the Russian nihilists in power!

Jean Lacouture: But these people were Marxists, they claimed to adhere to Marxism. They created a Communist Party.

To justify their policy towards Vietnam, the Cambodian leaders explain that they had no choice; Vietnam's wish to dominate Indochina left them no alternative but to struggle or become dependants as in Laos.

Jean Lacouture: So, in the framework of Indochinese cooperation or a federation, the Cambodians had to choose between the system imposed on the Laotians and their own rabid ultra-nationalism?

But Laos is a 'non-existent' country! There is a completely respectable Laotian people, but there has never been a Laotian state. It was invented under the occupation, at Vichy in 1941. It was made up from this and that, one of the worst colonial arrangements.

But Cambodia is a completely coherent nation, with a long history, a unified language, a culture, a religion and priests which also unify it very largely.

The Cambodians can't say to us that unless they had done what they did they would have undergone the fate of the Laotians today — which is, in my opinion, a typically colonial fate.

I have all sorts of reservations from this point of view on the Vietnamese strategy, even if it is to defend themselves vis-à-vis China. But it isn't serious for the Cambodians to say that they could have been colonised.

There were possibilities for cooperation between the Vietnamese and Cambodians, as one nation with another, one revolutionary group with another.

Sabata for trial

JAROSLAV Sabata, a spokesperson for the Charter 77 human rights manifesto in Czechoslovakia, goes on trial this week accused of insulting a government official.

The alleged incident took place last October when police broke up a Charter meeting with the Polish Workers Defence Committee (KOR) on the Polish-Czechoslovak border.

The original charge was one of assaulting a police officer. It is believed to have been reduced because of international pressure.

Sabata, who is 52 and has suffered two heart attacks, faces a prison sentence of up to a year.

Peruvian strike

A GENERAL strike started in Peru on Tuesday despite attempts at intimidation from the government. The country's military rulers have declared a state of emergency, suspended all constitutional guarantees and banned a number of political weeklies.

The strike is in protest against the government's economic policies and is planned to go on for three days.

Free Ben Bella

HOUARI Boumedienne, the Algerian dictator, is dead. He played a useful role for imperialism by eliminating those sections of the FLN leadership who were inspired by the model of revolutionary Cuba.

Their leader was Ahmed Ben Bella, a charismatic figure who planned to move Algeria leftwards. His weakness lay in his failure to develop any strategy for mass mobilisations to settle political accounts with the right wing of the FLN.

This proved to be a fatal error. He was overthrown by a military coup and imprisoned in 1965. Boumedienne took his place. Ben Bella has been kept under house arrest for thirteen years.

A campaign for his release has been launched in France and should be supported by all socialists. Any openings in the political situation could see his re-emergence as a major political leader.

German steelworkers

THE German steelworkers' strike ended too late to be covered in our article on the opposite page. The settlement was something of a setback for the struggle for a 35-hour week.

The strikers won only a four per cent pay rise and, instead of a reduction in the working week, the union leaders cooked up a deal over annual holidays.

Defend Astrid Proll

THE extradition proceedings against Astrid Proll have resumed at Lambeth magistrates court in south London. Supporters of the West German, a former member of the Red Army Fraction who faces charges of attempted murder and robbery, had their cars searched by police.

A picket outside the court demanded that Proll be allowed to stay in Britain and condemned her detention in the men's prison at Brixton.

Mason attacks Burntollet march

LABOUR's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, made criticism of last week's Burntollet commemoration marchers a major theme of his 'new year message' on 2 January.

By Geoff Bell

The march itself left Belfast on Friday 5 January and arrived at Burntollet on 7 January. It marked the tenth anniversary of a similar march which was viciously ambushed at Burntollet bridge by Loyalists and members of the 'B' Specials — the predecessors of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

In his speech, Mason said: 'Ten years ago, as we all remember, we saw the beginnings of violence and civil disturbance.'

'Those who marched and demonstrated in 1969 and thereafter did so in the name of civil rights. Many of them were genuine in their concern for these issues and were concerned about grievances, real or perceived, for which they

sought redress.

'But what are the aims of those who march today? This time their banners are not asking for equal treatment for all citizens of Northern Ireland. They are demanding special treatment for a few.'

'And who are they supporting? Men who have shown by their actions a contempt for the human rights of ordinary people in Northern Ireland.'

Mason's anger at the marchers was accompanied by his usual claims about his own achievements.

'I and my ministers have weathered the storms', he boasted — remarks which brought heavy criticism from the Chief Whip of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, Seamus Mallon.

The latter complained: 'At every level of political activity

the Northern Ireland office has shown an arrogant indifference to the real problems facing Northern Ireland.'

Mason's speech was also attacked by Sheffield Labour MP Joan Maynard. Referring to Mason's remarks about the violence starting ten years ago, she told **Socialist Challenge**:

'If he believes that he can't know much about the turbulent history of Ireland and Britain's part in it. We have been there for 800 years — Ireland is our oldest colony.'

THUGGERY

'The violence and thuggery we have perpetrated against Ireland is a black record in our history. It ill behoves Mr Mason to talk of human rights when you look at our history in Ireland, and at what we are doing at the present time.'

'Mason and the government, like the Tories, have no policy for Ireland except repression. The violence will continue until we set a date for withdrawal and work for a political settlement.'

Maynard's comments about Mason's policy of repression were reflected in the government's handling of the Burntollet commemorative march.

Two nights before the march started the RUC visited one of the principal organisers of the march, Michael Farrell of People's Democracy. The RUC informed Farrell that the police would stop the demonstrators

from entering the towns of Bellaghy, Claudy, and part of Maghera.

Farrell told **Socialist Challenge** that his RUC visitors had made it clear that the ban was being imposed because of pressure from Mason and local Loyalists.

The whole situation bears a remarkable resemblance to the original Burntollet march.

When the Loyalists ambushed the march ten years ago, they did so with the connivance of the RUC, who had been chatting and joking with the ambushers just before the bottles, rocks and sticks were hurled at the civil rights demonstrators.

As a statement from the Commemoration Committee of last week's march said: 'Ten years ago, RUC collaboration with Loyalist harassment of the first march exposed to the world the rottenness of the Northern state. Ten years on, the authorities have evidently learned nothing.'

WITHDRAWAL

Those who backed last week's commemoration included: a number of Relatives Action Committees, the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression, the Irish Republican Socialist Party, and People's Democracy.

Provisional Sinn Fein withdrew its support for the march because the Commemoration Committee had notified the RUC of the intended route.



ROBERT OVEREND (with shotgun) — the Loyalist statesperson and would-be murderer.



DUBLIN demo for contraception rights last month

Bid to ban contraception for singles

by Tomas Marlowe

OPPOSITION is mounting in the South of Ireland to the Irish government's proposed Bill restricting the sale and availability of contraception.

The Bill is the most savage attack on democratic and women's rights that has been launched by the present Fianna Fail government. Measures proposed include:

*Sales of contraceptives will be made only to those with prescriptions or written authorisation signed by registered medical practitioners.

*The doctor issuing prescriptions must be satisfied that the person concerned is using the contraception for 'bona fide family planning purposes'. The assumption is that this means that the person concerned will have to be married.

*The advertising and display of contraceptives will be banned.

*Penalties for offences under the Bill would range from six months in jail and a £500 fine to a year's imprisonment and a fine of £5,000.

The Bill, which was introduced by Minister of Health Charlie Haughey, is an attempt by the government to clarify the existing confusion

around the sale and use of contraceptives.

But the measures proposed by Haughey will further restrict the availability of contraception.

BIGOTRY

Leading the opposition to the new measures is the Contraception Action Programme, who in December defied the existing legislation when they opened a shop in Dublin providing the open sale of contraceptives.

The shop is still operating, and CAP will be organising a demonstration in Dublin on 29 January.

The government's proposals are essentially the result of pressure from the Catholic Church. Haughey is allegedly one of the most 'Republican' of Fianna Fail ministers, but his legislation reflects a greater allegiance to Catholic bigotry than to Irish Republicanism.

Police riot again

From Ronan Brady

UNDER pressure from Robert Overend (Loyalist Convention member and local councillor) the Burntollet commemoration march was banned from Bellaghy, a small almost totally Catholic Antrim village.

The pretext was 'local opposition', but the course of the march was to show that the only opposition came from Overend and his family.

The marchers refused to accept the ban. In an impressively organised manoeuvre, using a decoy and local geographical knowledge, we fooled nearly a thousand police who were using two army helicopters.

By taking to the lanes and then to the fields, we left the RUC thugs well behind.

As we reached the last field outside Bellaghy, we saw that the army and police had been forced to occupy this small town with massive forces in order to try to keep us out. The main street was filled with armoured cars.

ABUSE

It was at this point that Overend re-entered the picture. We had unknowingly occupied his field, and this impressive statesperson came running from his farmhouse with a gun.

Hurling abuse at us he fired a shot, and only the fact that the police then rushed to protect

this thug saved him from a premature end to his political career.

The police then pulled their guns and rioted — no doubt to remind us how little has changed in ten years. Michael Farrell, one of the march organisers, was among those beaten up.

In the whole affray the police succeeded in arresting only two people. Neither of them was the attempted murderer called Overend.

But the final touch was yet to come. The Special Patrol Group of the RUC was sent into the field and surrounded the marchers.

We sat down and refused to move; demands to be allowed into the local hall where people had prepared food for us were refused. The only answer from the police was to raise their guns against us.

We then decided to occupy a piece of road nearby. As we formed up there, the march organisers pointed out that we were within the limits of the town of Bellaghy.

In spite of massive police and army harassment we had reached Bellaghy and fooled Mason!

And when we bedded down in Maghera ten miles later, we noted that our march had grown in numbers from 180 people to 250, despite the arrests, the assaults, and the sheer exhaustion.

BLOODY SUNDAY COMMEMORATION

Demonstrations 28 January

LONDON — organised by Provisional Sinn Fein
GLASGOW — organised by the United Troops Out Movement

Marxist theory and the British labour movement



The first two articles in this series looked at the contrasting paths taken by the Russian and British working class movements.

The Russian movement, historically characterised by its extreme interest in what Lenin referred to as the 'last word' in international revolutionary theory, overthrew capitalism in one-sixth of the world.

The British movement, characterised by its national insularity, disregard

of Marxist theory, and obsession with 'bread and butter' questions, was thoroughly defeated in the General Strike of 1926 and is still very far from overthrowing capitalism in Britain today.

This article looks at the connection between the two different traditions of these labour movements and their historical fates.

THE basic attitude of the Russian revolutionary movement to Marxist theory was well illustrated in a story told by the Bolshevik Nadezhda Krupskaya in her book *Memories of Lenin*:

'Vladimir Ilyich [Lenin] and I recalled a simile that L. Tolstoy used somewhere: Once when walking, he spotted in the distance the figure of a man squatting on his haunches and moving his hands about in an absurd way; a madman, he thought — but on drawing nearer, he saw that it was a man sharpening his knife on the paving-stone.

'It is the same thing with theoretical controversies. Heard from aside, they do not seem worth quarrelling about, but once the gist is grasped, it is realised that the matter is of the utmost importance.' (p84)

This little story captures two things which rapidly become apparent to anyone coming into contact with Marxism.

At first glance, Marxist theory does frequently sound like mere abstract squabbling. 'United Front', 'Popular Front', 'economism', 'reductionism', 'revisionism', 'labour and labour power', and innumerable other pieces of apparently incomprehensible jargon dot the pages of Marxist works.

Yet any knowledge of the history of the working class movement shows that these 'abstract' questions have in fact had tremendous importance.

PHRASE

Take the dispute between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks in Russia — between what became the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary wings of the working class movement. This first appeared in the form of a difference around a single phrase in the party rules concerning whether a member was one engaged in 'personal participation in one of the party organisations' or one who 'renders it regular personal assistance under the direction of one of its organisations'.

Similarly, the struggle between Trotsky and Stalin assumed its fundamental form on the apparently ultra-abstract question of whether it was possible to build socialism in one country or not.

So why have the most tremendously important struggles in the working class movement been inseparably bound up with questions of 'abstract theory'? To answer that it is necessary to go back and look at the nature of revolutionary theory itself.

When Marx and Engels first developed their positions, they adopted the term 'Scientific Socialism' to describe their theories. This was not merely a grand phrase but exactly expressed the relation of their theories to material reality. As

Engels explained in criticising the German theorist Karl Heinzen:

'Herr Heinzen imagines communism is a certain doctrine which proceeds from a definite theoretical principle as its core and draws further conclusions from that. Herr Heinzen is very much mistaken. Communism is not a doctrine but a movement; it proceeds not from principles but from facts.' (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 6, p303)

FACTS

A socialist system basing itself on the facts of reality. That was what Marx and Engels meant by scientific socialism.

Yet while they based their positions on facts, Marx and Engels obviously brought about a tremendous revolution in socialist theory — as anyone who has tried to read *Capital* or any other major work of Marxism will rapidly find out.

For the British tradition, technically known as 'empiricism', this relation of facts and theory is an insuperable problem. That tradition counterposes facts and theories — expressing itself even in such everyday phrases as 'that's all very well in theory, but in reality it's different'.

In reality, however, there is no contradiction between facts and theories. Theory is precisely something which reflects, or if false fails to reflect, the real forces and facts of reality.

As Marx put it, 'the ideal [theory — JF] is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought'. (*Capital*, Vol 1, p 19)

In short the theories of Marxists are nothing other than the reflections of the material reality of the class struggle. In the words of the Communist Manifesto:

'The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.' (Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol 6, p498)

QUIBBLE

Compared with the forces analysed by Marxism, the 'common sense' approach loved in Britain is the height of impracticality.

This can be seen in one of the most famous theoretical 'debates' in the history of the workers movement — that on the state.

The position of Marxism, put forward in Marx's *The Civil War in*

France and given its classic statement in Lenin's *The State and Revolution*, is that the state apparatus of capitalism must be smashed. The German Social Democratic leader Kautsky, however, argued that the state machine must be 'taken over' or 'transformed'.

'Smash' or 'transform'? It might seem an obscure quibble over words. But if we look at the realities reflected in these terms, then it rapidly becomes obvious that something far more is involved.

The concept of 'the state' reflects the reality of a force of hundreds of thousands of people with tanks, guns, atomic bombs, law courts, the army, the police, etc. The debate about 'transforming' or 'smashing' the state is not about words but about how that tremendous armed force and apparatus will act in reality.

When the socialist positions of the working class achieve a majority, will the army quietly dissolve? Will the capitalists surrender their wealth? Will Prince Charles meekly pack his bags and leave Buckingham Palace?

VIOLENT

Or, on the contrary, will every single weapon which the bourgeois class has at its disposal be turned against the oppressed in one final violent attempt to maintain the power and wealth of the capitalist class?

That is far from being an abstract debate about words. It is literally a life and death question for millions of people.

If the working class does prepare itself beforehand, if it makes propaganda and organisation among the rank and file soldiers against the officers, if it arms and organises the ranks of the working class, then historical experience shows that the capitalist state can be smashed and defeated.

But if the working class is not prepared beforehand, then examples such as Chile under Pinochet and Germany under Hitler show only too clearly what will happen.

REALISTIC

In Chile, a country with a population only one-fifth that of Britain, over 20,000 people were murdered by the army within six months of the military takeover of September 1973. That is equivalent to 100,000 people — one in every three shop stewards in the country, for example — being executed in Britain.

In Germany, the fascist takeover of power led to the murder of six million Jews and hundreds of thousands of trade unionists and socialist activists, and the unleashing of a world war in which 50 million people were killed.

The people who led the working class to those terrible slaughters precisely prepared these catastrophes by rejecting armed resistance to the ruling class under the banner that the capitalist state could be 'transformed'.

This is what is involved in the 'quibble' over whether the state apparatus of the capitalist class must be smashed or whether it can be 'taken over'. Will the working class be organised to defeat the attempted armed counter-revolution of the bourgeois class, or will it be led defenceless to be crushed under capitalism's heel in the name of 'taking over' the state?

That is a far bigger and more powerful reality than the day-to-day 'practical' questions which dominate the majority tradition of the British labour movement.

That is why the 'theoretical' Russians were able to lead the working class to power while the 'practical' British achieved only defeats. The Russians, in their

obsession with what Lenin called the 'last word' in revolutionary theory, were not turning away from reality but towards it.

The forces reflected in their theories — the state, political parties, the trade unions, economic development — were the overwhelming powerful forces of reality. The so-called 'real issues' of the British — dues collection, administrative efficiency as an end in itself, day-to-day economic struggles as the highest form of class conflict — were completely insignificant compared with the forces dealt with in the Russians' 'abstract theory'.

The theory of the Russians was the sole realistic and practical approach, because it meant basing action on the most fundamental and powerful forces at work. The blind concentration on 'day-to-day' questions was and is totally unrealistic because it ignored the really fundamental and powerful forces which shape reality.

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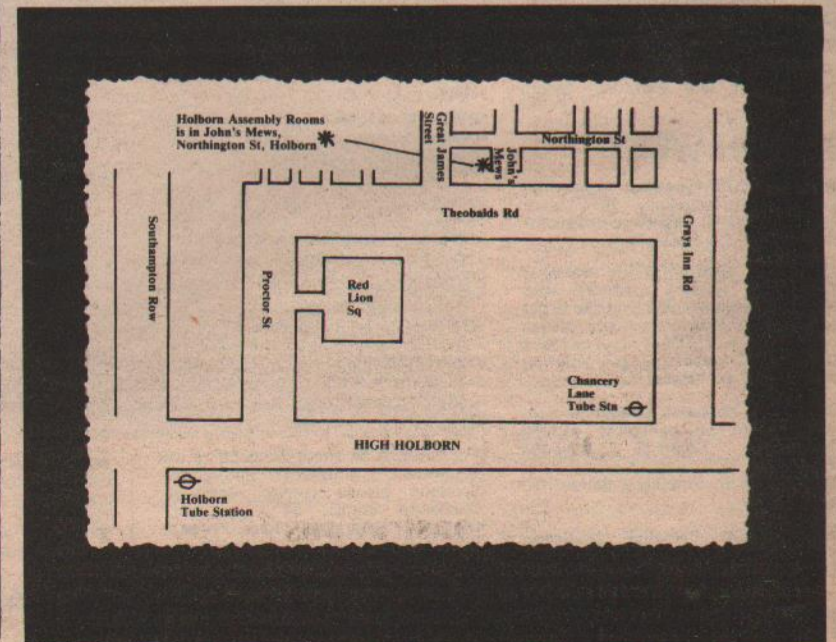
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LETTERS

How con descending!

YOUR 'Open Forum' on other revolutionary traditions (16 November) was the worst form of condescension. In asking that question one would have expected either concrete examples or a debate. But no! Your only 'proof' that non-Trotskyists can be revolutionists is that Trotsky said so!

Similarly, the article by Cannon on splits and regroupment was from the narrow Trotskyist standpoint. On the failure of reunification with some other group all he could say was: 'After seven years... they had not changed their position on the Soviet Union.'

Trotsky defines sectarianism (in the **Transitional Programme**) as socialists who have only convinced themselves of their socialist programme. Most 'Trotskyists' suffer from just this today.

TONY SHARP [Liverpool]

Rank and file in NALGO

KATY Gold's comments (4 January) on my article on the social workers' strike and her accusation of 'political inaccuracies' cannot be allowed to pass without a reply on some aspects.

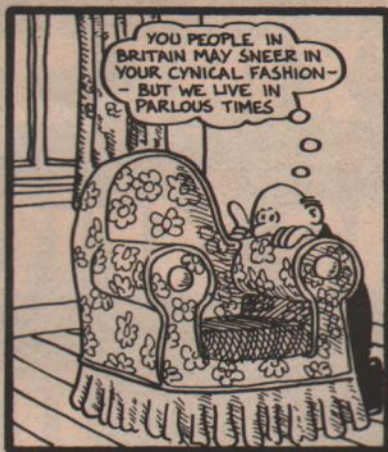
1. Since we knew right from 29 November that talks on a national deal were to continue, the NALGO leadership's juggling with words about whether the original deal was 'not accepted' or 'rejected' is of no real importance. If we can force them to 'not accept' a further national deal we will be doing very well.

2. I did not vote against the call for a strike on 29 November. I abstained in fact on the call — which was for a 'national one-day strike'. It seemed to me that such a call, made by 120 people (not 250), was doomed to failure, and would only show our weakness rather than our strength.

This turned out to be true, as only two branches in the whole country took strike action. Also the date for the 'strike' was introduced in the most appallingly undemocratic fashion — leaving no time at all for discussion about it.

3. The standing conference of strike committees is very definitely 'accountable to the rank and file'. Delegates report back weekly to strike committees/mass meetings, and in most cases are re-elected weekly or subject to instant recall.

Katy's allegation that it is not a 'rank and file' body is based on the strange idea held by some NALGO Action Group members that delegate bodies have no place in rank and file organisation. Such a view is surely closer to anarchism than revolution-



ary Marxism.

4. NAG is in fact a rank and file political current in NALGO (one of several) and not 'the union's rank and file group'. It has proved by and large to be hostile to the unity of the left in NALGO. That is one of the reasons why I, and many other people, are no longer in NAG.

5. Whilst it is true that the strike needs to be supported by other unions and departments, those of us who are on strike have been working to do this for months. It is, of course, a lot easier just to talk about it than to do it, and there are no magic ingredients to be called upon in this task — least of all the incantation of the name of the NALGO Action Group.

PETE CRESSWELL [Liverpool]

*What do other social workers and NALGO activists think? — Eds.

Unity with non-Trotskyists

JOHN Ross's article 'Can only Trotskyists be revolutionaries?' (16 November) manages to tell us a lot of stories but very little conclusions. And he still hasn't explained in any of his articles what Trotskyism is.

Simply because a group is revolutionary at a particular time does not automatically mean we unite with it. John gives the example from Trotsky's writings of the Bordigists.

But if he flicks back a few pages Trotsky explains why they shouldn't unite: 'To take upon ourselves so much as a shadow of responsibility for the tactical views of the Bordigists would mean for the International Opposition, and in the very first instance our German section, to hang a stone around its neck' (my emphasis).

There are no timeless formulas. It is one thing to co-exist with Bordigists in a mass party (e.g. the Communist parties in the early 1920s) but quite another to be common members of a small revolutionary group — which is what every far left group in Britain is

despite names or pretensions.

At the other end of the scale are the situations where new parties and alignments form out of the major events of the class struggle. Thus the Comintern was established by drawing together all those who supported the October revolution and saw the need to construct a new International. It was after these parties had been formed that the political fight was waged to transform them into Bolshevik parties, capable of leading the working class and oppressed to power.

It was this method that was expressed by James Cannon in a letter, of which extracts were printed below John's article: 'It appears to me that the whole international movement, in all its branches and affiliations and independent sectors, is in a process of fermentation and re-examination of the problems of party-building. That puts a serious discussion on the agenda. And that, in turn, can lead to a broader eventual re-unification of the international Trotskyist forces, and others who do not yet recognise themselves as Trotskyists' (p.77, my emphasis).

There are therefore two questions on our agenda today: (1) Is there any basis for separate organisations for those claiming to be Trotskyist today? (2) At the present time is there any non-Trotskyist group with whom we can unite? In answer to John's question we must say: 'Yes, on a world scale the only consistently revolutionary current is that grouped around the banner of the Fourth International, of Trotskyism'.

MARK TURNBULL (Liverpool)

Theory and practice

WE MUST defend ourselves from the insulting and backward letter from S. Kerry (7 December). Kerry accuses us of 'intellectual elitism' and 'talking above the workers'. Kerry is the elitist, however, by saying that anything more than the most mundane should be 'set aside for the confines of some theoretical organ', suggesting that ideas be kept away from the working class.

On the contrary, the attempt to unify theory and practice is in the classical tradition of Marxism. No support can be gleaned from the Marxist tradition for Kerry's position, which, rather, is an effusion from the economist/syndicalist and politically underdeveloped tradition of the British labour movement.

In the early 20th century, the pages of the German SPD organ *Neue Zeit* reverberated with just such polemics as we see in *Socialist Challenge* today, but on a much vaster scale.

Kerry seems to be unaware that the aim of our movement is the creation of a radically new form of civilisation that transcends the divisions between theory and practice, politics and work. Gramsci was well aware of this when he argued for the formation of 'organic working class intellectuals' to defend socialist democracy and to maintain the politicisation of the class during periods when we cannot be nourished by the bread and butter issues of economic struggles alone.

Contrary to Kerry's distortion, Lenin didn't need to be reminded of this point: 'Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. This idea cannot be insisted upon too strongly at a time when the fashionable preaching of opportunism goes hand in hand with an infatuation for the narrowest forms of practical activity.'

STEVE SMITH, JOE ROURKE (Hull)

Future of ANL

I WAS rather taken aback to read Colin Talbot's 'report' of the Anti Nazi League working council meeting, as well as the report on the ANL trade union conference (7 December).

The meeting was not called to discuss whether there should be a recall conference or not. It was discussing the state of the ANL and various areas of work. There was a useful discussion on the state of the NF and other fascist organisations, and from the local reports it was clear that many local ANLs were beginning to take up anti-racist issues in the localities.

At the end there was a resolution

moved from Birmingham and Merseyside to have a recall ANL conference. The motivation was that the steering committee was undemocratic and accountable to no-one; that two major initiatives had been rather badly cocked up (Remembrance Day and Brick Lane); and that we need a clear line on immigration controls. Unfortunately none of those criticisms related to trade union work, nor were they drawn out of the previous discussions that had taken place.

I voted for a recall conference because I believe that if people think that the steering committee is undemocratic let us have it out in the open — and a more democratic steering committee would help — not because of what happened at Brick Lane.

There are problems with the ANL. The major one, it seems to me, is that it is in danger of running out of steam, given that the General Election wasn't called. Now this problem is not going to be solved by a national conference. No-one (even *Socialist Challenge*) has been able to map out a clear strategy for the ANL in practice, with or without a line on immigration controls that deals with trade union work, black self-defence, no platform, women, etc.

I believe that the crucial problem with the ANL is not whether to have a national conference or not, but what is the way that the ANL can take forward the struggle against racism and fascism in Britain today, carrying with it as many of the people that it has attracted over the past 8-10 months.

I would suggest that *Socialist Challenge*, recognising the problems that local CARFs and ANLs have, opens up its pages for such a discussion on the way forward.

ANNA REESE (Coventry)

THE LENGTH of letters printed will usually be kept down to 400 words in order to encourage as wide a range of contributions as possible. All letters may be cut at the Editor's discretion. Unsigned letters will not normally be published, although we will withhold real names from publication on request.

THE DEADLINE for this column is midday on the Saturday before publication.

NORTH WEST

WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-236 2352.

GREATER MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge. School students who support the paper and would like to get involved in anti-fascist activity, please contact Chris (273 5947, day) or Steve (226 4287), evening, or write to Manchester SC Centre, 14 Piccadilly.

SALFORD Socialist Challenge supporters can be contacted at the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre c/o 14 Piccadilly, Manchester with a view to forming a Salford SC group.

MOSS SIDE Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper at Moss Side Centre, Saturday, 11-1.

NORTH EAST

NEWCASTLE Socialist Challenge local supporters are active! If you want

to join them, phone Pete on (0632) 29057.

DURHAM Socialist Challenge Supporters Group. For details contact: Dave Brown, 2 Pioneer Cottages, Low Pittington, Durham.

MIDDLESBROUGH Socialist Challenge sales, Saturday lunch time near the lottery stand at Cleveland Centre. Paper also available at Harrisons (newsagent) opp. McKenna & Brown in Linthorpe Road.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES readers can buy Socialist Challenge from Green Books, upstairs in the Spencer Hall shopping centre.

SCOTLAND

For information about the paper or its supporters' activities throughout Scotland please contact Socialist Challenge Books, 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Open Wed, Thurs, Fri and Sat afternoons. Phone for alternative arrangement (221 7481). Wide range of Fourth International publications.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly. Phone George at 031-346 0466 for details.

DUNDEE Information about Socialist Challenge activities from 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Join in SC sales outside Boots (corner of Reform St) each Saturday 11am-2pm.

YORKSHIRE

Huddersfield SC group meets fortnightly on Thursdays at the Friendly & Trades Club, Northumberland St.

DEWSBURY Socialist Challenge sales regularly on Saturday mornings in Westgate at the Nat. Westminster Bank, 12.30-2.00pm.

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YORK Socialist Challenge is on sale at the York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate or from sellers on Thursdays (12.30-1.45) at York University, Vanbrugh College; Saturdays (11.30-3.30) at Coney Street.

MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters throughout the Midlands contact the Socialist Challenge

Centre, 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham (021) 643 9209.

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BATH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 2-3.30pm, outside Macfisheries, Ring Bath 20298 for further details.

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BRIGHTON SC forums fortnightly on Tuesdays. Contact Micky on 605052 for details.

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COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. For details phone Steve on Wivenhoe 2949.

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TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge supporters sell every weekend: Saturdays meet 10.30am, Whitechapel tube; Sundays meet 10am, Brick Lane (corner of Buxton St).

WALTHAM FOREST paper sales every Saturday, 11am-noon outside the post office, Hoe St, Walthamstow, London E17.

HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly, details from Box 50, London N1 2XP.

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge Group meets every fortnight

(phone 247 2717 for details).

BRENT supporters sell every Saturday, 2.30pm, at Kilburn Sq., Kilburn High Rd, London NW6.

SW LONDON sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm, at Clapham Junction (Northcote Rd), Brixton tube, Clapham Common tube, Balham tube. Also on bookstalls outside Oval tube, Herne Hill BR, and at Shepherd's newsagents, Braganza St.

HACKNEY supporters sell every Saturday, 12-2pm, in Kingsland High St, Dalston — meet outside Sainsbury's.

WALTHAMSTOW readers can buy Socialist Challenge regularly from Sheridan's Newsagents, 86 Hoe St, E17.

HACKNEY Socialist Challenge supporters group now meets fortnightly on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the Britannia Pub, Mare St, E8. 18 Jan: 'Socialists and nuclear power', introduced by John Boran (SERA).

HARINGEY Socialist Challenge group discussion: 'What's happening in China'. Thursday 18 January, 7.30pm, at West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road, N15 (Turnpike Lane tube).

UNDER REVIEW

Science Fiction

'The only good alien is a dead alien'

ONE of the great early socialists said that the status of women in a society is a pretty reliable index of the degree of civilisation of that society.

If this is true, then the very low status of women in science fiction literature would make us ponder about whether we are civilised at all, writes **URSULA K LeGUIN**, a leading science fiction author.

The women's movement has made most of us conscious of the fact that science fiction has either totally ignored women, or presented them as squeaking dolls subject to instant rape by monsters — or, at best, loyal little wives or mistresses of accomplished heroes.

Male elitism has run rampant in science fiction. But is it only male elitism?

Isn't the 'subjection of women' in science fiction merely a symptom of a whole which is authoritarian, power-worshipping, and intensely parochial?

The question involved here is the question of The Other — the being who is different from yourself. This being can be different from you in its sex; or its annual income; or its way of speaking and dressing and doing things; or in the colour of its skin; or the number of its legs and heads.

In other words, there is the

sexual Alien, and the social Alien, and the cultural Alien, and finally the racial Alien.

Well, how about the social Alien in science fiction? How about in Marxist terms, the proletariat?

Where are they in science fiction? Where are the poor, the people who work hard and go to bed hungry? Are they ever persons in science fiction?

No. They appear as vast, anonymous masses fleeing from giant slime-globules from the Chicago sewers, or dying off by the billions from pollution or radiation, or as faceless armies being led to battle by generals and statesmen.

In sword and sorcery they behave like the walk-on parts in a school performance of **The Chocolate Prince**.

Now and then there's a busy lass among them who is honoured by the attentions of the Captain of the Supreme

Terran Command, or in a space-ship crew there's a quaint old cook, with a Scots or Swedish accent, representing the Wisdom of the Common Folk.

The people in science fiction are not people. They are masses, existing for one purpose: to be led by their superiors.

From a social point of view most science fiction literature has been incredibly regressive and unimaginative.

All those Galactic Empires, taken straight from the British Empire of 1880.

All those planets — with 80 trillion miles between them — conceived of as warring nation-states, or as colonies to be exploited, or to be nudged by the benevolent Imperium of Earth towards self-development — the White Man's Burden all over again.

The Rotary Club on Alpha Centauri, that's the size of it.

What about the cultural and racial Other?

It is the Alien everybody recognises as alien, supposed to be the special concern of science fiction; it's in the old pulp science fiction; it's very simply: the only good alien is a dead alien — whether he is an

Alderbaranian Mantis-Man, or a German dentist.

And this tradition still flourishes: witness Larry Niven's story 'Inconsistent Moon' (in **All the Myriad Ways**, 1971) which has a happy ending — consisting of the fact that America, including Los Angeles, was not hurt by a solar flare.

Of course, a few million Europeans and Asians were fried, but that doesn't matter, it just makes the world a little safer for democracy, in fact.

It is interesting that the female character in the same story is quite brainless: her only function is to say Oh? and Oooh! to the clever and resourceful hero.

If you deny any affinity with another person or kind of person, if you declare it to be wholly different from yourself — as men have done to women, and class has done to class, and nation has done to nation — you may hate it, or defy it; but in either case you have denied its spiritual equality, and its human reality.

You have made it into a thing, to which the only possible relationship is a power relationship. And thus you have fatally impoverished your



own reality. You have, in fact, alienated yourself.

This tendency has been remarkably strong in American science fiction. The only social change presented by most science fiction literature has been towards authoritarianism, the domination of ignorant masses by a powerful elite — sometimes presented as a warning, but often quite complacently.

Socialism is never considered as an alternative, and democracy is quite forgotten. Military virtues are taken as ethical ones. Wealth is assumed to be a righteous goal and a personal virtue.

Competitive free-enterprise capitalism is the economic destiny of the entire Galaxy.

In general, American science fiction has assumed a permanent hierarchy of superiors and inferiors, with rich, ambitious, aggressive males at the top, then a great gap, and then at the bottom the poor, the

uneducated, the faceless masses, and all the women.

I think it's time science fiction writers — and their readers! — stopped day-dreaming about a return to the Age of Queen Victoria and started thinking about the future.

I would like to see the **Baboon Ideal** replaced by a little human idealism and some serious consideration of such radical, futuristic concepts as Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

And remember that about 53 percent of the Brotherhood of Man is the Sisterhood of Woman.

Books by Ursula K LeGuin: *The Dispossessed* [95p]; *The Left Hand of Darkness* [60p]; *City of Illusions* [50p]; *Nebula Award Stories II* [95p]; *Plant of Exile* [60p].

All available from **The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1**. Add 10% if ordering by mail.

'We're black, we're white, we're dynamite'

By Carl Gardner

THAT THE media are racist is unquestionable. Indeed it would be surprising if the media institutions alone could escape the generalised racism endemic in white British society.

However, to oppose that racism effectively, the important thing to understand is not that they are racist, but how they are racist.

For the media — and TV in particular — don't just reflect racism like a mirror, or let it shine through like a window. The media subtly recreate and represent it in a novel media form.

Therein lies their power.

This process does not consist simply of a preponderance of overtly racist utterances; in news and current affairs at any rate they are relatively rare.

Racism resides instead in a whole series of codes or conventions of presentation which have become totally

'naturalised' in the eyes of media personnel and viewers alike.

Such conventions are seen simply as the 'best' and probably only ways of reporting on race.

These conventions of racist meaning are too numerous to list here — a forthcoming BBC TV **Open Door** programme by the Campaign Against Racism in the Media, to be broadcast in March, will be analysing them in detail (provided it isn't suppressed).

Besides you can all probably spot some of the more obvious ones — the overwhelming preponderance of white reporters and 'experts' discussing the supposed 'problem' of blacks is just the most basic.

But when a series of programmes comes along which breaks almost all the normal rules and conventions of dealing with race on TV, then it is worth commending.

And from the first notes of the Tom Robinson musical



intro to the final fading credits, Thames TV's six-part series **Our People**, starting tonight (Thursday) at 10.30 pm, is quite simply the most devastatingly radical TV vision of race and racism which has brightened our screens to date.

The first two programmes

begin by debunking the racist myths surrounding the rate of immigration, jobs, housing, crime and education.

One of the best uses of interviews with whites is a 'vox pop' with immigrants from Canada, New Zealand and Australia: 'It was easy to get

in', 'no trouble at all', 'I just walked through'.

This is set against chilling footage from the detention centre at Hounslow, where black immigrants are talked to through the fence-wire like zoo animals.

The dark Satanic mills of

Blake's Lancashire are still much the same for 20,000 Asian workers on permanent night-shift, working for as little as £47 for a 48-hour week.

The third programme places the situation of immigrants firmly in the European context. The super-exploitation of 15 million migrant workers, living in barracks or shanty-towns with no democratic rights, has formed the backbone of the EEC economies since the mid-fifties.

Programmes five and six home in on the growth of racism and the National Front. Using the April ANL Carnival in Hackney as its starting point, the final half-hour is a heartening celebration of anti-racist activity in the East End and elsewhere.

Flashbacks to Cable Street and interviews with anti-Mosley veterans underline the tradition.

Anti-racist journalists on local papers talk about their anti-NF policy: 'How, as a journalist in a multiracial area, can you sit on the fence?' No anxious qualms about 'press freedom' or 'objectivity' there.

Young schoolkids — 'We're black, we're white, we're dynamite' — describe their efforts against racism at school.

All in all it's positive, it's euphoric, it's possibly a trifle over-confident — but as a series of images, a collection of voices and a cogent, anti-racist argument, you won't see or hear anything else like it on TV for a long time.

'Our People', in six parts, begins on ITV tonight at 10.30pm.

CAMBODIAN REGIME COLLAPSES

THE FALL of the Pol Pot government in Cambodia had been expected for some time.

Despite the crocodile tears of some Western analysts (obsessed with a cold war hatred of the Soviet Union) a few left-liberals and Peking, the departure of the Pol Pot government was mourned by no one.

By Tariq Ali

While the Vietnamese were clearly involved in removing this regime, there is no doubt that the Cambodian United Front for National Salvation does have local support. Its programme will enable it to win further acceptance as it intends to reverse the draconian measures of its predecessors.

In its communiqué, the Front

pledged to permit people to return to their villages and towns; ban compulsory marriages; and institute a 48-hour working week.

This last measure would reduce the working time of Cambodians by getting on for 50 per cent! The Front has also promised to reinstitute payments for work carried out.

Thus there can be little doubt that for the overwhelming

majority of Cambodians the departure of Pol Pot, Ieng Sary and friends will come as an immense relief.

It is ironic that a regime which refused to accept Western aid to deal with natural disasters is now appealing for United Nations troops to intervene in Cambodia. This latter is the clearest indication yet that the Chinese do not appear to extend their solidarity beyond brave words.

Why did the Vietnamese intervene at this particular time? The most important reason is the continuing destabilising impact of Cambodia on Indochina as a whole.

It was the Vietnamese who

took the bulk of the refugees from Cambodia. Tens of thousands of Cambodians fled to Vietnam to escape the barbarism of the Cambodian government.

For five years the Vietnamese had held back, hoping that negotiations and patience would do the trick.

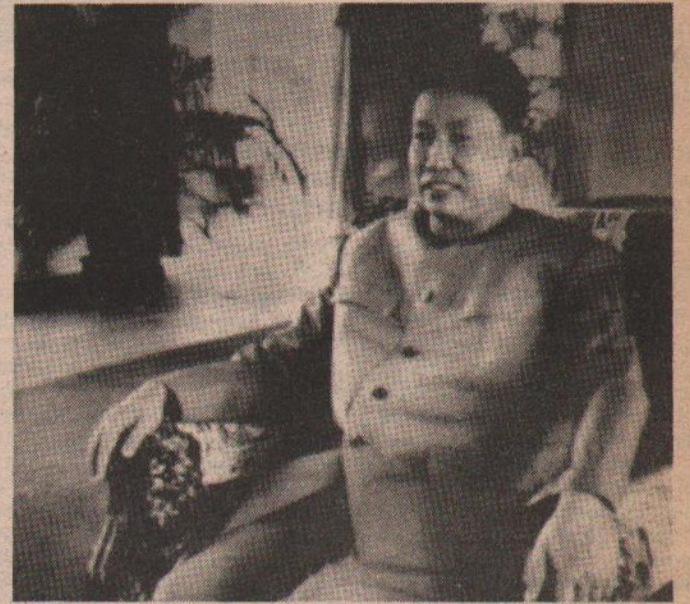
In the meantime all the Cambodian guerrillas trained by the Vietnamese to fight the United States, together with most of their leaders, were massacred. Ultimately the Vietnamese helped to organise the resistance in Cambodia and delivered the final blow last Sunday.

The Vietnamese-Cambodian war, the Sino-Vietnamese conflict, the Sino-Soviet dispute must, however, all be seen within a broader framework. At the root of the conflict is the Stalinist theory of 'building socialism in one country'.

The Cambodians took this theory to its most barbaric logic. They proclaimed 'self-sufficiency' to be the driving force of the Cambodian revolution. They herded the population into camps in the countryside.

Through naked coercion they transformed them into virtual slaves. They engendered a semi-mystical nationalism to provide their victims with an ideology. This has all now blown up in their faces.

Socialist Challenge has maintained that the central dilemma of the post-revolutionary regimes in Indochina was the establishment of organs



POL POT — before his fall

of power which institutionalised their legitimacy.

This involves the establishment of democratic rights, elections, a plurality of parties, access to a press, freedom of religion, no cultural restraints, etc.

Utopian? No. It is interesting that all these themes have been discussed on wall posters on Peking's 'Democracy Wall'. It is these political rights which are lacking.

Given that these rights do not exist in Vietnam, it would be utopian to expect the Vietnamese or their supporters to institute them in Cambodia. But that is what Marxists must continue to argue, for the ultimate fate of those

revolutions is intimately connected with the whole question of socialist democracy.

It might be unpopular to say these things in certain quarters (as it was initially in relation to Stalin's Russia and then Mao's China), but silence would be criminal.

Meanwhile we can only state our amazement at the cheek of General Haig, the boss of NATO and a possible presidential candidate in the United States, when he expresses sympathy with the plight of Cambodia.

For we have not forgotten who invaded Cambodia, bombed it and imposed a vicious and tyrannical regime in the early Seventies.



PHNOM PENH, in the rush hour

OUR FUND DRIVE

'AS LONG as newspapers are sold to the public for less than they cost to produce they will need a supplementary source of income.

'Of the various possible sources of income, the sale of their space to advertisers seems to us to be one of the least harmful...its receipt creates a relationship both remote and impersonal.'

The first part of this

statement, from the 1962 Royal Commission on the Press, we would respectfully draw to the attention of our readers.

Like so much of the press, our cover price would need to be something like twice its present level if we were to be able to fund Socialist Challenge out of this source of revenue alone.

We do not, however, have a massive subsidy from capital-

ists in the form of advertising revenue to make up for the shortfall; though readers may disagree with their lordships of the Royal Commission about the editorial indifference of Fleet Street to the bribes of big business.

In short, dear reader, our 'supplementary source of income' is primarily your good self, with whom — we hope — our relationship is neither remote nor impersonal.

But you did not do us very proudly last week, which was the first of the new financial quarter.

The total we received was £95.40 — barely half the weekly sum the fund drive needs if we are to make the total of £2,500 in the 13 weeks of this quarter.

Much of our hope for the future is vested in the sub-cutaneous tissues of teacher militant Bernard Regan. Their loss is our gain.

Sponsorship so far means nearly £10 for the fund drive for every pound in weight that he loses. Keep the sponsorship

money coming in; and cut out the fat, Bernard!

Lastly, a word of thanks to some of our supplementary sources of income in Colchester who played the game we published in Xmas '77, Left Overs, and collected £5 from the players.

This idea could be extended to Diplomacy, Risk, Monopoly, Class Struggle, Beat Your Neighbours out of Doors, or any other of the games people play.

Our thanks this week to:

Anon	£0.50
S. Taylor	£5
J.R. Coward	£1
Anon	£5
C. Harpum	£1
SC sale of books	£20
Anon	£2.50
Jo Hammond	£5
Charlie van Gelderen	£1.40
Middlesex supporters	£20
Jane Shallice	£25
R. Hurcombe	£1
Anon	£2
Left Overs game	£5
Melvyn Holdsworth	£1
TOTAL	£95.40

WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE!
FOR THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION



HEAR HUGO BLANCO
MIKE FARRELL, IRAMAN TROTSKYIST, TARIQ ALI
7.30pm FRIDAY 2 FEBRUARY
CAMDEN TOWN HALL, EUSTON ROAD, LONDON NW1
5.30pm FILMS, MUSIC, DISPLAYS/ADMISSION £1

Admission £1. Two tickets for £1.30, three for £1.60. The reduced rates apply only to tickets bought before 31 January. Tickets from IMG, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques to 'The Week'. GLASGOW Socialist Unity rally with Hugo Blanco, Thursday 1 February, 7.30pm, Highlanders Institute, Berkeley Street, Charing Cross. Also Latin American seminar in Glasgow University plus lunch and reception — phone 041-221 7481 for details.

SUBSCRIBE!

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Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.
Multi-reader institutions: double individual rate

Name _____
Address _____

I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of £ _____

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'. Complete and return to:
Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.