

No 17 October 1981

the next step

review of the Revolutionary Communist Party 20p

Tony Benn says 'Britain is a colony'



Where will it strike next?

Malaya 1948, Jordan 1951, Kenya 1951, Iran 1951, Egypt 1952,
Cyprus 1954, Suez 1956, Iraq 1958, Oman 1959, 1965, Kuwait 1960,
Yemen 1962, Thailand 1962, India 1962,
Borneo 1962, Indonesia-Malaysia 1963,
Tanganyika 1964, Ireland 1969...

Preparing for Power

Neither Benn nor Healey

FRANK RICHARDS introduced the first plenary session on the patterns of the class struggle in Western Europe. Drawing together the themes developed in the RCP's latest theoretical journal, *Prolonging the death agony: the rise, fall and reconstitution of social democracy*, he analysed the breakdown of the systems of cooperation between the ruling class and the labour leaders on which social stability has rested since the Second World War.

The recession has shaken the institutions of class collaboration to their foundations. Throughout Europe the bourgeoisie is taking a harder line, still seeking a relationship with the labour bureaucrats, but on terms which mean austerity and mass unemployment for the working class. The bureaucrats are desperately trying to renegotiate their standing with the capitalist class — whilst keeping a firm grip on a more and more ground-down rank and file.

These contradictory forces are tearing the British Labour Party apart; they have brought the French Socialist Party to an unprecedented prominence over the Communist Party; they have even stirred up conflict within the stifling bureaucracy of German social democracy. In Italy, Europe's strongest Stalinist party can no longer rely on its working class base. Everywhere social democratic parties are trying to acquire the radical face they need to carry workers with them in their survival strategies for ailing capitalism.

Capitalist decline inevitably heightens class tensions: the capitalists may once again have to rely on the labour bureaucrats to bale them out. But the ruling class has its problems too. In Spain, for example, where the bourgeoisie is weak, so too is the labour bureaucracy. Hence the regime is working flat out to *strengthen* the trade union machine, to make it an effective instrument for controlling a militant working class. Its success is far from guaranteed.

In Britain, Tony Benn leads the drive to transform the Labour Party into the saviour of British capitalism. His attempt to reconstitute a traditional social democratic wing in the Labour Party can be reconciled with the existing leadership more easily than it can with the interests of the working class. The recession forces workers to look for political solutions — our aim is to turn them from Benn's campaign to save the system to our movement to destroy it. Neither Benn nor Healey, but revolutionary communism!

At a time when most of the British left is grappling with the problems of reviving the Labour Party, more than 200 people gathered in London in early September to discuss the problems facing the establishment of a revolutionary working class party in Britain. Last year's international conference focused on imperialism; this year's theme was 'the working class movement in the 'eighties'.



From Moscow to Pretoria

Numerous workshops over the weekend looked at different aspects of the problem of reformism. They examined the experiences of the working class in different European countries and the issues arising in the class struggle today. Another plenary considered different theories of reformism and the history of the struggle against it — in the social democratic Second International up to the First World War, in the Communist International in the 'twenties and in the Trotskyist movement that formed the Fourth International in the 'thirties.

Other workshops debated the left's 'alternative economic strategy', the struggle against redundancies (focusing on Laurence Scotts), the position of women

in the unions and the fight against racism in the labour movement. The common theme that emerged was the importance of presenting working class politics as a clear and immediate alternative to the reformists' schemes which are simply a recipe for demoralisation and defeat.

Preparing for power also dealt with class struggle in countries where it doesn't take the same elementary form that it does in the major capitalist powers: the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Ireland and South Africa. *Critique* editor Hillel Ticktin introduced a session on the working class in the Soviet Union. He brought out the potential for proletarian opposition to the bureaucracy as the regime attempts to shore up its stagnant economic system. The discussion provided a useful background for a sub-

sequent workshop on Poland and Hungary.

Discussions on Ireland, north and south of the border, emphasised British domination as the decisive factor in shaping class relations. Contributions rejected those who attempted to narrow working class politics down to trade union issues and insisted on the priority of the national struggle against British rule. A heated debate on South Africa led to the conclusion that the struggle against apartheid could not be limited to the fight for democratic reforms but had to be oriented towards the overthrow of the Pretoria regime.

Political debate

While the conference was a great success and most of those attending found the sessions informative and stimulating, one weakness was the lack of significant opposition to the RCP, giving the debate a limited character. This problem would not have been greatly altered if our political opponents had attended in larger numbers: their failure to take theoretical issues seriously means they have little to say on most of the subjects discussed at *Preparing for power*. Those that did attend from various left-wing groups were better at repeating slogans than taking up the specific topics under discussion. Even in sessions on subjects where the left claims great knowledge and experience — shop stewards' organisation, the Broad Left, trades councils, public sector unions, youth unemployment — its representatives had little to contribute. The 'downturn' seems not only to have sapped the left's activist spirit, but also to have accelerated its decline into theoretical dementia.

Preparing for power revealed the enormous job still to be done. Many of the discussions were limited because the analysis of the political problems involved — for example, on the Soviet Union — remains at an elementary level. Others were limited because our experience of the class struggle, although growing rapidly, is still constrained by the restricted scale of activities of the RCP. However, one of the most positive features of the conference was that it gave many people their first opportunity to join in a wide-ranging discussion of RCP politics — with the result that they have decided to begin to work with us to make the RCP a real alternative to the Labour Party. As Mike Freeman concluded in the final plenary 'to challenge a party, you've got to be a party'.



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the next step

Behind the Benn~ Healey show

THE CONTEST for Labour's deputy leadership has overshadowed all other issues in the labour movement. The closeness of the result reflects the tensions wrought in the Labour Party and the trade unions by the recession. The conflict between left and right is fundamentally about how to get the Labour Party back into government.

A great distraction

The right in Parliament and in the unions thinks Labour's best chance is with Denis Healey and an old-style appeal to the nation as a pragmatic alternative party of government. The left says there's no going back: in the stormy days ahead Labour needs Tony Benn with his radical appeal to the British people.

Michael Foot himself is undecided what sort of Labour Party will be a winner in 1984: hence his equivocation almost to the end as Benn and Healey slugged it out. And the TUC, while containing divided loyalties, has not exactly fallen apart into warring factions. Certainly Duffy and Chapple, Weighell and Sirs rooted for Healey — but many on the trade union right remember the 'winter of discontent' and hold him to blame. Healey could only pull one vote on NUPE's 26-member executive. And while Scargill and Sapper, Gill and Guy backed Benn, others traditionally associated with the left showed the same deep misgivings about this parvenu as were expressed by a hard core of Tribune MPs. Both Alex Kitson (TGWU) and Clive Jenkins (ASTMS) tried to prevent their block votes going to Benn but were outmanoeuvred by pro-Benn factions in their unions.

The deputy leadership wrangle has distracted attention from developments of much greater importance. While the great debate raged from Blackpool to Brighton, the TUC has been discreetly consolidating its power in the labour movement and strengthening its grip on the Labour Party.

Basnett takes the helm

When a veteran moderate, the grim and grey David Basnett, calls for industrial action against the Tory Government, as he did at Blackpool, it's a sure sign that the trade union movement is in deep trouble. The General Council's reckoning showed the TUC one million members down and £200 000 short on affiliation fees. The *Financial Times* dismissed Len Murray on the eve of Congress as 'scarcely a force in contemporary British politics'. But there's life in the old carthorse yet. In its evidence to the recent TUC inquiry into official union organisation Basnett's GMWU displayed a dogged determination:

'We can mount an offensive fightback. We are still the strongest and one of the best organised trade union movements in the world. But in order to do so, we must be prepared to sacrifice a few sacred cows, to pool what have hitherto been sectional vested interests, and to use our resources and expertise to maximise efficiency.' (quoted in *The Times*, 1 September)

While the bureaucrats are by no means clear about how to mount an offensive fightback, certain clear lines of advance have emerged.

The first thing is to streamline the TUC itself. The General Council's document on the internal reorganisation of the TUC, which aims to centralise its operations and strengthen the hand of the leadership, was quietly endorsed at Blackpool. The second measure, one opposed by the old guard on the General Council, was the decision to abandon its trade group structure and to include representation automatically of every union with more than 100 000 members. This move will increase the status of the big white-collar unions at the expense of the declining manual workers' organisations that originally launched the TUC and still rule its inner councils. The result of this reorganisation (which the GMWU supported) will be to make the General Council more representative of the trade union movement than it now is and thus more effective in directing its activities.

The target this revamped trade union machine has set its sights on is the Labour Party. The cabal of trade union leaders in Basnett's group, Trade Unions for a Labour Victory (originally set up to help Labour move shop from Transport House to Walworth Road), has moved in to sort out the Labour Party's finances. 'Bloodless auditors' fumed TGWU leader and Labour Party chairman Alex Kitson at this year's TUC, exasperated at his General Council colleagues' attempts to take control over Labour's national executive.

Shift to the left?

However the most important TUC activity in the Labour Party is in the sphere of policy making. Its representatives on the top level TUC-Labour Party Liaison Committee were the driving force behind the draft social contract 'Economic issues facing the next Labour Government'. This document was approved at Blackpool — and no doubt will be in Brighton.

Meanwhile the September meeting of the Liaison Committee considered proposals for a new 'central planning agency' including representatives of the unions, the employers and the government under a future Labour administration. The various schemes discussed met with some opposition from Labour MPs concerned about 'the constitutional implications' of plans which would mean trade union leaders virtually sitting in the Cabinet. But the scheming goes on.

The TUC is moving centre stage. Not only is it drawing up policy for a Labour government, it is preparing to take on a major role in the implementation of the measures necessary to salvage British capitalism. 'What worries the moderates', one General Council right-winger confided to a *Financial Times* reporter, 'is not that the TUC will have too little influence on the Labour Party, but that it will have too much' (7 September). While trade union leaders like Basnett and

Jenkins are shaping the Labour Party into an instrument that can open the doors into the corridors of power, the more conservative bureaucrats are fearful of losing room to manoeuvre with their own rank and file.

The labour bureaucracy's ticket to power is its capacity to control the working class:

'If recovery from recession brings another rapid surge in wages, and there is a risk of that, a Labour Party which could plausibly lay claim to an understanding with the unions would greatly strengthen its electoral appeal.' (*The Times*, 9 September)

It would certainly strengthen Labour's appeal to the ruling class. The problem, however, is to deliver the workers. The TUC needs to win some popular approval for the general drift of its strategy: this accounts for its 'shift to the left' in backing unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from the EEC. As Murray says, these 'new departures' are 'symptomatic of a shift in public opinion generally'. Even middle of the road NALGO voted to join CND and nearly rejected Europe at its recent conference. The TUC hopes to broaden its appeal by identifying with the populist causes for which the left has already won the Labour Party.

Tragic farce

The Benn-Healey drama has distracted attention from all the serious problems facing the working class. Unemployment accelerates past three million, but the great issue following a poorly attended Labour Party rally against unemployment in Birmingham was not the absence of any real fight to defend the jobless — but who heckled Denis Healey? This was the petty preoccupation, not only of the bourgeois press, but of the labour movement too, as the deputy leadership roadshow trundled on towards Brighton. (For the record, the RCP did not organise the heckling any more than 'left-wing agitators' organised the summer riots: these things take place spontaneously.)

Wage rises have been relentlessly forced down below the rate of inflation; cuts in money wages have made their appearance for the first time in half a century; and the employers are shaping up for a showdown on wages across the board. But Benn and Healey want to have it out about the exact terms on which a hypothetical future Labour government would withdraw from the EEC. They have to get it straight how this government, which might take office with luck in three years time, would go about negotiating the balance between conventional and nuclear weapons in Britain under the NATO alliance. And each of the protagonists is ready to appear on television, speak on radio or write in the pages of any newspaper to defend the proposition that the particular structure of the party and manner of organising its elections that gives him and his policies the greatest chance of success, is the very heart and soul of democracy. The whole

debate is a farce; it is about the wrong issues at the wrong time.

The intensity of the Benn-Healey bunfight simply reflects the indecision of the trade union bureaucrats about the kind of Labour Party they want. However, it provided a welcome relief both inside and outside the conference hall at this year's dreary and low-spirited TUC Congress. Speculation about the Labour Party of the future was a useful diversion for trade union leaders incapable of defending their members' jobs and living standards in the here and now.

Empty rhetoric about industrial action against the Tories conceals the capitulation of the TUC leaders before every Tory assault. Not only have they become reconciled to mass unemployment and wage cuts, they have come to terms with a series of legal restrictions on trade union rights, with more to come. And when workers have fought back — as for example at Laurence Scott — they have been ruthlessly betrayed.

The Bevan of the future?

The TUC can get away with its posturing and its plans for even deeper entry into the apparatus of the state because it is firmly in control of the rank and file. For this it can thank mass unemployment... and Tony Benn. The three million jobless have a dampening effect on workers' militancy — whether it's directed against employers or their friends in the trade union offices. And many workers who have turned in despair from the trade union struggle in search of a political alternative have been mopped up by the Benn bandwagon.

Radical left supporters of the Benn Campaign are fond of comparing their hero with Nye Bevan, the leader of the Labour left in the 'fifties. They have much in common: faith in Parliament, trust in the state, loyalty to British imperialism — and an ability to inspire working class confidence in the Labour Party. But the different times in which Bevan lived resulted in a different relationship with the trade union leadership from that enjoyed by Benn. Bevan had scarcely a single friend on the General Council of the TUC; its leading members detested him with a ferocity that makes today's rancorous debates in the Parliamentary Party seem positively fraternal. In contrast Benn has bitter enemies in Parliament, but many allies in the TUC: some delivered him their block votes in the deputy leadership election. Even his trade union opponents are moderate in their criticisms.

Deputy leader or not, the labour bureaucrats need Benn to sustain the Labour Party's radical appeal in the hard times that lie ahead. That they need Benn to provide popular support for the Labour government they yearn for is a sure measure of his irrelevance to the needs of the working class. If Benn can achieve so much in sidetracking active workers from the real issues today, what wonders might he work for a future Labour government?

Liberation theology

FOR THE LABOUR bureaucracy Benn's programme is quite adequate: after all they drew it up. It puts forward an alternative approach to managing the problems of British capitalism which they consider would be less damaging to the interests of the trade unions than Thatcher's current policies. And it tries to rally popular support for the labour bureaucracy's position by appealing to chauvinist prejudice.

Benn's selection from the party programme for his election campaign does less than full justice to his commitment to the policies which a new Labour government is pledged to carry out. Benn denounces the 'wage restraint' policies of the last Labour government but he is a supporter of the incomes policy outlined in the new social contract he helped to draw up with the TUC for the next Labour government. He is sympathetic towards ethnic minorities — but he approves of immigration controls. He murmurs about Irish unity — but he fully backs Thatcher's stand on the hunger strikers.

While Benn's programme of class collaboration is adequate for the labour bureaucracy it runs directly counter to the interests of the working class. It is not that it contains some 'inadequacies' — on every issue it contradicts workers' interests. *Workers Power*, like the bourgeois media, sees politics as a continuum. Benn stands at one point and what is required is 'pushing the movement he represents further'. But supporters of class collaboration and social chauvinism do not need to be pushed further, but in a completely different direction. The revolutionary programme *Workers Power* chants about is not a more extreme version of Benn's reformist policies. It expresses the interests of the proletariat: interests which conflict with those of the labour bureaucracy on every essential point.

Take the keynote of Benn's election campaign — his thesis, developed in his new book *Arguments for democracy* and in many recent speeches, that 'Britain is a colony'. Britain, according to Benn, has been 'colonised' by Americans with their nuclear missile bases, by Europeans through the EEC and by the multinational corporations. This is an attempt to synthesise the traditional jingoistic prejudices of the die-hard Tory Empire loyalists into a populist appeal to the British people. Its central argument is frankly ludicrous: Britain is evidently a major imperialist power, perhaps in a weak position compared to its biggest rivals, but still commanding vast economic wealth and military might around the world. The labour bureaucracy needs Benn's style of chauvinist populism to drum up some support for its national self-sufficiency strategy to save British capitalism: scarcely anybody else takes it seriously — except the radical left.

Battle of ideas?

Socialist Organiser editor John O'Mahoney has entered what he calls a 'battle of ideas' over Benn's article — a serialised review on his paper's centre-page spread which has so far run to three episodes. O'Mahoney thinks that 'the ideas in Benn's articles, which sets up the restoration of British greatness... as the historic goal of the working class and socialism are loosely, and in my opinion, badly worked out' (10 September 1981). How-

ever he welcomes Benn's articulation of views which could be taken straight from the pages of *National Front News* as 'a valuable contribution to clarifying our minds and our perspectives'.

The left is fond of issuing pompous warnings that Benn will betray the working class at some stage in the future. The point is that Benn's programme is a betrayal of workers *now*. Any politician who peddles nationalism and cooperation between workers and employers against foreign competition is a menace to the working class. Benn's reactionary philosophy which the radical left greets as a 'valuable contribution' in practice paralyses workers' independent initiatives in fighting for their own rights against employers and the government. Workers

have to stand up as a class — not for the British Empire but for those who are oppressed by British imperialism.

The influence of Benn's outlook in the labour movement has paved the way for tens of thousands of redundancies, widespread cuts in real wages and helped ensure the quiescence of British workers through a summer in which the British state launched a ferocious assault on young blacks after the riots, and forced ten hunger strikers to a cruel death. The radical left can discern some 'inadequacies' but still lends its full support.

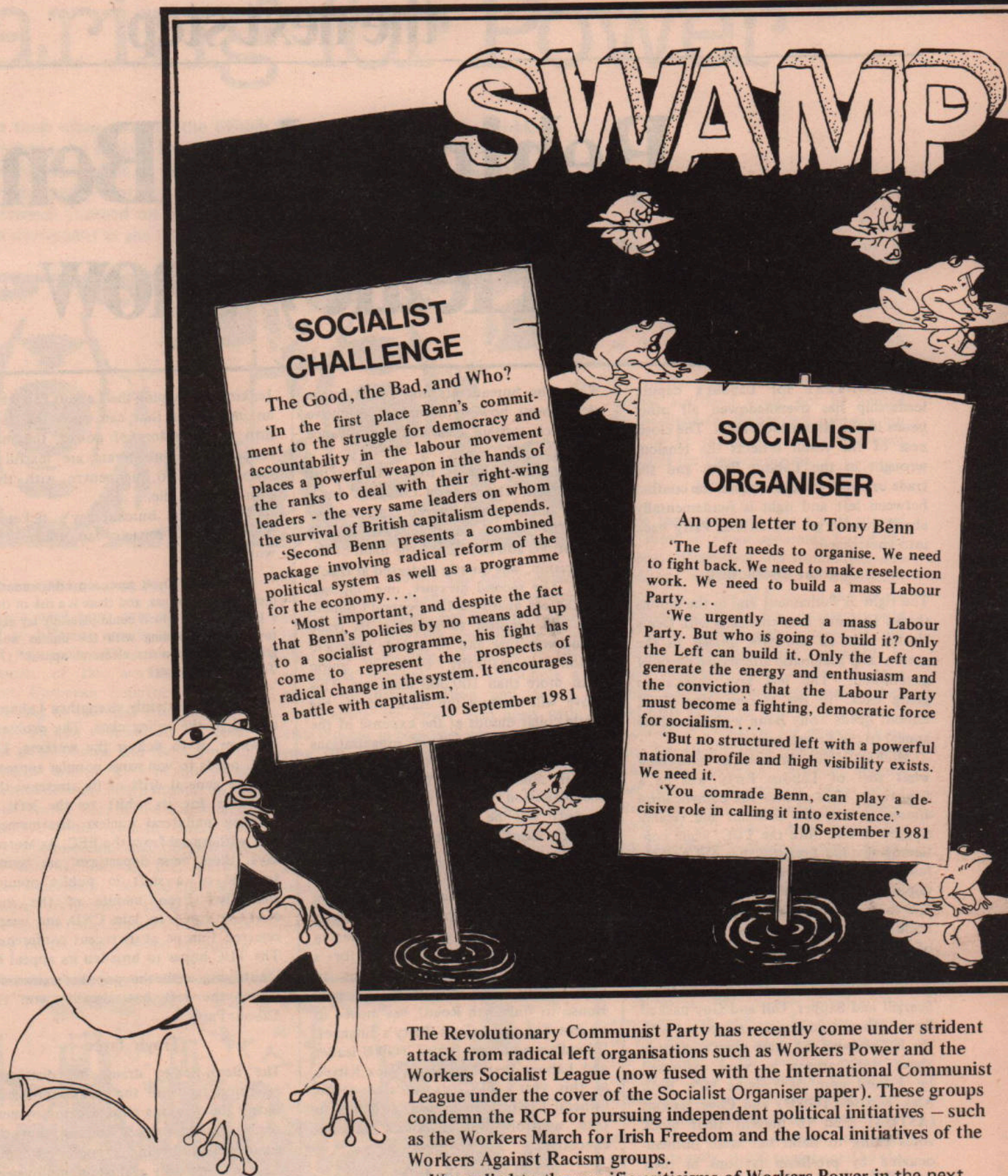
Democracy, democracy

Reactionaries in the Parliamentary Labour Party like Neil Kinnock and Dame Judith Hart are in full agreement with Benn's

policies. Their difference with Benn is over the issue of inner-party democracy. The radical left, however, is enthused by the concept of 'democracy' — that alone makes the battle for Benn worthwhile. For revolutionaries it is a matter of indifference how the Labour Party comes to formulate its reactionary programme or how it elects its reactionary leaders.

The question of party democracy has always been crucial to the survival of the Labour Party. In the 'sixties cynical Labour leader Richard Crossman explained how the party operated from its earliest days:

'The Labour Party required militants — politically conscious socialists to do the work



The Revolutionary Communist Party has recently come under strident attack from radical left organisations such as *Workers Power* and the *Workers Socialist League* (now fused with the *International Communist League* under the cover of the *Socialist Organiser* paper). These groups condemn the RCP for pursuing independent political initiatives — such as the *Workers March for Irish Freedom* and the local initiatives of the *Workers Against Racism* groups.

We replied to the specific criticisms of *Workers Power* in the next step No 16, September 1981 and we answer the *Workers Socialist League* on p16 of this issue. Here we look at the left's alternative to independent revolutionary activity — its work 'in the labour movement' in support of Tony Benn's campaign for the deputy leadership of the Labour Party.

The selection from the papers of the radical left above illustrates their enthusiasm for the Labour Party swamp. *Workers Power* reconciles its inability to pursue independent work through its discovery that 'entrism is a form of the united front' (September 1980). *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Challenge* are less creative — they view

FEVER

WORKERS POWER

Key issues at conference

'First, we think that a victory for Benn will weaken the right-wing bulk of the PLP, but at the same time strengthen the movement for democracy in the party, encouraging it to go further. Secondly, although we do not believe that Benn and his programme offer a real alternative to the managing of capitalism that has been Labour's stock in trade for years, his rank and file followers do. The best way to convince them otherwise is precisely to put Benn to the test. We warn of Benn's inadequacies and of his unwillingness to see the struggle against the PLP through to the end. But we seek to exploit the mobilising potential his campaign has opened up — pushing the movement he represents further, strengthening it to the point where, when Benn does betray, it can sweep him aside and go forward independently of him and on a revolutionary programme of action.'

September 1981

TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

A manifesto for marginals

'Benn represents an essentially middle class radicalism, and he appears to know next to nothing of Marxist ideas. . . .

'We have in Benn an updated version of socialism's oldest enemy, bourgeois left liberalism. . . .

'One can only be a little tickled about how easily the extra-Parliamentary left have once again been drawn into Parliamentarianism and the necessities of an old-fashioned leadership campaign.'

11 September 1981

their dissolution into the Labour Party as a new form of party building. The 'Benn for deputy' campaign is portrayed by our opponents as a catalyst for anti-capitalist struggles. It is a measure of their desperation and cynicism that the bureaucratic manoeuvres of the Labour left are given pride of place in the struggles of the British working class.

While backing Benn for deputy, Workers Power, like the rest of the left warns of his 'inadequacies' and of his 'unwillingness to see the struggle against the PLP through to the end'. In what way is Benn's programme inadequate?

Benn's programme, as he never tires of saying, is simply the programme of the Labour Party approved at successive party conferences. It is broadly supported by the TUC and in most respects by the party leadership. It calls for the implementation of the familiar strategy of economic nationalism: import controls, bans on capital exports and industrial democracy. In common with such progressives as the Liberal Party and the National Front it is hostile to the American Cruise missiles and to the EEC. We can only speculate what the radical left means by its characterisation of this pro-imperialist programme as inadequate.

of organising the constituencies. But since these militants tended to be 'extremists', a constitution was needed which maintained their enthusiasm by apparently creating a full party democracy while excluding them from effective power.' (quoted in R Williams, *May Day Manifesto 1968*)

The Labour Party needs to keep up the facade of democracy to sustain the constituency activists; it cannot become genuinely democratic or it would no longer serve the needs of the bureaucrats who set it up in the first place and who still directly control it. This arrangement is common to all social democratic parties. Benn is not in reality seeking to make the Labour Party more democratic

— he is not challenging the block vote, the bureaucratic way conference is run or the way in which policy is drawn up in shady committees. He simply wants to promote limited reforms to strengthen his own position in the party. This is fair enough, but should not be advertised, as it is by the radical left, as a fundamental transformation of the Labour Party.

Socialist Challenge believes that Benn's democratic reforms are 'a powerful weapon in the hands of the ranks to deal with their right-wing leaders'. The reforms may benefit Benn's radical faction within the Labour leadership and may help him to succeed to high office in place of some of the present right-wingers. But this should not be confused with a growth of rank and file influence in the Labour

Party. Benn may be more popular than Callaghan, Healey or even Foot on the floor of the conference. But the party machine, democratic reforms and all, remains a weapon of the leadership against the ranks of the party.

Socialist Challenge believes that the survival of British capitalism depends on the right of the Labour Party. This is only partly true: without the left the Labour Party could not secure working class support for the measures promoted by the leadership to sustain British capitalism. The creation of a mass Labour Party to make sure that a Labour government of the future has sufficient popular support to carry through unpopular measures to save the nation for capitalism is now the top priority for the radical left.

Who needs a mass Labour Party?

Socialist Organiser, urgently. The various fragments that have come together behind *Socialist Organiser* have an acute sense of their own irrelevance. They have come to terms with their inability to build independent organisations so they huddle together for comfort under the wing of the Labour Party. And they acknowledge their inability even to take a lead in the modest project of reviving the Labour left. Hence their pathetic appeal to 'comrade Benn' to help them out of their misery and create a 'structured left' in which *Socialist Organiser* supporters could play a suitably humble role.

Tony Benn too needs a mass Labour Party. He has little backing in the Parliamentary Party and some powerful enemies in the unions. He has encouraged the radical left to enter the Labour Party and sponsored the development of the left in the constituencies and in the unions.

The Labour leadership is ambivalent. On the one hand it welcomes the growth in popular support for the Labour Party that Benn has won around the country. It knows that many workers will not vote for Denis Healey and wage controls; but they might vote for Tony Benn and incomes policy. On the other hand the bureaucrats fear the threat to their control from a revived left. The trade union leaders are particularly wary of Benn's moves to promote left-wing Labour organisation in the unions; after all, they set up the Labour Party partly to keep politics out of the unions. So far the activities of Benn and his radical left supporters in the trade union sphere have been circumspect. As long as they are confined to electioneering, as they are likely to be, they will pose little threat to the bureaucrats.

The working class however has no need of a mass Labour Party. In fact the Labour Party has never been a mass party of the working class in Britain. It was set up by the trade union leaders and its mass membership has always been through the formal affiliations of trade union members through their union executives. The constituency parties were established in 1918 to allow middle class non-trade unionists to join the party: they have retained their petit-bourgeois character. Workers have voted in their millions for the Labour Party but the party has always had the pro-capitalist outlook that dominates its programme today: that's why it has always betrayed workers' interests. Yet the peak of the ambition of the radical left is to make the Labour Party appear more democratic so that it can more effectively absorb working class pressure; and to build up the Labour Party's membership to strengthen its grip on working class political activity.

What workers really need is a revolutionary communist party. Most radical left supporters acknowledge this in the abstract: but they imagine that building the Labour left is the best way to realise what they consider to be a long-term objective. The problem is that revolutionary parties have never been built in the future; and they have never been built in this tortuous roundabout way. Fortunately, while the radical left fragments sink into the swamp, a revolutionary party is being built today by the RCP, through independent activities outside the Labour Party but inside the labour movement.

Mike Freeman

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AFTER BUDAPEST ONE YEAR ON FROM GDANSK



Twenty-five years have passed since Hungarian workers took up arms against the Stalinist bureaucracy. The revolution of October 1956 was crushed by the overwhelming military might of the Soviet regime. But the continuity of working class resistance in Eastern Europe is revealed by the activity of the Polish working class today.

The contrast between Hungary in 1956 and Poland in 1981 reflects the different circumstances in which European workers fight to defend their interests. Yet the lessons of Hungary in 1956 are not unimportant for Polish workers today. This was recognised recently by Polish workers at the Polam electronics factory in the town of Pila. Editors of the factory's newsletter wrote and distributed a pamphlet on workers' struggles in Poland and Hungary in 1956. When local authorities moved in to confiscate the pamphlets workers came out on strike.

Recent events in Poland have in turn become a source of inspiration for Hungarian workers and students today. There was an angry response when rumours began to circulate early this year about the use of Hungarian troops in a joint Warsaw pact invasion of Poland. Slogans supporting Polish workers have been painted on walls and Hungarian youth proudly wear the Solidarity badges they can get hold of. The September issue of *Pártélet*, a periodical for the activists of the Hungarian Communist Party, is devoted to an attack on people who propagate 'ultra-left' ideas ie political opponents of the regime. Hungarian bureaucrats are ready to do all in their power to prevent the spread of the Polish disease across their borders.

The Hungarian bureaucracy well remembers that it was the unrest in Poland in 1956 which triggered off the Budapest uprising. The march in Budapest on 23 October 1956 which began the revolution was organised to demonstrate solidarity with the movement of Polish workers.

The workers' councils set up by the Hungarian working class in 1956 and the militant activities of Polish workers today are a testimony to the creativity and determination of the proletariat in Eastern Europe. At the same time these struggles bring to light a common problem: the working class in Eastern Europe lacks a clear proletarian outlook and a revolutionary party. As a result the petit bourgeoisie, particularly the intelligentsia, has always exerted an overwhelming influence over the struggles of the working class.

Growth problems

CAPITALISM was overthrown in Eastern Europe, not by working class revolution but by the Soviet army. The Soviet bureaucracy destroyed capitalism but prevented the proletariat from taking power. Throughout Eastern Europe Stalin installed puppet regimes characterised by their spineless subservience to the Kremlin. These bureaucratic regimes enjoyed no legitimacy. Moreover the absence of workers' democracy ensured that all attempts to plan the economy were doomed from the start. Socialism cannot be built and a planned society cannot be created without the active participation of the working class.

The bureaucracy that ruled Eastern Europe succeeded in initiating some economic development in the late 'forties and early 'fifties: but growth was restricted to heavy industry and the cost was enormous. The bureaucracy's strategy was

straightforward: mobilise all available manpower into the capital goods sector, channel rural manpower into industry and direct investment into construction or enlargement of existing industrial plant. In other words economic growth was the result of more workers and more investment using more of the existing plant and machinery rather than the outcome of using better technology and higher levels of productivity.

This type of extensive growth soon faced problems. With shortages of manpower from the rural areas growth could only be maintained through higher volumes of investment. As the proportion of national income used for investment shot up, resources available for consumption declined. At first living standards stagnated then they began to decline.

Apart from forcing down consumption, this style of economic growth was extremely wasteful. Bureaucratic command rather than conscious planning led to an

inefficient use of resources. As essential goods were in short supply workers had no incentive to work: hard work was not rewarded. High economic growth statistics obscured the fact that the figures reflected high growth in volume but not in quality. This is how leading spokesman of the liberal wing of the Hungarian Communist Party Imre Nagy characterised the defects of the 1949-53 Five Year Plan: the results achieved meant 'increase in production for its own sake' which 'combined with the neglect of technical standards, inevitably allowed almost no increase in productivity during the First Five Year Plan. Shortages arose not only in consumer goods, but also in capital goods designed to produce consumer goods' (*The New Course*, Praeger, 1957).

High rates of investment at the expense of consumption and the efficient use of resources led to political instability throughout Eastern Europe. The bureaucracy could only survive by police terror. By the mid 'fifties the bureaucracy became aware of the danger of working class unrest and the need to find a new economic strategy. The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, with the denunciation of Stalin by Khrushchev, was a symptom of the bureaucracy's determination to find a new course. But 'de-Stalinisation' promised too little and came too late. On 28 June 1956 Polish workers in Poznan took to the streets and in October the Hungarian working class smashed the Stalinist bureaucracy.

Tremors in Hungary

By late 1955 virtually every section of Hungarian society was united in its hatred of the existing regime. Even the Hungarian Communist Party was deeply divided. Nagy's liberal wing of the party took every opportunity to criticise the disastrous policies of the bureaucracy. The liberals used the 'de-Stalinisation' drive launched by the Soviet bureaucracy to initiate their own campaign.

The Polish workers' revolt was contained by the liberalisation of the bureaucracy under the leadership of Gomulka. Demands for more liberal measures along Polish lines were voiced throughout Hungary as well. This led Moscow to replace the leading bureaucrats in Budapest in July 1956. But the new regime led by Ernő Gerő was just as repressive and just as compromised as the previous one. Unlike their Polish colleagues the Hungarian bureaucrats were in no mood to reform.

The unresponsive stance of the Hungarian bureaucracy ensured that social unrest would gain momentum. Students and intellectuals began to organise mass meetings. In August the factories began to stir. By September unrest had become so widespread that students could publicly

demand economic and political reforms and the establishment of a government led by Imre Nagy without any reprisals from the secret police.

On 22 October student groups throughout Hungary called for a mass demonstration 'in solidarity with our Polish brothers'. The demonstration of 23 October in Budapest set off a remarkable chain of events. Attempts to ban the demonstration failed as tens of thousands of workers and students converged to the rallying point. By the afternoon the demonstration was so large that all normal activities in Budapest came to a halt.

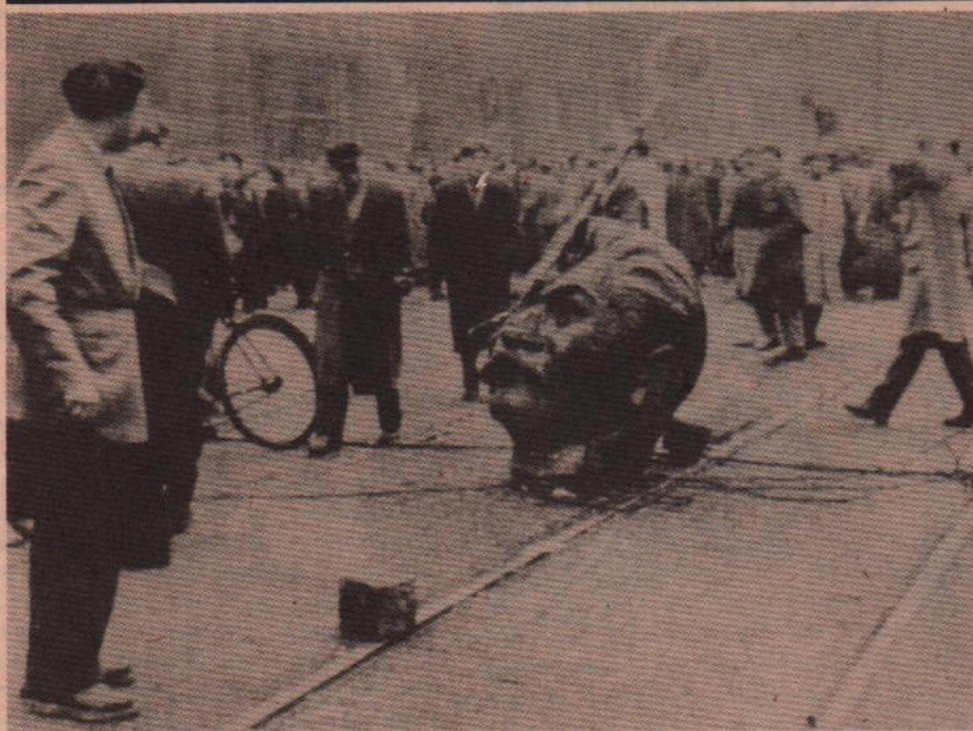
Budapest explosion

In the evening a section of the demonstration marched to the main radio station. Their demands for social change were met with a rebuff and when the people pressed towards the doors, members of the AVO, the Hungarian secret police, opened up with machine guns. The massacre of unarmed demonstrators changed the character of the protest movement. Groups of demonstrators broke into police stations and military barracks and armed themselves. By dawn on 24 October workers in the factories around Budapest had downed tools and come out on strike.

During the day fighting spread and a number of skirmishes took place between Hungarian workers and Soviet troops. But the state had collapsed, the Communist Party had vanished and in an act of desperation the bureaucracy handed the government over to Imre Nagy. But despite his popularity nobody was any longer in control of the situation. On 25 October the fighting in Budapest subsided. Hungarian workers fraternised with Russian troops and many Russian soldiers expressed their sympathy with the revolution. Most Russian troops withdrew to their barracks and military action was restricted to shoot outs between workers and AVO men.

By Friday, 26 October the conflict had spread throughout Hungary. By Saturday, the revolution had acquired a degree of organisational coherence. Workers' militias were established in Csepel and Angyalföld, the proletarian suburbs of Budapest, and revolutionary councils were set up throughout the country. In effect the revolutionary councils assumed all governmental powers.

This was the highpoint of the Hungarian revolution. Spontaneously dozens of political parties sprang up and hundreds of newspapers and newsheets were published. A major debate on the way forward involving tens of thousands of workers and students was raging on the streets, factories and revolutionary councils. The overwhelming support for the revolution forced the Soviet bureaucracy to make a tactical retreat: on 30 October



Soviet troops began their withdrawal from Budapest. Negotiations between the representatives of the revolutionary councils and the Soviet bureaucracy began on 1 November. The revolution appeared to be near victory.

The lessons of the revolution

A few days later, on 4 November the Hungarian negotiators were arrested and Soviet troops launched a new offensive. This treachery was met by a general strike. Workers' councils were established in most major industrial plants. It took three days of intensive fighting to break the back of the resistance – though the struggle lasted till 11 November in Csepel.

The Hungarian revolution showed the strength of the working class and the fragility of the bureaucracy. The Stalinist bureaucracy also learned a lesson: repression alone was not enough to ensure social stability. While the bureaucrats presided over the deaths of more than 15 000 revolutionaries and crammed the jails to overflowing, they embarked on the path of economic reform. To prevent another explosion the Hungarian bureaucracy tried to increase the living standards of the working class.

The tragedy of 1956 was not military defeat of the Hungarian workers at the hands of the Soviet bureaucracy. The real tragedy was that the absence of a revolutionary party meant that workers would draw only negative conclusions from their experience. After 1956, Hungarian workers turned away from social and political questions and fell into passivity. 'What can we do against Russian tanks?' was the question that haunted the proletarian suburbs around Budapest.

Throughout the revolution workers fought for what they saw as essential for their liberation: workers' and peasants' power and democracy. Often influenced by nationalist and anti-communist propaganda the proletariat retained its instinct of self-preservation and took power into its own hands. Even those workers who burned red flags still maintained their allegiance to workers' control over production and looked upon pro-capitalist politicians with suspicion. But the ideological confusion meant that the revolution became merely a heroic episode born out of desperation with no long-term consequences.

Today, 25 years later, the Hungarian working class has begun to stir again. But the workers' movement will have to be built anew if it is to overcome the confusion and ultimate paralysis of the generation of 1956.

Poland's drift to disaster

Like their Hungarian colleagues, the Polish rulers realised after 1956 that

coercion had to be tempered with economic concessions. Throughout the 'sixties and 'seventies the Polish bureaucracy tried to abandon the wasteful course of an extensive form of growth. Instead it tried to raise productivity through the introduction of new technology. This strategy had only a limited impact because the bureaucratised economy was incapable of generating productivity increases. In the late 'sixties and early 'seventies the Polish economy received a boost from massive injections of Western credit and technology. High growth rates leading to steady increases in living standards occurred till 1974.

But this economic miracle relied entirely on foreign credit and could not be maintained indefinitely. Even before the credit ran out and Poland was pushed to the edge of defaulting on its \$27 billion debt to the West the structural weakness of the economy became apparent. The bureaucracy was not able to assimilate the new foreign technology for the same reason that it could not raise productivity previously. The absence of conscious planning meant that new technology was introduced in an arbitrary manner. The result was massive waste: billions of dollars worth of investment was tied up in uncompleted projects whilst operational plant was used at 20 to 50 per cent capacity. The bureaucracy was simply incapable of overcoming the structural obstacles to the development of the forces of production. As a perceptive report on Poland noted:

'we find that after 1956, just as after 1970, there was an improvement in the standard of living, a rash of dramatic and ambitious plans, and an upsurge in activity generally; but in each case it was confined to the first two years.

'In both periods the crisis struck at similar moments and for similar reasons: toward the end of the first five-year planning period, and as a result of a breakdown in investment policy'. (*Poland: the state of the republic*, Pluto Press, 1981, p12)

The resulting crisis forced the bureaucracy to resort to its old standby – cutting social consumption. But Polish workers had come to expect an increase in their living standards. Ever since 1970 every attempt made to cut living standards through withdrawing subsidies of food prices has been resisted by the Polish proletariat. The events of 1980, leading to the establishment of Solidarity, follow a decade of continuous working class resistance.

Strains on Solidarity

Polish workers today, like their fellow workers in Hungary in 1956, have no illusions in the state. They see the bureaucracy as an alien anti-social force which acts as an obstacle to the realisation of their aspirations. But unlike the Hungarian workers in 1956, the Polish move-

ment did not surface out of a feeling of desperation. In 1980 the Polish workers had something to lose and in the first instance their movement was an attempt to defend the living standards they had already achieved. Consequently the Polish movement has a coherence and stability which the Hungarian workers lacked. But this stability also contains the danger of the institutionalisation of class protest.

Moreover the Polish movement like the Hungarian lacks a revolutionary party. The Polish working class is vulnerable to the reactionary influence of the Church and pro-capitalist forces and to the gradualist philosophy of KOR and other reformist forces. KOR, the Church, Polish nationalists and indeed the liberal wing of the bureaucracy have all argued for moderation lest the struggle provoke a Soviet intervention. In this way they have all sought to confine the activities of the working class to trade unionism.

The same forces also broadly agree on the necessity for economic reforms – a greater utilisation of the market mechanism, rationalisation, economic incentives, etc. These reforms spell disaster for Polish workers – they would mean millions of unemployed and further reductions in living standards. The lack of opposition to these reforms from the working class shows that the Polish proletariat has not yet differentiated itself as a class with independent interests.

Stalinist renewal?

Despite the insidious influence of the Church, KOR and other forces the proletariat has refused to vacate the battle field. Various attempts to disengage the working class have failed. The well-publicised 'renewal movement' for democratic change inside the Communist Party failed to arouse any enthusiasm in the factories. The July conference of the Polish Communist Party may have been more 'democratic' than ever before but few Poles were taken in by the Party's new media-created image: for most Polish workers the conference was a non-event. Polish workers are not about to rely on the promises of the bureaucracy to reform the system.

Nor are Polish workers prepared to confine their actions to narrow trade unionism. Trade unions are of limited use when workers' main problems are food shortages, the chaotic state of a society in which you have to queue for everything, and state repression. Higher wages do not mean higher living standards as the most basic goods are not available and trade unions cannot plan and control the economy. The recent national conference of Solidarity showed that Polish workers are determined to take matters into their own hands. Inevitably many of the speeches to the conference were anti-communist. This is only to be expected as

Polish militants associate communism with the present regime. This point of view was clearly expressed by one of the delegates from Gdansk: 'We have had enough after 36 years of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Let's remove the paragraph from the Gdansk agreement which recognises the leading role of the party'.

The delegate from Gdansk hates the proletarian dictatorship because he identifies it with the tyranny of the Stalinist regime. In the same vein other delegates called for 'democracy', 'free elections' and other trappings of bourgeois democracy. Stalinism has ensured that even the most militant workers express their class interests in the language of anti-communism.

Vigilance plus Marxism

But the message that came loud and clear from the Solidarity conference gives little comfort to anti-communists. Militants spoke out against Walesa and other Solidarity bureaucrats who have tried to curb the class struggle. Demands for the decentralisation of decision-making within Solidarity reflects the growing vigilance of Polish workers. Other demands raised at the conference such as the right of workers to elect factory managers expresses the growing determination of workers to take matters into their own hands. And the appeal to the proletariat of Eastern Europe to follow the path of Polish workers demonstrates a growing concern for working class unity.

The September conference of Solidarity demonstrates the potential for the development of a revolutionary movement. Whether this potential is realised depends on a ruthless struggle against petit-bourgeois politics. The growing crisis in Poland means that the present movement cannot sustain itself much longer unless it overcomes its ideological confusion. Revolutionaries have a long and protracted struggle on their hands. Decades of Stalinist rule have discredited communism and strengthened nationalism, Catholicism and other reactionary ideas in the working class. But whether workers use the rhetoric of bourgeois democracy or of Polish nationalism their struggle against the bureaucracy is progressive. The more far-reaching the struggle, the clearer it becomes that the interest of workers lies not in Polish nationalism or Catholicism but with proletarian power. Already many workers have come to question the moderating influence of the Church, KOR and the Solidarity bureaucrats.

Poland need not repeat the Hungarian tragedy. What the Polish working class requires is a continuation of its tenacity plus the violence of the Hungarian revolution and the ideology of Marx and Lenin.

Frank Richards

Don't blame Lenin

IT IS FASHIONABLE among feminists to explain the failure of the left to support the fight for women's rights as a defect of Leninism. The SWP has often been attacked on these grounds. However a closer examination shows that its attitude to women has nothing to do with Leninism. In fact it is a result of the SWP's adaptation to two different traditions – militant trade unionism and petit-bourgeois feminism.

In the late 'sixties and early 'seventies the SWP (then the International Socialists) indulged the chauvinist prejudices of militant trade unionists and neglected the fight for women's rights. The IS aimed to pull shop stewards into its ranks – and challenging their backward attitudes towards women was no part of its strategy. When party functionary Ian Birchall wrote his history of the IS in 1975 (recently republished as *The smallest mass party in the world*) he didn't even mention the party's work on women. In the early days the IS leadership did not want to antagonise potential trade union support by raising awkward issues of discrimination and oppression; when work among women began it was left to a few individual women activists. (Gays were in a similar, though worse, position.)

However IS could not continue to ignore women. Many of its young recruits were women strongly influenced by the radical feminist outlook of the women's liberation movement. While the group's national position remained one of indifference and even hostility to the women's movement, many IS members became actively involved in feminist activities. Indeed as ex-IS feminist Sheila Rowbotham recalls 'it was a particularly confusing situation because many of the first women's groups outside London were started by women in or close to IS' (*Beyond the fragments*, p34). The solution was to adapt to the pressures of feminism by creating a section which was allowed to function as a semi-independent organisation.

Women's work

Women's Voice began publication in summer 1972. It played an active part in the abortion campaigns in the mid 'seventies and organised several large national rallies. In 1978 it set up local 'women-only' support groups which operated with considerable independence of the SWP. This arrangement suited the SWP well. *Socialist Worker*, after some ritual self-criticism, hailed its sister paper on the fiftieth anniversary of female suffrage:

'Just like those male socialists 60 years ago, we on *Socialist Worker* have tended to turn our back on that movement. . . .

'The women in the Socialist Workers Party refused to accept this bias. They acted, as part of the women's movement, to change the party.

'They organised themselves in *Women's Voice* groups, and changed the face and tone of their paper *Women's Voice*.

'They tapped a great well of anger and enthusiasm which men only socialism had never come near.' (*Socialist Worker*, 10 June 1978)

Women's Voice thrived, campaigning in various feminist causes and in a series of important industrial disputes involving women. But did this division of labour within the SWP benefit women's struggles? For a number of reasons, the answer must be no.

Women's Voice let the SWP off the hook: it institutionalised the neglect of women's issues by the organisation as a whole by creating a separate organisation through which interested SWP women could pursue their struggle against oppression 'autonomously'. As Birchall now recalls, 'the work tended to be left to the small group of women who took the initiative, with little guidance or encour-



womens Voice A TALE TO TELL YOUR SISTER

The squabble in the Socialist Workers Party over the magazine *Women's Voice* and its local support groups reveals a lot about the British left's backwardness on the vital issue of women's oppression. On the one hand the party leadership wants to consolidate the organisation by integrating its female activists more closely into the party. SWP leader Tony Cliff provides a formal justification for this course from the writings of Lenin and Clara Zetkin; in reality he wants to subordinate activity on difficult political issues like women's oppression (and Ireland and racism) to SWP work around the anti-Tory initiatives of the TUC, the Labour Party and CND.

On the other hand some *Women's Voice* supporters want to retain the 'autonomous' status their movement adopted as an adaptation to the prejudices of petit-bourgeois feminism in the 'seventies. Cliff seems set to win the faction fight but whichever way it goes working class women are the losers.

agement from the central leadership of the organisation' (p28). Work against women's oppression remained. . . women's work. The SWP has reproduced and even reinforced the philistine norms of bourgeois society inside its own organisation: men rarely write or speak about 'women's' issues and women rarely write or speak about anything else.

Women's Voice combined the SWP's worship of trade unionism (in the form of women's trade union struggles) and its adaptation to feminism in one paper. As *Women's Voice* grew, more articles on women crept into *Socialist Worker*, but the basic approach remained the same.

Sentimental sisterhood

The revolutionary movement has always identified bourgeois feminism as a reactionary influence, a barrier to winning working class women to communism. The SWP however always portrays the women's movement in a positive light: it upbraids the feminists, not for their politics, but because they don't do enough to propagate their views among working class women. Leading SWP member Lindsey German's 'most serious criticism of the women's movement' is that 'there is no concerted attempt to reach women on the estates; there is no attempt to organise women in the unions at a rank and file level' (*Socialist Review*, September 1978).

If this wasn't bad enough *Women's Voice* has taken it upon itself to disseminate the reactionary views of bourgeois feminists as they are insufficiently

diligent at this task themselves. *Women's Voice* follows right-wing feminist magazines like *Spare Rib* in promoting consumer protection politics and confidence-boosting individual solutions to women's emotional and political problems. SWP member Anna Paczuska summed up the individualist preoccupations of petit-bourgeois feminism in a recent issue of *Women's Voice*:

'To me feminism means women fighting for their rights as women – it means women daring and winning against the odds. It means women developing ideas about the kind of people they could be and organising to make the revolution that will make those changes possible. Feminism is active.

'The early women's movement generated a dynamic and radical image of the new woman. She was a woman for whom everything was possible.' ('Where are you going sisters?' in *Women's Voice*, May 1981)

This article, supposedly a polemic against feminism, indulges all its prejudices. This sort of sentiment is little use to women faced with unemployment, closing nurseries and declining dole money for whom very little will be possible until the organised working class starts to take the defence of women seriously. Paczuska's ideal seems to be the women 'for whom everything is possible' living in a non-submissive relationship, sharing the *Daily Mail* equally with 'the man who has everything.'

Sisters and workers

Of course *Women's Voice* does not provide a pure stream of feminist pap –

otherwise nobody would read it. Its other side is its coverage of women's industrial disputes. *Women's Voice's* reporting of the recent Lee Jeans factory occupation was typical of its approach to women's struggles. It has an extremely patronising attitude to working class women. The wonderful women of Greenock were contrasted to the terrible men of Chrysler Linwood who gave up their jobs without a fight: 'the women are showing the men how it's done' (*Women's Voice*, June 1981).

But when the SWP wasn't congratulating the occupiers on being female, it ignored the fact that they were women. Lee Jeans could have been any dispute, involving any group of workers: the solutions were time-honoured trade union measures – collecting money, messages of support, etc. A recent SWP/*Women's Voice* pamphlet endorses this approach: 'the main lesson of the many struggles that women have fought over the past ten years has been the need to organise solidarity and support from other workers' (Anna Paczuska, *Sisters and workers*).

By treating women workers just like male trade unionists the SWP misses many of the specific problems they face as women. Women are not just poorly organised and in low paid jobs by accident. They face these conditions because their role as unpaid workers in the home puts them in a weak position when they go out to work. Most women cannot consider coming out on strike or even being active in their union without taking into account a whole range of domestic responsibilities. 'Solidarity and support' for women strikers means more than elementary trade union measures. It means rallying workers to do whatever is necessary to ensure that women can play a full part in industrial action. It means challenging trade union structures that are a barrier to the participation of women.

Winding down

Women's Voice played a useful role for the SWP in the 'seventies. It allowed women who might otherwise have drifted out into the women's movement to stay in the SWP, and it provided the SWP with a bridge into the feminist milieu. But it has outlived its usefulness. There is no longer a dynamic women's movement to connect with – the fragments have dispersed to the suburbs and beyond. And there are fewer women's struggles to relate to – the Lee Jeans occupation and the journalists' strike at BPC are significant as exceptions in a period of declining trade union activity.

So *Women's Voice* and its support groups have got to go. They no longer serve as a source of recruits and they claim the energies of some of the SWP's most capable activists. Their loose and undisciplined character is a liability for the leadership at a time when Tony Benn is drawing loosely attached radicals into the Labour Party and the SWP is fighting hard to retain members and maintain its organisational integrity.

The *Women's Voice* 'debate' in the SWP is about how to preserve the SWP, not about how to fight women's oppression. Serious discussion about how to defend women's rights today can only take place in an organisation which is committed to making women's oppression the concern of the working class.

The SWP has never understood the vital importance of women's struggles for workers: workers who challenge any barrier that the capitalist system puts up to the emancipation of women are taking a major step forward towards uniting the working class against capital. This is the point at which the cause of women's liberation and the struggle to build a revolutionary party meet: it is a point the SWP, with or without *Women's Voice*, will never reach.

Kevin Green



WORKERS FIGHT FOR IRISH FREEDOM

In recent months the Trades Union Congress has come under attack from the rank and file of the labour movement over its policy on Ireland for the first time since the present war began back in 1969. The September Blackpool Congress was the target of the Smash the Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign's 'Workers' March for Irish Freedom'. More than a hundred trade unionists, students and unemployed workers joined the three-day route march from Manchester to Blackpool to declare support for the Irish hunger strikers and to condemn the official labour movement's backing for British government policy in the Six Counties.

The Blackpool TUC reaffirmed the official labour movement's support for British imperialism. Congress refused to hear the case for political status from Teresa Moore, aunt of Mickey Devine the last

hunger striker to die — just as the TUC refused sixty years ago to listen to Mary MacSwiney, the wife of the Lord Mayor of Cork who died of starvation in Brixton prison shortly afterwards. A delegate supporting the march who appealed from the floor of Congress for the voice of the hunger strikers to be heard was bundled out by TUC stewards.

Len Murray and the rest remain on their knees before Margaret Thatcher, obediently acquiescing in every aspect of British barbarism in Ireland. However the Smash the PTA Campaign is building ever wider support for its campaign to throw out TUC Irish policy and replace it with support for the national liberation struggle. On this page Mick Kennedy looks at the way the TUC tries to justify its existing policy. On pages 10 and 11 Fenna King and Keith Tompson report on the Workers' March.

The TUC backs Britain

AFTER THE USUAL desultory debate this year's TUC passed the following motion, proposed by Frank Miller of the construction section of the engineering workers' union:

'Congress views with the utmost concern the continuing discrimination and sectarian violence in Northern Ireland. Congress reaffirms its policy, adopted at the 1978 congress, in the belief that it provides the basis for finding a peaceful political settlement in Northern Ireland.'

'In order to increase understanding and support for such policies in the British trade union movement, Congress calls on affiliated unions to develop programmes of exchange visits and delegations with the trade union movement in Northern Ireland.'

Utmost concern

The first sentence sums up the outlook of the labour bureaucracy on the Irish war. By 'discrimination' the TUC means the system of oppression on which the Six County regime it recognises as part of the United Kingdom ('Northern Ireland') is based. By 'sectarian violence' the TUC means the armed struggle of the Irish people against British oppression, for national freedom. The TUC's even-handed 'utmost concern' thinly disguises the approval for British imperialism given away by the terms of the rest of the sentence. The TUC has always been critical of 'discrimination' — a weak word to sum up the tyranny under which Catholics in the Six Counties have suffered for 60 years; its criticism has never had the slightest consequence. But the TUC condemns the resistance of the oppressed in the malicious language of the gutter press, as 'sectarian violence'; its strident condemnations have helped to isolate the Irish people from their allies in the British working class.

So Congress reaffirms its 1978 policy. But what was this policy? After a brief preamble the resolution called on the British Government to:

- 1 enact a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland
- 2 accept without qualification the Better Life For All Programme
- 3 ensure that there are no violations of the British Government's undertaking on human rights, and
- 4 to consult with representative organisations

Just 24 hours before the TUC voted overwhelmingly to reject a call for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, Brian Sullivan, NUPE district secretary from the Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast, was detained under the PTA as he arrived at Liverpool to join the Workers' March for Irish Freedom lobby and rally outside the TUC in Blackpool. On this occasion he was not held long but his detention symbolises how the PTA can be used to prevent Irish solidarity politics from gaining influence in the labour movement.

The TUC's stand behind the draconian repression of the PTA typifies its position on Ireland. Its loyalty to British imperialism means that it is prepared to sanction any restrictions on democratic rights that are necessary to ensure Britain stays on top in Ireland — and to make sure it doesn't face too much opposition in Britain either. Indeed the TUC General Council makes it its special responsibility to curtail opposition to British policy in the labour movement: it expelled Tameside Trades Council last year for declaring support for the republican movement; it threatened to kick out any Trades Council that attended the Smash the PTA Campaign's Coventry conference in support of the hunger strikers back in March; and over the summer the TUC has repudiated the Trades Councils' national conference resolution calling for political status and the repeal of the PTA.

As a new wave of hunger strikers approach the grim end that has already claimed 10 lives in the H-Blocks this summer, we review the current state of the British labour movement's official policy on Ireland.

(including the trade unions) as to whether there is a political initiative which could be taken to break the present deadlock.' (*TUC report 1978*, p589)

It is now 10 years since the TUC first backed the call for a Bill of Rights: it embodies a notion which exists virtually exclusively in the heads of these bureaucrats and their camp followers, that Britain could extend civil liberties in a country in which it is at war. It is not surprising that apart from its annual outing to the TUC's seaside conferences nothing is ever heard of the Bill of Rights. The 1978 resolution is concerned about violations of 'human rights': the TUC's 1981 stand on the PTA ensures that all manner of violations of democratic rights can proceed with the full backing of the law.

However the centrepiece of the 1978 policy, reaffirmed this year, is the Better Life For All Campaign. Now this campaign, for Britain to bring 'Peace, jobs and progress' to its Irish war zone, first launched in 1976, was already a dead duck in 1978. In 1981 it is scarcely within the living memory of the average TUC delegate. The TUC's Irish policy can thus be reduced to a non-existent campaign. But no matter — the TUC can produce this token of its 'utmost concern' and cling on to its faith in Britain's progressive mission in its oldest colony.

The final element in the TUC's Irish policy is its continuing concern to promote links between the TUC and the trade unions in the Six Counties organised in the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. 'We are in almost daily contact on the telephone and we have regular meetings, alternately in Belfast and London', Len Murray told the Southport Trades Council conference in June. This liaison is very important to the TUC: the convergence between the Loyalism of the Six Counties' trade unions and the loyalty of the TUC to the British state provides a useful justification for its pro-imperialist Irish policy. Before looking at the conflict over the Trades Council conference resolution, a few words on the trade unions in the Six Counties.

Loyal trade unions

Approximately half of all workers in the Six Counties are members of trade unions: 78 per cent belong to British unions, 14 per cent to unions based in Northern Ireland and 8 per cent to unions with their headquarters in Dublin (C McCarthy, *Trade unions in Ireland, 1884-1960*, Dublin, 1977). All are affiliated to the Northern Ireland Committee, the virtually autonomous Six County section of the all-Ireland Dublin-based Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

The NIC was established in 1944 with the objective of winning the recognition of the Stormont state. It finally succeeded in 1964 by demonstrating its total commitment to the Northern Ireland state and British domination of Ireland. The NIC has followed through this commitment by serving loyally on a host of government committees — including the authority that directs the sectarian para-military police force. In return it has been rewarded with close consultation by the state and generous financial subsidies.

The NIC makes extravagant claims for its work in combating 'sectarianism' in the Six Counties and these are ritually repeated by TUC leaders in Britain. It is true that the trade unions include both Catholic and Protestant workers — although Catholics are more likely to be in Dublin-based unions and Protestants in British unions. Given that unemployment is at least twice as high among Catholics as Protestants there are obviously less Catholics in unions. The trade unions' 'non-sectarian' reputation has been built on their retreat from taking any stand on the issue of Ireland's national oppression by Britain in favour of a narrow emphasis on wages and conditions. However in practice the NIC's acceptance of the Northern Ireland state and its endorsement of Protestant control over access to jobs means that it lines up with Britain against the nationalist people.

The hollowness of the NIC's claims can be seen in the way the unions have done nothing to oppose the intensification of sectarian discrimination in employment since the recent troubles began. A series of pogroms has virtually removed Catholics from the shipyards and a number of Belfast engineering works. Some firms operate shifts for Catholics and Protestants (see C McCarthy, *Civil strife and the growth of trade union unity: the case of Ireland*, 1973). When there was a conflict over a scheme for housing Catholics near the Protestant-dominated Sirocco engineering plant in the Short Strand district of Belfast, the NIC backed Sirocco and its Loyalist workers. Stalinist Andy Barr, prominent NIC official and promoter of the Better Life For All Campaign, led the Loyalist clamour against the housing project (see

continued on page 10

continued from page 9

TUC backs Britain ...

Trade unions in Northern Ireland, Belfast Workers Research Unit, Summer 1979). The NIC's 'non-sectarianism' in reality means its endorsement of the sectarian discrimination enforced by the majority of its members against Catholic workers.

Aberration in Southport

Partly in response to the campaign initiated by the Smash the PTA Campaign in the trade union movement a motion departing radically from official TUC policy appeared on the agenda of the Trades Councils' conference. Before the resolution was even discussed Len Murray wheeled out the NIC artillery against it:

'I can tell you the unequivocal view of the NIC is that adopting that motion would make their task yet harder and yet more dangerous. To ask for a commitment on withdrawal of troops, to ask for the ending of emergency powers, to ask for the restoration of special category status would put the Trades Councils' conference firmly down on one side of the sectarian divide. The NIC would be split from top to bottom if they were to identify themselves with the political objective of this motion. They have told us that they will not do it.'

He urged delegates to 'kick it out' and told them that 'if by some strange aberration you were to adopt it then I tell you that the TUC would not be party to it'. Well, an aberration gripped the conference and it passed the resolution. But Murray was true to his word: the General Council in August rejected the Trades Councils' conference resolution and reaffirmed solidarity with the NIC.

When Murray speaks of different sides of 'the sectarian divide' what he means is different sides in the Irish War. He recognised that the Southport motion meant British trade unionists taking the side of the Irish people against the side the TUC and the NIC loyally support — the British state. He recognised that this would expose the loyalist allegiance of the NIC and exacerbate tensions in its ranks. But most of all he recognised the threat to the allegiance of the official labour movement to the British state posed by the growth of the Irish solidarity movement in its ranks. It was this threat that led to the TUC's prompt repudiation of the Trades Councils' resolution.

Although the trades councils' resolution supported political status — and in the context of the continuing hunger strikes this was its most important feature — it did not represent an unequivocal working class position on the Irish War. Promoted by the Communist Party, it was an attempt to bring the Better Life For All Campaign up to date. It did not support the right of the Irish people to decide their own future but proposed a series of reforms to be imposed on the Irish by Britain — the old Bill of Rights and measures to 'relieve mass unemployment and social deprivation'. It also equivocated on the troops — calling for 'withdrawal to barracks pending their complete withdrawal' and approved a 'period of devolved government in Northern Ireland as a stage towards a united Ireland'.

The Southport motion is an attempt to find a middle way between the programme the Workers' March for Irish Freedom brought to Blackpool and the existing policy of the TUC. But as Len Murray knows well, no such middle way exists. He knows which side he's on and growing numbers of trade unionists are lining up with the Smash the PTA Campaign on the side of the Irish people. The fight to win the labour movement from the side of British imperialism is really on at last.



1 The march begins: Crown Square Manchester
Our message for the TUC: 'Get off your knees and stand up for Irish freedom!'



2 The march covered 12 miles to Bolton on the first day, 26 miles (phew!) to Preston on the second and 16 miles to Blackpool on the final day.
'Where are we going? Blackpool!
What for? Political status!
Who to see? The TUC!'



3 Along the way we appealed for support and sold hundreds of copies of the next step. Irish people in particular responded enthusiastically; several joining the march as it passed through their town. Loyalists turned up to harass the march in Manchester and in Blackpool; fascists tried to attack the marchers in Preston but were soon scared off.

Meet the marchers

Of more than 100 marchers about a quarter were unemployed and there were 20 students. The bulk of the march was made up of trade unionists: 12 members of the TGWU topped the list which included engineers, building workers, printers, electricians, shopworkers and hospital workers as well as representatives of various white-collar unions (ASTMS, NALGO, NUT, NUJ, CPSA).
Apart from a scattering of RCP members there were 8 supporters of the Revolutionary Gay Caucus, handfuls of Sinn Fein, Troops Out Movement and Socialist Workers Party members, groups of Iranian and Kurdish students and at least 3 members of the Labour Party. The British Army provided 3 veterans against the War in Ireland. There were several Irish people on the march — including one man who missed out on the all-Ireland hurling final for the first time for twenty-five years to come on the march to the TUC.

● Organisations:
Irish Republican Socialist Party
Building workers rank and file
Hunger Strike Action Committee
Society; Kurdistan Solidarity
and Wales — supporters of C
Freiburg, Berlin, Munster, Kie

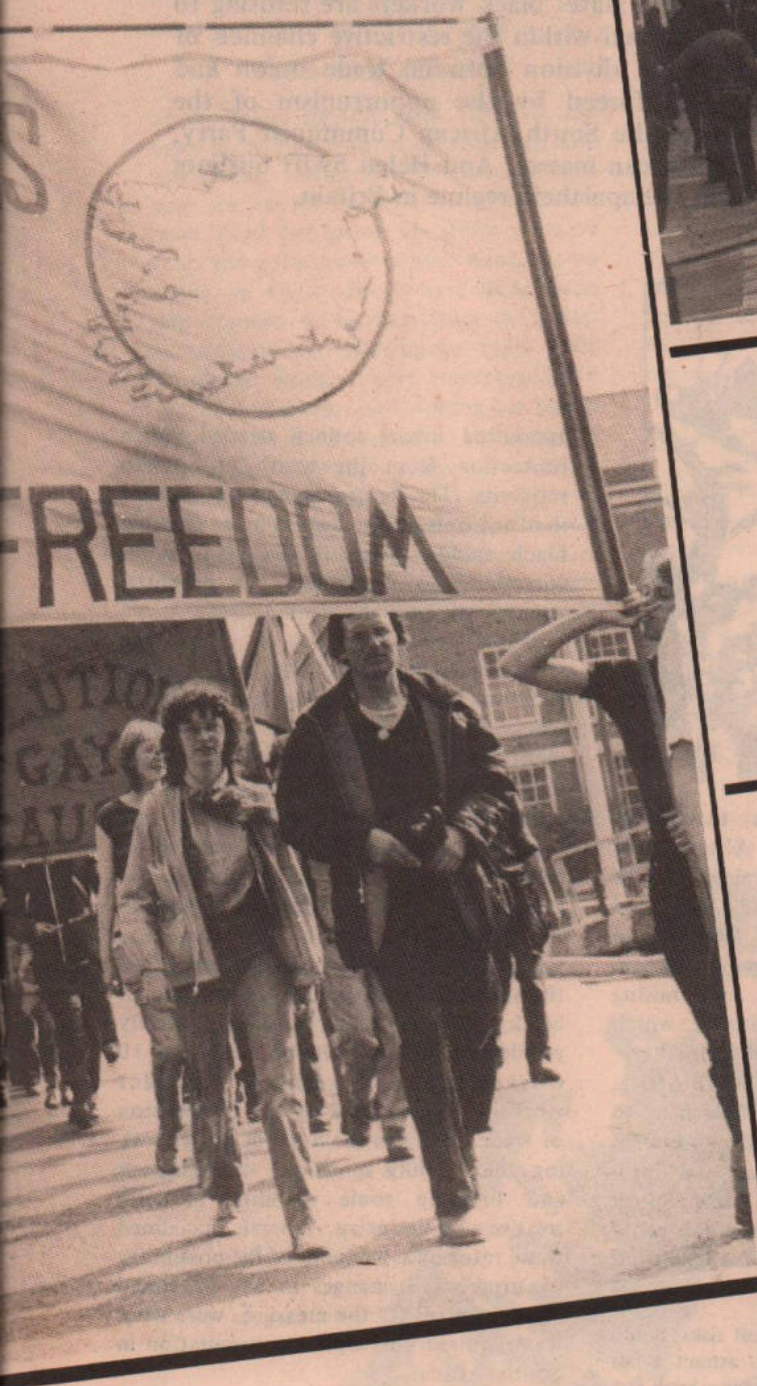
● Trade union branches:
TGWU 6/389; AUEW Ashton
ASTMS SE London medical

● March sponsors in an ind
Jackie McMullan (H-Block
general secretary, Local G
toria Hospital, Belfast); Li
Long Kesh); Micky McMu
ment); Ernie Roberts (M
Paul Foot (Daily Mirror, 1

MANCHESTER TO BLACKPOOL On the M to the T



March UC



sors included:

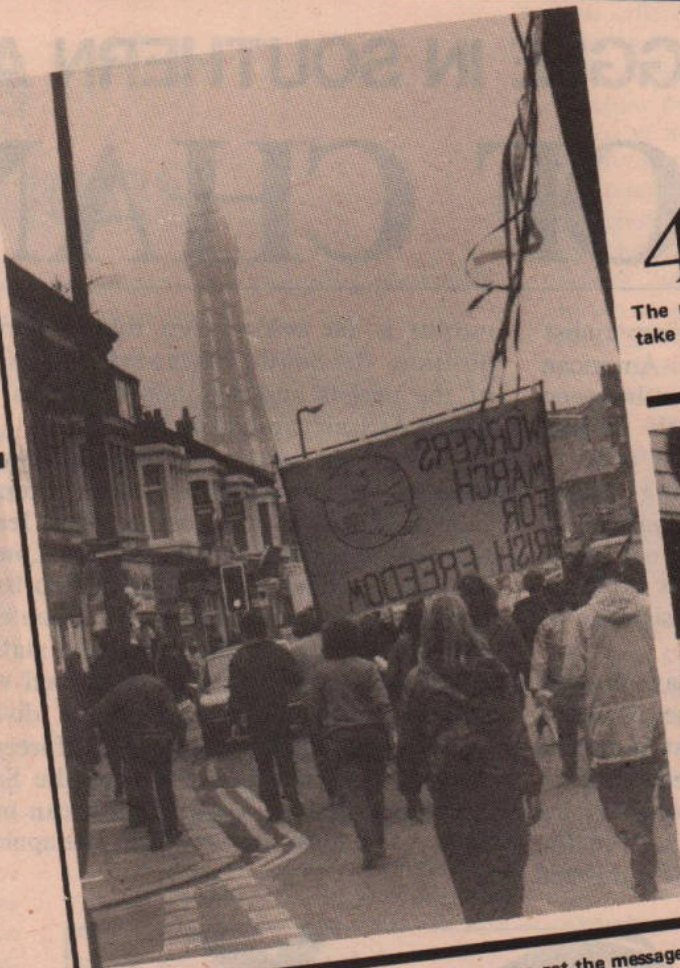
IRSP POWS, the cages, Long Kesh; Derry H-Block/Armagh Trade Union Group; Wear Valley and District Trades Council; Hackney Trades Council; Coventry East London Troops Out Movement; Revolutionary Gay Caucus; Moslem Students; Iranian students in Britain (Left platform); Union of Iranian students in England; German H-Block solidarity groups in Frankfurt, Bochum, Gottingen, Marburg, Burnley SWP; Preston SWP.

No 2; NUJ Nalogo chapel, Brixton UCATT No 1; Northampton UCATT; Putney UCATT; Manchester ACTSS; ACTSS SW London, ASTMS NE London medical.

ual capacity: Paddy Logue (National H-Block/Armagh Committee); Phil Flynn (deputy hunger striker); Brian Sullivan (NUPE district secretary, Royal Vicarage and Public Services Union); Patsy McNiece (IRSP POW, the cages, Carlin (ex-blanketman, Derry felons association); Finbar O'Doherty (founder Derry civil rights movement); Ken Livingstone (Leader Greater London Council);

4

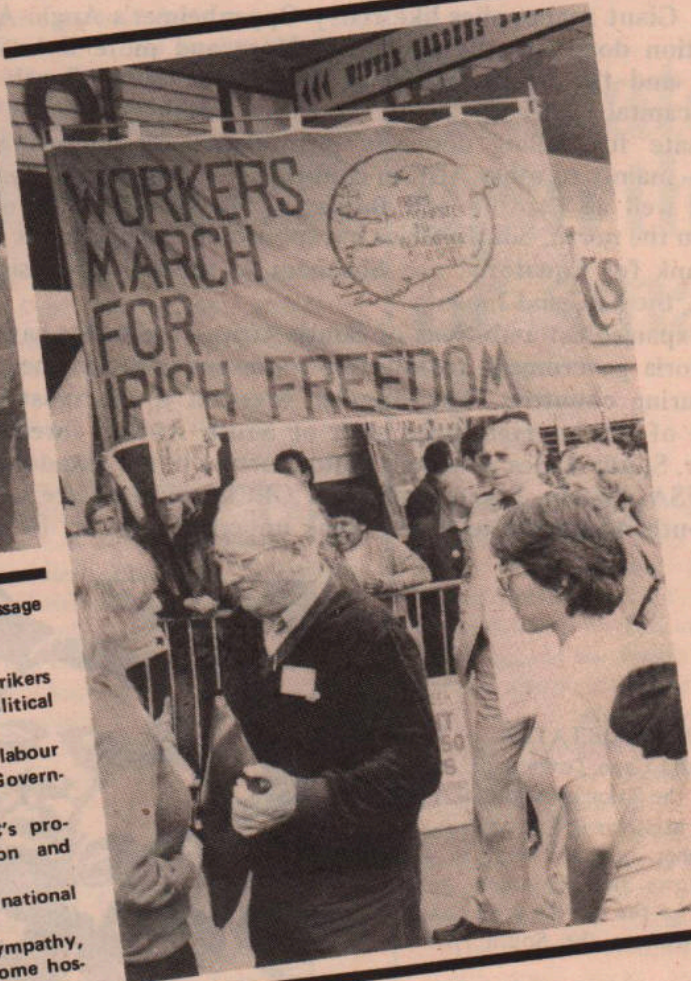
The marchers hit the golden mile: tired and footsore but ready to take on the bureaucrats.



TUC delegates get the message from the Workers March. Our appeal:

- support the hunger strikers and their demands for political status
- condemn official labour movement backing for Government policy
- condemn the TUC's prescription of discussion and debate on Ireland
- support the Irish national liberation movement

5 Their response: sympathy, indifference — and some hostility.



6

Teresa Moore (aunt of Mickey Devine): 'We need your support to make sure that the hunger strikers have not died in vain.'

Brian Sullivan (NUPE, Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast): 'The TUC has a scandalous record — it's high time its policy was changed.'

Terry Matthews (IRSP, London): 'This march shows that it can be done: it shows that it is possible to build working class support for the Irish struggle. Not only is it possible — it is vitally necessary.'

Don Milligan (Revolutionary Gay Caucus): 'As homosexual people we must support those who struggle against discrimination and oppression. As people living in England we must oppose all attempts by the government to invade or occupy any other country.'

Keith Tompson (Revolutionary Communist Party): 'Build the Smash the PTA Campaign in local areas, in trade union branches, trades councils and in workplaces. We've already got Murray rattled — now let's put him on the run.'



THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

WINDS OF CHANGE

Uniquely on the African continent, South Africa is an imperialist country. Giant monopolies like Harry Oppenheimer's Anglo-American Corporation dominate the economy. More and more links between industry and the banks testify to the emergence of South African finance capital. Since the early 'seventies South Africa has tried to compensate for falling domestic profitability by exporting capital abroad — mainly to other African countries like Zimbabwe, Uganda and Zaire as well as Lesotho and Botswana. To spearhead its economic drive into the north, South Africa has sponsored the Economic Development Bank for Equatorial and Southern Africa with the assistance of America, the EEC and Japan.

The expansionist ambitions of South African capitalists have pressed the Pretoria government to interfere more and more in the affairs of neighbouring countries. The Angolan invasion is the most dramatic example of the interventionist shift of South African foreign policy. However, South Africa remains a junior partner in the plunder of Africa — the USA, Britain, France and other OECD countries are well in the lead. South Africa is a relatively weak imperialist power: its industrial

output is far below even that of Britain. To ensure its competitive position the South African ruling class has to intensify the exploitation of the masses and maintain the brutal system of oppression on which South African capitalism depends.

In no other country is the gulf between the pretensions of the ruling class and the subjection of the workers as great as it is in South Africa today. In this special feature Nick Jenkins looks at the forces behind the Angolan invasion and Charles Longford surveys the pressures that have led premier P W Botha to step back from reforms and tighten up the regime of apartheid. Moses Dube examines the upsurge of popular struggle against the South African state: black workers are refusing to allow their struggles to be contained within the restrictive channels of official trade unionism, but the division between trade union and national liberation politics, reinforced by the opportunism of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party, continues to hold back the African masses. And Helen Swift outlines how — and how not — to fight the apartheid regime in Britain.

THE BRUTAL DEPORTATION of black squatters around Cape Town back to the wastelands of the Transkei and Ciskei has tainted Prime Minister P W Botha's image as the reformer of apartheid. In fact it simply shows that although minor modifications of the system are possible, apartheid is vital to the South African regime.

While the South African economy has enjoyed increasing growth for the past two years, it has been accompanied by an eruption of class struggle. Violence directed at both military and civilian targets by the African National Congress guerrillas, culminated in a rocket attack in August on the Vootrekkerhoogte military complex on the very outskirts of Pretoria. This year has seen the most dramatic increase in black working class militancy: whilst last year 207 strikes occurred at a cost of 174 000 man-days — more lost production than in the entire 1975-79 period — this year alone there has already been at least one strike a day.

The explosion of popular resistance to the government has intensified divisions in the ruling class. Liberals plead for Botha to stabilise the situation by honouring his commitment to reform apartheid. But right-wing opposition to these policies is growing too. Despite the fact that in the recent general elections, the ruling Nationalist Party (NP) retained 131 of the 165 seats in Parliament, the ultra-conservative Herstigte Nasionale Party (HNP) won a 14 per cent increase in its vote.

Botha opened Parliament with a declaration that there would be no common voters roll for whites, coloureds and Asians; no constitutional representation at all for urban blacks; no change in controls preventing migration to the cities. To understand why Botha has embarked upon what the liberal opposition condemns as 'a return to Dr Verwoerd's constitutional fantasies' we have to review the evolution of the South African government's strategy over the past decade.

The price of gold

Until 1974, South Africa boasted a rate of return on capital investment that ranked among the highest in the world. The average American company enjoyed an 18 per cent rate of return on investment in South Africa while in Britain, for example, the rate of return was only



eight per cent. Like all industrialised nations, South Africa has a highly mechanised economy. Since 1965, the real capital stock per worker in the manufacturing sector rose at a rate of 5 per cent a year — one of the highest rates in the world (*Financial Mail*, 11 February, 1977).

But the more money they spent on new machinery, the more the surplus value they sweated out of black workers was spread over a larger investment base. South African capitalists began to experience the major problem facing all imperialist countries — the declining profitability of their industry. The 'rate of return' on investment in South Africa plummeted from 19 per cent in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies to a more modest eight per cent in 1976.

The Soweto uprising in 1976 coincided with the crisis of profitability: it had a cataclysmic effect. Foreign confidence in the apartheid economy began to falter. So between 1975 and 1976, the inflow of long-term capital into South Africa fell by R633m to R1.113m, and the outflow of short-term capital of R634m was a record. One year later this had risen to R1017m and hit R1175m in 1978 (*The Economist*, 21 June 1980). Net reserves declined by as much as R1056m — never before in the country's history had the reserves declined by more than R350m in any one year (*South African Reserve Bank*, March 1977). The net result was that the South African economy ground almost to a halt. After an unprecedented 10 per cent increase in real gross national product in 1974, by 1978 it showed a decline in growth of approximately one per cent.

The world recession simply made South Africa's problems worse. The decline in the price of gold in 1975 produced a massive deficit on the trade account of the balance of payments.

Government income from the mines declined, forcing the South African state to borrow from abroad, raising South Africa's foreign debt to R1317m (*Rand Daily Mail*, 7 June 1977). This in turn necessitated cutbacks on public expenditure, reducing subsidies and raising prices of goods sold to industry, which only depressed the rate of profit further.

Foreign capital is vital to South Africa, but a rising rate of profit is essential to attract it. Without this inflow, foreign exchange revenues decline, and prolonged stagnation sets in. The South African bourgeoisie recognised the problem very clearly. As the *Financial Mail* put it:

'Notwithstanding the political risks, South Africa has usually managed to attract a fair amount of foreign capital, allowing a brisk rate of economic development. Why? Because of the profitability of its business... No longer... it appears South Africa has forfeited its place near the top of the world profitability ladder... the overall downward swing in profitability will have to be reversed before South Africa can once again become a magnet for long-term foreign equity funds.' (21 January 1977).

The bourgeoisie knew that the only way to restore profitability was to step up the exploitation of black workers. But this risked provoking even more resentment and resistance among South Africa's already viciously oppressed black masses. So the government tried to cushion the blow by promising some reforms in the apartheid regulations and by promoting a black middle class to act as a buffer between the regime and the black workers.

'Reforming' apartheid

By 1976, it had become all too obvious that the government-created black middle class, composed of homeland bureaucrats hand-picked by the state, was incapable of playing a mediating role for the bourgeoisie. In Soweto, for example, the

appointed urban council needed police protection from the wrath of Soweto residents. The bourgeoisie soon realised that not only did it need a more credible black middle class, it also had to do something to undermine the potential strength of the black working class.

With these objectives in mind, the state set up the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions — to investigate the fields of black trade unionism and urban settlement. The Commissions noted the growing shortage of skilled labour in the economy and the increasingly vital role black workers had come to occupy in all spheres of the economic productive processes. To ensure the optimum utilisation of black labour with the minimum political threat, the Commissions proposed the institutionalisation of the division of black workers into settled, relatively privileged, urban workers (Section 10 workers), and migrant or contract workers. They approved the recognition of trade unions in the hope of incorporating the existing unofficial organisations and bringing some stability to class relations in industry. Liberals acclaimed these reforms as evidence of the possibility of progressive changes in the apartheid regime: in reality the measures were what was required for capital accumulation in South Africa.

Five years after Soweto the South African bourgeoisie's strategy can be seen to have been successful. Profitability has been largely restored through a ruthless attack on the black working class. Since 1974 the rate of increase in real wages has fallen in every successive year: by 1980 average black wages were well below the state's poverty datum lines. Economic revival has given the regime greater scope for dealing with the class struggle without resorting to naked coercion. Whereas in 1976 protesting students and workers were simply shot, today the government is more inclined to make concessions to working class militancy. Independent trade unions, for example, have been allowed to continue to operate.

However, the economic upturn since 1979 has provoked a series of militant spontaneous strikes and demonstrations that the regime has no control over. It is this menacing development for the apartheid regime that has led Botha to reassert his commitment to the bed rock of the South African constitution — the oppression of the blacks.

Problems in the unions

ALTHOUGH BLACK WORKERS have pushed their demands for higher wages and better conditions beyond the limits prescribed by the regime, the bourgeoisie has so far managed to contain the threat to its rule from the factory floor. It has achieved this by a combination of traditional strike-breaking tactics with attempts to promote legitimate moderate trade union procedure. Undoubtedly the ruling class' strongest card is the continuing isolation of the struggle in the workplaces from the broader movement of the masses to overthrow the South African state.

The bosses' offensive

Spontaneous protests and strike action have been met with mass dismissals and disciplinary measures. By July of this year an estimated 13 600 workers had been fired for going on strike — more than the total number who went out on strike in 1979. There have been mass deportations of workers from the cities: in August last year more than 1000 municipal workers were transported out of Johannesburg after striking for higher wages. And scabs have been deployed on a wide scale to replace striking workers. A recent circular issued to employers in East London urged businessmen 'to keep lists of employment seekers instead of just turning them away at the gates without taking any of their particulars. To take down only the bare essentials and keep this on record would help firms not to give in to ridiculous demands when their present workforce goes on strike' (*South African Labour Bulletin*, July 1981).

The same document suggested that black workers' unions should be recognised and encouraged to operate in a

sectional manner that could be exploited by the bosses:

'black unions would, with the foreseeable future, increase in numbers to such an extent that they would act competitively. In other words, that one union would serve black workers in one category and another union would serve black workers for another specific category of work... One of the long term solutions would thus be to force the black unions, by way of legislation to act on behalf of one specific type of industry only.'

Companies like General Motors, Fords and Volkswagen, recognising the need to divide and contain their workforce, have introduced full-time shop stewards into their plants, as well as projects to house their black workers. Volkswagen is currently spending over R1 million in Uitenhage on a housing project. This sort of scheme aims to intensify the division between a settled urbanised relatively privileged section of workers, and the constantly insecure black migrant workers. This division, although by no means yet firmly established, has proven useful in crushing a number of disputes.

Workers' response

Black workers have displayed tremendous combativity in taking on both their employers and the state. They have developed aggressive and imaginative tactics. Textile workers in Natal, for example, armed themselves against police attacks, set up defence squads for their hostels and even stormed other textile plants and beat up security guards in attempts to bring their fellow workers out on strike. However black workers

have suffered a number of setbacks.

In April 4500 workers at the Sigma motor corporation in Pretoria came out on strike demanding wage rises and recognition of their union, the National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa (NUMARWOSA). Sigma management refused to negotiate with the workers' committee. When the firm sacked 2000 workers who refused to return to work the dispute erupted into rioting, the stoning of cars — and one striker was shot dead. Scabs were brought in and the union was finally forced to accept a compromise in which it was recognised by the company — but the strike leaders remained victimised. Many disillusioned militants have turned to a rival union — the Motor Assembly and Component Workers Union (MACWUSA) in disgust.

At the Leyland Motor Company in the Western Cape 2000 workers struck for higher wages. The company followed a similar course to Sigma: mass dismissals, refusal to negotiate with the union — also NUMARWOSA — and the use of scab labour. The final defeat also led some militants to turn to rival general unions like MACWUSA or the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU). Alternatively others looked to community-based organisations like Thozamile Botha's Port Elizabeth Black Community Organisation (PEBCO) or Buthelezi's Inkatha ka Zulu for support.

The problem is that these community organisations have a petit-bourgeois nationalist outlook that provides no way forward for black workers: the same outlook tends to prevail in the general unions such as MACWUSA and SAAWU. Inkatha ka Zulu is notorious for its pro-capitalist record — its armed vigilantes have helped the police round up rioting school children in Kwa Zulu and have provided defence squads for employers during strikes. Whilst PEBCO has played a significant role in organising consumer boycotts in support of industrial disputes, it shares the same orientation as Inkatha ka Zulu.

The way to unity

Black workers have shown an often heroic determination to go beyond the confines of the narrow trade union approach fostered by the government and the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). However, in the absence of any real alternative, they have sought alternatives under the leadership of petit-bourgeois nationalists who reinforce the division between the struggle for higher wages and the fight for democratic rights. Whether in the unions or in the community organisations black workers are sidetracked from the struggle against the apartheid regime. But it is this struggle that is vital to the advance of the oppressed masses of South Africa — and it is this struggle that only the working class can lead to victory.

The South African Communist Party, the dominant influence in the African National Congress, has just celebrated its sixtieth birthday. Although it began by proclaiming itself as a workers' party it has ended up denying any distinctive role to the working class in the liberation struggle in South Africa. It encourages the continuation of the separation between workers' economic and political struggles by, on the one hand endorsing radical trade unionism, and on the other subordinating the struggle for democratic rights to the influence of petit-bourgeois nationalism.

The only way forward for the black masses in South Africa is to repudiate the SACP's notion of a peaceful democratic revolution and prepare for a socialist revolution. This means building a party that can link the day to day struggle in the factories with the wider struggle against the apartheid system.



'Isolate apartheid' or smash it?

THE ANTI-APARTHEID Movement in Britain is holding a trade union 'week of action' from October 24-31 with the theme 'isolate apartheid'. But this is not a week in which workers are urged to take action against the British firms that prop up the apartheid regime. Not at all. It is a week in which trade unionists are encouraged to appeal to British capitalists to conduct the exploitation of black workers in South Africa in a less brutal manner; and to appeal to the London government to press its Pretoria allies to adopt a more liberal approach to the oppression of the African masses.

The AAM is strongly backed by the British trade union bureaucracy. The TUC's 'action' against apartheid is of an entirely diplomatic character. It asks the CBI to encourage its member companies in South Africa to recognise black trade unions and it requests the government to impose sanctions against British companies that refuse to introduce British-style industrial relations procedures in South Africa. It colludes in the EEC's 'code of conduct' for companies with interests in South Africa — a fig leaf to cover the role of Britain and its European allies in sustaining the vicious oppression of blacks under the apartheid regime. The TUC never suggests mobilising workers to act against the British firms that help keep apartheid going.

The trouble with the TUC is that it wants to oppose apartheid without fighting British capitalism. Indeed it likes to make out that Britain's association with the excesses of the South African regime is not in the best interests of British capitalism. For example Len Murray 'warned' Lord Carrington last May that the Government's failure to suspend a contract for the import of uranium from the Rossing mine in Namibia 'could have serious international repercussions'. It 'could well affect adversely Britain's standing with an independent Namibia and with other African states'. Murray's cringing pleas cut little ice with Carrington: he knows that the apartheid system guarantees British investors some of the highest profit rates in the world. TUC/AAM calls on the British ruling class to 'isolate apartheid' will undoubtedly fall on deaf ears.

The only force in Britain that can fight apartheid is the working class. We appeal to British workers to help smash apartheid through a campaign of industrial action against the British companies that thrive on the poverty-line wages and denial of political rights of South African workers. That is the best service the British working class can render the growing mass movement against the South African state.



Angola and the Western alliance

FOR SOME TIME now the imperialist countries have been trying to find some way of exploiting the enormous mineral and natural resources of Namibia whilst maintaining political stability in the area. Ruled by Britain since 1915 as South West Africa, Namibia has been virtually incorporated as a fifth province of South Africa.

Resistance and repression

Resistance to the continuing occupation of Namibia is led by the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) which has been engaged in a national liberation war since 1966 through its armed wing, the People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN). SWAPO has been the target of a bloody South African war of attrition over the past 15 years: now it operates largely from bases across the northern border in Angola. The aim of the latest South African operation is to smash SWAPO, by wiping out its camps in Angola and by neutralising Angolan support for the Namibian freedom fighters.

The invasion marks a hardening of South Africa's approach to Namibia. Until recently the emphasis was on political manoeuvres — seeking to build up the puppet 'Democratic Turnhalle Alliance' ready for internal elections. Such was South African confidence that it even agreed to a United Nations proposal backed by the 'big five' imperialist powers calling for supervised elections. However, the Patriotic Front's election victory in Zimbabwe and the discrediting of British stooge Abel Muzorewa shook the South Africans. On receiving reports that SWAPO would easily win 50 per cent of the votes in an election, South African premier Botha adopted a policy of stalling the elections while stepping up attempts to liquidate the SWAPO forces. The breakdown of the Geneva 'pre-implementation' conference in January this year signalled a decisive shift from a negotiated to a military solution.

Undoubtedly SWAPO guerrillas have been able to operate from within the relative safety of Angola, and this provided the immediate pretext for the invasion. South African Defence Force commander Major-General Charles Lloyd said in July: 'If SWAPO flees to FAPLA (the Angolan army) — and FAPLA protects SWAPO, then we will unavoidably have to cross swords' (*Observer*, 31 August 1981). South African generals have long been itching to unleash their military might against the much weaker SWAPO and FAPLA forces. But there were other forces too behind the invasion.

Reagan lashing out

Reagan's election has already had a dramatic effect on world politics. The Sirte incident when American jets shot down two Libyan fighters; increased intervention in Central America; the decision to press ahead with the neutron bomb; silence over the Israeli attack on Iraq's nuclear reactor; these incidents signify a new belligerent posture in American foreign policy.

In southern Africa this means a much more supportive attitude towards the apartheid regime. South Africa is no longer a pariah among nations, but a friend with a vital role to play in the region. Relations between the two countries are closer than for many years. On 31 August the US vetoed a UN

The South African invasion of Angola was the third major armed incursion across the Namibian border since Angola became independent in 1974, in the wake of the Portuguese withdrawal from Africa. In October 1975 a South African armoured column came within striking distance of the capital Luanda before turning back at America's insistence. South African armed forces or their proxies have kept up the pressure on Angola ever since. In June last year a raid into Cunene and Kwando-Kubango provinces left many hundreds dead and caused enormous devastation.

The latest invasion met with a mixed response from the imperialist powers. Despite its avowed 'evenhandedness', the Reagan Administration gave almost unqualified support to the invasion. Europe on the other hand, was not so pleased. Former Under Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, Ian Gilmour, summoned the South African Ambassador to his office and gave him a stern talking-to on the dangers of driving the Angolans and Namibians into the hands of the Russians through ill-conceived military action.

His words echoed those of former premier Edward Heath who, speaking in South Africa, warned in true Macmillan style, of the winds of change blowing ever-stronger in southern Africa. The Angolan invasion has provoked the first major difference of opinion amongst the five 'Contact Group' powers — Britain, France, USA, Canada and West Germany — who are trying to work out a solution in Namibia, which is presently occupied by South Africa. Nick Jenkins examines the background to the South African invasion of Angola to explain why the big powers have fallen out.

Security Council resolution condemning the South African raid, showing in no uncertain terms on which side America stands on Botha's attempt to crush the anti-imperialist movement in Namibia.

America's strong support for South Africa stems from its desire to consolidate its position in Africa at the expense of its rivals. For the United States, South Africa is a profitable area of investment and an important export market. Last year the US became South Africa's biggest trading partner: two-way trading reached \$4.7 billion, 49 per cent higher than a year previously. US investments have grown, and recently the South African government has awarded important contracts to American capitalists. The US also relies on South Africa for a variety of strategic minerals.

US policy makers want to see a settlement to the Namibian issue, which threatens to destabilise imperialist control in southern Africa. They agree with the Pretoria government that the best way to do this is to break SWAPO's supply lines from outside the country and hopefully isolate it within. Hence the invasion. By making Angola's border a no-go area for SWAPO and at the same time building up Jonas Savimbi's collaborationist UNITA forces (fighting the Angola regime from inside the country), the South Africans hope to kill two birds with one stone. They want to defeat SWAPO and at the same time weaken the Angola regime by forcing it to accept the anti-communist UNITA into a coalition as the price of preventing the break-up of the country. This would suit the USA — and there would be little Angola's much publicised Cuban troops could do about it.

Carving up the competition

In 1979 Angolan ambassador to the EEC Luis de Almeida explained the consequences of the last major raid:

'All the targets have been economic, not military... They have not hit SWAPO bases, for instance, but have chosen factories and boatyards. We know why: the South Africans are worried because hostility in the West towards Angola is diminishing. Investors are

coming in on a 49-51 per cent basis with the government in agriculture, oil production and minerals... Angola believes that the bombing is designed to force expenditure away from reconstruction and towards defence.'

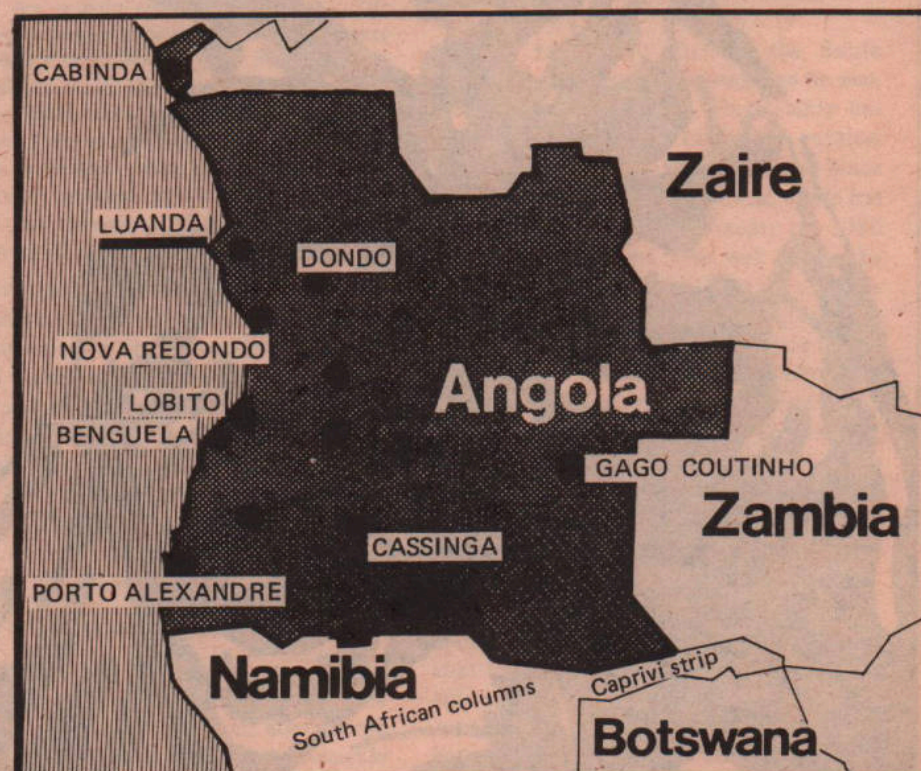
The same is true today. Angola is potentially a very rich country. It was the second richest in Africa before independence, and has massive deposits of oil, diamonds and minerals. It also acts as a transit route for raw materials from Zaire and Zambia to the sea. This is not in the interests of South Africa, which as the major regional power, is wary of any competitor. There has been some discussion amongst the South African bourgeoisie in recent years about whether it would be better to try and encourage stable and prosperous neighbours or whether the existence of South Africa depends on them being weak and divided. It is the second view which predominates today. This is why South Africa is prepared to support guerrillas against the regime, and why it is being accused today of destabilising Zimbabwe.

If Angola were to be left alone it could very quickly become independent of foreign aid and loans. Oil production in 1979, mainly from the Cabinda area, was 9.6m tons — a record. There are proven deposits of 34 minerals, 14 of which can be classified as 'strategic'. Diamonds could bring in revenue of hundreds of millions of dollars. At the same time the Benguela railway could make Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe independent of South Africa's railway system, along which at present these countries have to export and import most of their goods. Angola is now offering generous terms to prospective investors, including no nationalisation for 10-15 years, transfer abroad of profits up to 25 per cent of invested capital, access to Angolan credit and exemption from taxes. This kind of deal has been successful in attracting French capital, which explains the antipathy of the Mitterand regime towards the invasion.

To try and halt this process South Africa has trained and armed the FNLA and UNITA rebels in Angola who have sabotaged three quarters of the 98 steam locomotives, 24 out of 30 diesels and over 600 wagons. This has slowed down exports of Zairean manganese, for example, from 40 000 to 18 000 tons a month in the last 18 months.

South Africa's ultimate aim is to weaken Angola, create a buffer zone along the Angola-Namibia border filled with UNITA rebels, and then try and string together some kind of set-up in Namibia using the collaborationist forces of the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance. However this remains a distant goal, and if any part of its strategy fails South Africa will continue in the way it knows best, through brute military force. It has no intention of handing over power to a black nationalist regime.

South Africa will no doubt continue to enjoy American support for its murderous policies in Namibia and Angola. However, these policies are born out of desperation. Hopes for a stable solution in Namibia without complete independence are utopian. Hopes for a ring of friendly 'buffer' states have evaporated. Every day the war comes closer to the borders of South Africa itself.



RACIAL OPPRESSION

AFTER BRIXTON, TOXTETH, SOUTHALL, CHAPELTOWN, MOSS SIDE...

They've got the upper hand

RUBBER BULLETS, CS gas, water cannons, riot police? The left replied with its own solutions — democratically controlled, community-based policemen. The left accepted the same premises as the ruling class — the issue was how best to maintain law and order, not how best to defend the black community. The right of the police to enforce racist laws was never questioned — instead the police were criticised for 'provocations' and 'overkill'.

The British tradition

The ruling class agreed. Far from sympathising with military-style police methods the ruling class is keen to maintain the facade of an impartial and popular police force.

The Economist strongly rebuked incompetent chief constables who gave the game away, and has twice called for the resignation of Merseyside chief constable, Kenneth Oxford. In the debate on policing most sections of the ruling class have backed the softly softly approach of Devon and Cornwall chief constable John Alderson. *The Times* noted that community policing corresponds to the general strategy of capitalist domination:

'Community policing is not simply a technique for policemen but a prescription for society. Its efficacy depends on civilising agencies such as families, schools, clubs, and churches conditioning their members and their children to respect the law, keep the peace and behave with consideration.' (11 September 1981)

The *Financial Times* was even more categorical. Not only is community policing an efficient form of social domination it also involves the communities in their own policing:

'The answer... is to turn attention away from the traditional law enforcement and look to crime prevention by other devices that involve the community to some extent in its own policing.' (14 September 1981)

The absence of any serious political pressure allowed the ruling class to seize the initiative. In the aftermath of the repression it could afford to experiment. Lord Scarman was given *carte blanche* to question aspects of traditional police techniques. And community do-gooders and black careerists were given police-community liaison committees on which to let off steam. In Brixton, new community 'leaders' came forward ready to go on the streets to prevent a new explosion. The British Council of Churches came forward with a financial donation for the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee. And the TUC did its bit to provide resources for unemployment centres to keep black youth off the streets.

The cumulative effect of this strategy has been to neutralise potential working class support for black people and to isolate militant youth. It has given the state a breathing space to rationalise its techniques of repression and reorganise the system of racial domination.

Barriers to workers' defence

Throughout England, Workers Against Racism campaigns fought for working class support for this summer's revolt. We achieved some successes in a number of workplaces and union branches. However, one of the main obstacles to extending the campaign was the attitude of the labour bureaucrats and the left. They did

The revolt in the cities of England this summer was met with the full force of state repression. Thousands of police occupied the black ghettos and the courts worked around the clock handing out prison sentences. But state repression is only one side of ruling class strategy. Lord Scarman, the British Council of Churches, the race relations industry and new inner-city projects make up the other.

The official labour movement has contributed to the ruling class success by refusing to point out the racial dimensions of the uprisings. The TUC, the Labour Party and the left have gone to great pains to argue that these were not 'race riots' — the problem was Thatcher's monetarism, unemployment, or urban deprivation. The denial of racial oppression as the main factor behind the revolt has allowed the state to dictate the terms of discussion on the hot summer of 1981.

Heseltine's trip to Liverpool helped to distract attention from the continuity of racial oppression. Labour politicians demanded more money and in the end the TUC welcomed Thatcher's economic package as a step in the right direction.

Even more insidious has been the debate on policing. The left never questioned the racist character of the British police force. Its emphasis on community policing accepted the Government view that the problem is one of law and order. The criminalisation of black youth was never challenged — instead the left asked for more harmony and understanding. The Communist Party leads the way in the left's endorsement of state repression: national organiser Dave Cook recently urged the left to take the demand for law and order seriously. He considers that this has been 'seriously neglected by the left' which identified law and order 'almost exclusively with authoritarian Tory ideology. Yet crime is a common feature of inner-city life' (*Morning Star*, 14 September 1981).

While the debate on policing continues the official labour movement and the left have done next to nothing to defend the victims of the racist system. Below we examine the convergence between the left and the ruling class on policing and the political difficulties facing the existing defence committees.

everything in their power to ignore racial factors behind the revolt. Despite the prevalence of racist attacks the left simply vacated the anti-racist battlefield. By August the left had given up even the pretence of organising in local areas against the state's racist clampdown. Typically, an Anti-Nazi League conference in Leicester in September attracted only fifteen people.

The cynical opportunism of the left has prevented the development of serious working class support for the victims of racial oppression. In effect socialists have left the black community to fight on its own. The lack of working class support has left the field wide open for liberal and reformist institutions to influence the defence committees established in the riot areas to organise assistance for those arrested. The Commission for Racial Equality and the Community Relations Councils have moved in to 'help' defence committees up and down the country.

From Liverpool to Hackney to Brixton various state institutions have provided cash and 'volunteers' to defence committees. Not surprisingly they have influenced the activities of the campaigns in a legalistic and moderate direction. They have been most successful in Liverpool where they have managed to direct the anger of Toxteth against one man, the Merseyside chief constable. One spokesman for the defence committee, Michael Showers recently tried to reassure the do-gooders: 'The people in Liverpool 8 are not anti-police. You cannot have a civilised society without a police force' (*The Guardian*, 14 September 1981).

The liberal forces of the state have prevailed on sections of the black community to seek solutions in police-community

liaison committees. In Chapeltown a liaison committee has been established with a direct link to the city council. In Brixton Scarman has called for voluntary liaison officers from the community with right of access to police stations. Of course the black community is suspicious of these initiatives. But nevertheless these tactics have been effective in influencing the activities of the defence campaigns.

Community or class?

Many activists have not fallen for the respectable legalism of the liaison committees. But the indifference of the official labour movement to their struggle has forced some people to go ahead alone. Many black activists have drawn the conclusion that they can only rely on their own community and that organising black people is the most effective way of fighting racism.

Black organisations are often necessary to withstand the pressures of racist society. And certainly those under attack cannot wait until the left and the labour movement wake up and realise their class responsibility. But the issue today is not whether to have white, black or multi-racial organisations. The issue at stake is what kind of political outlook guides the anti-racist struggle. Unfortunately many defence committees have concluded from the paralysis of the labour movement that the anti-racist struggle should be conducted on a *community* and not on a *working class* basis.

In reality the concept of the community is an illusion. Although all black people face racial oppression, the community is made up of classes with contradictory interests. The illusory character

of community politics is clearly revealed in the focus of a number of defence campaigns on getting assistance from Asian and West Indian embassies and high commissioners.

This reliance on bourgeois diplomats only gives them credibility — it does nothing to advance the struggle against racism in Britain. It positively hinders the emergence of a proletarian movement in the black ghettos.

Who will defend the Bradford 12?

The orientation of defence committees throughout the country towards the ethnic minority community has seriously limited their effectiveness. But the attack on Asian youth in Bradford and Southall, the sustained assault on young people of West Indian origin in Brixton and Hackney — these represent severe blows against the working class. But instead of fighting to get the maximum amount of support, the defence committees have tended to narrow their focus to the black community. Some have even resisted attempts to broaden the campaigns to include all working class people. Why not use the anger of black people to force the labour movement to take a stand? Dissipating the energy of the black community while the working class sits on the sidelines can only preserve the existing situation.

There is no fundamental conflict between community politics and collaboration with state agencies — in fact they are complementary strategies. The race relations industry likes to deal with the 'community' and its representatives. In this way it can ignore the areas where racism thrives and concentrate on building bridges between the 'community' and the state. The representatives of separate community politics ignore the working class and of necessity are forced to conduct discussions and negotiations with the race relations agents. Even the staunchest advocate of black separatism must relate to the rest of British society — and inevitably it will be the liberal agents of the state who will be at the other end of the discussion. The liberal Lord Scarman preferred to conduct his 'man to man' talks with Rastafarians because these discussions did not threaten his class position.

The political development of the defence committees in a reformist direction is entirely the responsibility of the official labour movement and the British left. They have done nothing to forge a proletarian anti-racist movement. They have absolved themselves of their responsibility to fight racism and have cynically declared support for the right of black people to defend themselves. They have been accomplices in the isolation of the black ghettos and by their actions have strengthened reformist influences in the defence committees.

Workers Against Racism is dedicated to fighting racism from a proletarian point of view. We are not prepared to allow the ruling class to retain the initiative. We are fighting racism where it really matters — in the working class. We are convinced that organised defence work can fight state racism and bring workers to an awareness of their class interest in fighting racism. The time for talking is past — the struggle against racism in the labour movement cannot be postponed.

RACIAL OPPRESSION

Bradford, Liverpool

Building labour movement support

A 100-STRONG PICKET of the Director of Public Prosecutions offices in Queen Anne's Gate on 14 September showed that there's plenty of scope for building a strong solidarity campaign behind the 12 Bradford blacks charged with conspiracy to use petrol bombs. ELWAR and SOLWAR members have been participating in the London Support Committee set up to defend the Bradford 12, and organising in their unions and

workplaces to get all charges dropped.

Two recent WAR meetings in London (15 & 16 September) — in Brixton and Stoke Newington — were addressed by speakers from Bradford and also from the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee. The mood at both meetings was angry and positive — but also very critical of the way the Labour Party, the TUC and the community relations agencies have managed to contain the anger of black

youth and block attempts to build support for them. ELIZABETH LEE from Hackney, whose grandson Lloyd has been framed countless times by the police, summed it up when she said 'if you want to build defence committees keep away from the CRC'. Another speaker quoted a letter from a Haringey CRC chief to *The Times* which referred to the Finsbury Park rioters as 'hooligans'. JOE FARRAG from the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee told the audience how surprised he'd been to see black people working on the buses and the underground — in Liverpool you don't see them. In fact, racial discrimination in Liverpool is even worse than in London: six black workers in the Post Office; 33 in the entire city council workforce! And this is in an area where most blacks are fourth or fifth generation.

WAR supporters in the unions have been fighting attempts to criminalise the black youth of Liverpool and Bradford. Resolutions have been successfully raised

on Hackney and Lambeth Trades Councils, and in a number of union branches, which call for the dropping of all charges and pledge the trade union movement to provide financial and physical support to the defence campaigns. In particular, we've been building support for the *Bradford Day of Action* in late October (date to be confirmed) when industrial action will be taken in solidarity with the Bradford 12.

In areas where no support committees exist, such as Coventry, WAR members are setting them up. And throughout Britain meetings around the Bradford 12 and Liverpool have been organised in the colleges to coincide with the start of term.

Consistent activity of this kind is the only way to prevent the Bradford 12 getting sent down for years, and stop the state getting the upper hand in Liverpool and elsewhere. Join a WAR group in your area and start organising now!

Defending workers defence

WE WEREN'T too surprised to receive a letter from the Workers Socialist League (the group which used to produce *Socialist Press* but now backs *Socialist Organiser*) denouncing the RCP's anti-racist work in Coventry: 'substitutionist', 'abstentionist', 'provocative' and 'stunt politics'. The same organisation abstained from supporting initiatives in support of the anti-imperialist struggle in Ireland — at Tameside, Coventry and the Workers' March for Irish Freedom — on the grounds that they were provocative.

Who, whom?

Nor were we surprised to hear the WSL's advocacy of its latest anti-racist slogan — 'for workers' self-defence'. This slogan emerged at a large meeting held in Coventry the day after a racist murder earlier

this year. Hundreds of angry black youths put forward calls to organise self-defence within the black community. Reformists and radical leftists (including supporters of *Socialist Organiser*) felt it was sufficient to encourage blacks to defend themselves. Supporters of the newly formed Coventry Workers Against Racism put forward a different perspective: that the defence of black people should be organised in the labour movement. Instinctively recognising that this was the only possible working class approach, but fearing to move away from the reformists into alignment with the RCP, a WSL member came up with a compromise: 'workers' self-defence'.

But who is supposed to be defending whom? We could see the WSL was getting confused as a result of its opportunism. But we were surprised to discover just

how confused:

'Unions must take up the fight to ensure that the many black women who work at night, the many black public transport workers, etc receive adequate protection and that the bosses are made to make provision for workers' self-defence.' (*Socialist Press*, 28 May)

'Workers' defence' against racist attacks means *workers* defending blacks against racists. 'Workers' self-defence' now apparently means *bosses* defending blacks — a far cry even from the patronising 'blacks defend yourselves' position from which the WSL started. Perhaps the bosses should also be asked to make provision for the 'self-defence' of workers against the bosses' agents on picket lines?

Fighting racism

Although some *Socialist Organiser* supporters joined COVWAR activists in organising practical defence of an Asian family under attack, the WSL's main focus of activity was the broad committee set up after the racist murder. This committee of Labour councillors and representatives of the ethnic minority

communities collapsed after organising a few protests. Ever since, the WSL's anti-racist work in Coventry has consisted of discussions in Labour Party ward meetings. This is what the WSL calls working 'inside' the labour movement.

Meanwhile COVWAR has been carrying on building workers' defence on the streets and in the local trade unions — notably in response to the wave of arrests during the summer riots. The WSL has joined the bourgeois press in denouncing the independent activities of COVWAR and the RCP. From an organisation that wants to draft black and white youth into the Labour Party to fight for 'workers'/bosses' self-defence' that's not surprising either.



'Squadism'—no fun, no future

YOU'D NEVER GUESS it from reading *Socialist Worker* but every Sunday, down at Chapel Market in Islington, a handful of Anti-Nazi League supporters are slugging it out with up to 50 fascists from the National Front and New National Front. Some of the confrontations have been very serious indeed. The fascists use iron bars, knives, bricks, chains. The police are noticeably absent every time they attack. Why is *Socialist Worker* deliberately concealing these facts? And why did an Islington SWP circular recently inform local members that Chapel Market had been 'de-prioritised'?

The SWP's reasoning is tortuous, but has a logic to it nevertheless. Defending Chapel Market (like Brick Lane) was once a priority. The old ANL slogan was 'They Shall Not Pass'. The trouble is some ANL members took this a bit too literally. They formed themselves into squads for the express purpose of making sure the fascists didn't pass. Meanwhile, the ANL sank deeper and deeper into pacifism and respectability, disclaiming the use of violence as 'individual terrorism'. The squads became an intolerable embarrassment. They had to be got rid of. In recent months there's been a whole spate of expulsions from the SWP (particularly

since the Leeds ANL carnival). Anyone associated with 'the squad' is no longer welcome in the SWP. According to the leadership they're all thugs and lumpen psychopaths anyway.

Which brings us back to Chapel Market. The anti-fascists who go down there every Sunday call themselves the ANL. But in reality they're mostly ex-SWP 'squadists' who the SWP/ANL want nothing to do with. So why do they persist in describing themselves as the ANL?

Remember Lewisham?

The fact is that most members of 'the squad' still support the ANL. Not, of course, the ANL as it is today (when you can find it) — but the 'old ANL', with its short-lived reputation for violent confrontations with the fascists and the police. Memories of Lewisham, Leicester, Digbeth Hall are what keep the old ANL veterans together. But these of course were the exceptions, not the rule. For most people the ANL meant 'rocking against racism', pogo-ing at carnivals and letting off balloons. That's why it won universal support from the Labour Party, the TUC and a host of celebrities, vicars,

etc. All good clean harmless stuff.

'Squadists' reject all that. They want to rebuild the ANL along militant, anti-fascist lines. But they haven't got a hope of doing so. For all its rhetoric, the ANL never supported violent confrontations with the fascists. True, there was a time when 'the squad' had its uses for the ANL. It was good for doing the dirty work, stewarding meetings, etc. As long as it remained clandestine it was OK. But the ANL could never *publically* support such methods. On the contrary, it always bent over backwards to condemn them as 'substitutionist', insisting the ANL was a mass movement dedicated to isolating 'the Nazis' by the sheer weight of public opinion. The fact that it's failed abysmally to do so has led to some re-thinking — the 'new' ANL is even more right-wing than the old one. It is even more inclined to look to the state for protection from the fascists and even less inclined to support the use of class violence against fascist and racist thugs.

Winding up the ANL

It's been easy for the SWP to get rid of the 'squadists', and suppress internal discussion on the whole issue because

'squadism' offers no alternative to the ANL. 'Squad' members may despise the extremely wet Pete Alexander (SWP's ANL organiser) and pour scorn on the ANL's cowardice — but at bottom not much divides the two sides. Gut hatred of the fascists, and a willingness to confront them on the streets doesn't add up to a strategy to defeat racism and fascism.

The SWP's desertion of Chapel Market is only the latest example of its opportunism. It turned its back on Brick Lane in 1979 — a sell-out which had a disastrous impact on the local Asian community. The ANL was officially 'put on ice' at the same time in favour of new anti-Tory campaigns like nuclear disarmament. For the SWP racism, Ireland — and all the really important political questions — are peripheral issues to be picked up and dropped at will. Now it's ditched what was left of the old ANL 'hard-core'. Those comrades can only go one of two ways: either back to the SWP in the futile hope of rebuilding an ANL that never existed — or towards building *workers'* defence against racism and fascism. Over to you.

Roger C
(ex-ANL 'squad' member, Manchester)

Luton DEFENCE

On 11 July 'a young skinhead wielding a billiard cue led a fifty-strong mob shouting racist slogans through Luton town centre... the 17 year old skinhead then swung the cue with both hands to smash three windows at Don Miller's bread shop in George Street, at the start of Friday night's hooliganism' (Evening Post-Echo, 13 July 1981).

The Luton events followed a now-familiar pattern: black youths took to the streets to defend themselves against racists and the police and more than a 100 were arrested. The Luton Community Defence Committee was set up to defend the youths arrested. Because it has emphasised that racism is the key issue in 'the disturbances' it has come in for a lot of criticism from the local Labour Party, trade union and race relations officials and Communist Party members who dismiss the LCDC as 'racist'. The chairman of the LCDC spoke to Fran Eden.

'RACIST VIOLENCE has been growing steadily in the Luton area — particularly over the last two years. There have been attacks on black people in their homes, on the streets, at their places of worship. The attack on the Mosque by Chelsea football fans last Boxing Day was the worst so far: four Moslems were injured and thousands of pounds worth of damage done to the building. White youths have been seen causing repeated damage to the Hindu temple in Lewsey

Farm.' Things got so bad even the police noticed: Bedfordshire chief constable William Sutherland in March spoke of the need 'to protect Luton's ethnic groups against racial attacks by gangs of thugs' (Luton News/Gazette, 26 March 1981). Of course, nothing was done.

Racism at work

In Luton and the immediate surrounding area there are around 19 000 black families, approximately 10 per cent of

the whole population. Up to two years ago jobs were reasonably easy to obtain. Vauxhall Motors, the town's main employer was still taking people on in 1979. Out of 22 000 employees then, 7000 were black. But as the recession grips the workforce is being pared down — and black employees have been hit hardest. Some 6000 workers have left the firm since last January under the company's early retirement and voluntary separation programmes. Short time working has been in operation more than a year and now another 2000 jobs are to go soon. Union officials are reported to be encouraging the black workforce to take redundancy, and racist practices at Vauxhall are currently subject to investigation by the CRC.

The Defence Committee says 'Vauxhall is not the only firm in Luton carrying out racist practices and employment policies. Earlier this year the Home Office officials who made a flying visit to Luton as part of their inquiry into racial attacks and harassment were presented with a list of local firms where black workers face threats and harassment by management, foremen and their fellow workers'.

Racist violence

The LCDC thinks that racial oppression — plus the growing activity of organised racists and fascists in groups such as

the National Front, the White Defence Force and the November 9th organisation — formed the real backdrop to the weekend of the mass arrests. In May this year fascists attacked a Luton Youth Movement march against racism in the town centre and then went on to terrorise an Asian family later the same afternoon. 'The Setna family were surrounded by about 30 skinheads chanting racist and Nazi slogans.' (Luton News, 21 May 1981) Since July an Asian man has been deliberately run over and another black stabbed in Luton's shopping precinct.

The LCDC sees its function as broader than merely organising around the defence of those arrested. It contains representatives from the Luton Youth Movement, a group of primarily black youth who organised physical defence against racist attacks earlier this year. The LCDC has decided to orientate towards fighting and exposing racism in its wider sense — including its manifestations in the labour movement.

The LCDC is under heavy pressure. Since July seven new community relations officers have been appointed in the Luton area. Whether their attempts to contain the local fightback against racism succeed will depend largely on whether the labour movement in the area begins to take a firm stand against racism.

Racism with a socialist face

MITTERAND'S 'NEW DEAL'

The new Mitterand regime has promised to reform France's racist immigration laws. New minister for immigration Francois Autain has managed to present his amnesty for illegal immigrants as a major step forward for ethnic minorities. In reality Autain's new legislation is a refinement of the vicious repression that immigrant workers have faced during the past decade. In the meantime racist attacks continue. In the suburbs of Lyons racist vigilantes armed with guns harass the immigrant community. Autain will no doubt launch an inquiry.

MORE THAN HALF of the 7.5 million immigrant workers in the EEC live in France. Of these, an estimated 300 000 to 400 000 work illegally without residence or work permits, subject to intense exploitation by their employers and vicious harassment by police, fascists and other racists. The Giscard government created this super-exploited layer of the labour market in 1974 when it banned all further issue of residence and work permits to foreign workers. But it was unable to control these new illegal workers as it wished. Hence Autain's new tack.

Amnesty for some

Autain's circular of 11 August laid down the conditions for illegal immigrants to obtain valid documents:

- Proof of continuous residence in France since 1 January 1981.
- Proof of 'stable employment'.
- A certificate of medical fitness.

Immigrant workers have until 31 December to come forward individually to apply for their permits. After that date Autain has promised that the fight against illegal employment will be intensified. In other words, immigrants will be hounded out of their jobs and their places taken by true Frenchmen. Nothing has been said by the

government about the fate of those who come forward but fail to satisfy the conditions — except that they will receive a temporary permit valid for one month. Those who succeed will qualify for a permit valid for one year, or three years and three months in the case of Algerian workers.

With unemployment running at 1.8 million there will be few immigrants who will be able to provide proof of 'stable employment'. Autain is, of course, aware of this. He explained to *Le Matin* that when he speaks of 'regularising the situation of illegal immigrant workers' he does not mean 'regularising the unemployment of immigrants':

'There is no question, given the employment situation in France, either of renewed immigration or of allowing illegal immigration to grow.' (24 July)

In fact, Autain's rhetoric masks an intensification of the authorities' campaign against immigrants. Since the announcement of the new circular, Pakistani and Turkish workers in West Germany have been attempting to cross the French border through the forests covering the Bas-Rhin and Moselle region, hoping to improve their position. It is thought that at least 500 attempts have

been made, with a success rate running at 30 per cent. Not many are likely to succeed in future as thousands of French CRS riot police now patrol the area. Those that have succeeded will not have found the grass any greener on the other side. There is no way they will be able to 'regularise their situation'.

Divide and rule

Autain's circular refines the divisions the French bourgeoisie seeks to impose on the working class. To the existing divisions between French and immigrant workers and between legal and illegal immigrants the Mitterand government has created two new divisions: between those illegals who entered before 1 January 1981 and those who entered since, and between those with stable employment and those without.

The socialist government intends to ensure that immigrant workers receive no support from the governments of their home countries. France already has agreements in force with Portugal, Algeria and Turkey, and Autain is working to extend these to other countries from which immigrant workers come. Immigrant workers will in the future be even more at the mercy of the police.

The Mitterand government is making



no pretence of giving immigrant workers political rights. Immigrants are not allowed to vote in French elections and this will not change. In any case, as Autain explained in an interview in *Le Monde*, political rights are scarcely worth having in modern France:

'the exercise of political rights, however extensive, is not enough to guarantee the integration of immigrants into our society... That is why we are making every effort to solve this difficult problem by preparing specific measures, notably in the field of housing and education.' (29 August)

In fact, as Autain admitted elsewhere in the interview, his concern with regulating immigrant housing has more to do with preventing rent strikes and other forms of political action by immigrants which have challenged previous governments.

Outside the unions

The labour bureaucracy has welcomed the new enlightened immigration policies. The Socialist-allied CFDT and the Communist Party-dominated CGT see the new measures as useful for stabilising the labour market. The Stalinist-led CGT union federation declared that the legislation has a 'democratic character' and went on to propose an increase in the number of factory inspectors to 'regularise the situation of illegal workers'. In other words the CGT wants the French state to hunt down illegal workers to guarantee harmonious industrial relations.

Other socialists too have applauded the new laws. The radical paper *Liberation* noted:

'It remains for the socialists to try to make exile livable for four million foreigners. Otherwise Mitterand's France could experience ghetto riots like those of Brixton, which have so far been avoided.' (24 July)

Autain has the blessing of his predecessor in the Giscard government. Interviewed in *Le Monde*, Lionel Stoleru had a few gripes — mostly about Autain's attempts to present his policies as a radical departure: 'the policy laid down by M Autain seems to me good since it goes in the direction of a good integration of the foreigners' (1 September). Good for the bosses, that is.

Gareth Evans

Spitalfields squalor

Spitalfields housing and planning rights service and Catholic housing aid society, *The Spitalfields survey: housing and social conditions in 1980*, pp63, £2.00.

IT'S NOT SURPRISING to see 'Tower Hamlets council is a racist council' daubed on the walls of Varden Street, Tower Hamlets. Since 1975, Varden Street and nearby Nelson Street have been home for 300 Bengali squatters. For six years they've been battling with the local Labour council to become licencees and get their damp and dangerous homes renovated. All they've received is continual harassment. In the middle of winter 1977 electricity was cut off and the tenants charged £1200 to have the power reconnected.

There have been repeated moves to evict them. As the condition of the homes rapidly deteriorates, the squatters' organisation – the Bengali Housing Action Group – awaits long-promised talks with the local authority. All it gets is an occasional visit from one of the local councillors, or a letter promising all but delivering nothing.

The Spitalfields survey exposes why so many Bengali families live under squalid housing conditions. Spitalfields contains the largest Bengali community in Britain. It encompasses the Brick Lane area, scene of many violent racist attacks. This survey reveals the following facts about housing in this area:

- Overcrowding in Spitalfields is running at 58 times the national average.
 - One third of all dwellings lack exclusive use of hot water, a bath or shower and an inside toilet.
 - Bengalis make up half the population of Spitalfields but only a quarter of council tenants.
 - Most of the Bengalis who are council tenants are living on pre-war estates.
- For years the Labour-controlled Tower Hamlets council has kept things this way by its explicitly racist housing policy.

In 1974 the Greater London Council declared Spitalfields to be one of the most deprived wards in London. The Labour government's policy for 'reviving the inner cities' in 1976 seemed to be a promise of better things to come: 1274 new dwellings were promised for Spitalfields by 1981. As yet, only 183 have been completed – and Tower Hamlets council was responsible for none of these.

Although the general housing shortage affects all workers, it is the Asian community which suffers most of all. A husband applying for council accommodation is presented with a familiar Catch-22 situation. The council will not consider housing him until his wife and children arrive in Britain. The Home Office will not permit his wife and children to enter the country until they have suitable accommodation. Moreover, as an absence from Tower Hamlets for longer than three months will disqualify the applicant from the waiting list altogether, if a man returns to Bangladesh to fetch his family (and inevitably has to wait longer than three months to get entry clearance), the whole family will find themselves declared 'intentionally homeless'.

On top of this GLC officials argue that conditions for Asians can only be improved if they move away from East London and stop 'creating ghettos'. The point they miss is that it is the council's housing policy itself which is creating ghettos by deliberately excluding Bengalis from modern housing estates. Although many Bengali families topped the priority list for rehousing none were allocated to the newly-built Granby Estate in Spitalfields. It is not surprising that today no Asian family can move to a 'white estate' in safety. Violent racism is endorsed and institutionalised by the council. Whilst Tower Hamlets councillors express their disgust at the activities of fascist groups and decorate the borough with murals depicting racial harmony, they foster the very attitude they attempt to condemn.

Tower Hamlets' record of fighting racism in housing is so bad that only individuals like council leader Paul Beasley and Annie Elboz, who says that talk of racial discrimination in the borough is 'absolute rubbish', will attempt to defend it. However, the emphasis of those attacking the council is centred on 'transforming' the council for the 1982 elections. The problem is seen to be the lack of Bengali councillors and the difficulty that Bengalis have in joining the Labour Party. At present Bengalis are being urged to stand as Labour candidates

reviews



and there's heated discussion about how to ensure that left-wing 'anti-racist' candidates get selected.

We don't call on the Labour Party to reshuffle the limited facilities they have available. When we come down to it the fundamental problem is that there just are not the houses or jobs available in Tower Hamlets. All workers are suffering because the Labour Party can't defend the living standards of the working class. Our role is not to rejuvenate the Labour Party so that it can continue to sell out workers at every turn, but to expose its sordid record. The Varden Street squatters are right to declare the nature of their council in letters three feet high and we must support them, not only in their struggle against the Labour right, but also against the Labour left.

Anne Burton

African aspirations

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Detained: writer's prison diary*, Heinemann, pp 232, pbk £2.25.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Writers in politics*, Heinemann, pp142, pbk £2.95.

NGUGI WA THIONG'O has established an international reputation as a writer. His novels have earned him praise and his *Petals of blood* is one of the finest anti-imperialist stories ever written. Because Ngugi has given such sensitive literary expression to the aspirations of African workers and peasants he has incurred the wrath of the Kenyan ruling class. Ngugi was more or less left in peace so long as he restricted his literary activities to the academic and petit-bourgeois milieu. But in 1977 Ngugi co-authored a play with Ngugi wa Mirri, called *Ngaahika Ndeeda* (I will marry when I choose); and this wasn't designed for the Nairobi middle class. *Ngaahika Ndeeda* was an anti-imperialist play involving ordinary people as actors and was designed to be performed in the villages. Hundreds of people flocked to see it and identified their own experience with *Ngaahika Ndeeda*. The Kenyan government reacted promptly. In January 1978 Ngugi was arrested and detained for 12 months.

Mau Mau and the loyalists

Kenya ceased formally to be a British colony in December 1963. However the African ruling class that has run the state ever since owes its existence to British imperialism. Kenya became independent because it could no longer be run as a colony. The Mau Mau revolt showed the depth of hatred among the African masses for the colonial regime. Britain's response was straightforward: crush the liberation struggle,

isolate the militants and create a group of African collaborators who could be relied on to run an independent Kenya.

Today, virtually the entire government is composed of individuals whose families remained loyal to British imperialism during the liberation struggle. Ex-freedom fighters such as Bildad Kaggia have been publicly humiliated; others, like Achieng Oneko, have been detained. The government is forced to pay lip-service to the heroism of the Mau Mau while in practice it denies jobs to ex-freedom fighters and crushes any manifestation of anti-imperialist sentiment.

Kenya is a backward capitalist economy with a weak bourgeoisie. The ruling class can only guarantee its survival through systematic repression. Even moderate critics of the government have been murdered or detained, trade unions banned and the university closed down. The loyal pro-imperialist government has betrayed one by one every objective of the liberation struggle.

Ngugi's tradition

Ngugi's writings are firmly on the side of the liberation movement. His excellent trilogy *Weep not child, The river between and A grain of wheat* deal with the experience of the Kikuyu people under colonialism and their response. In *Petals of blood* Ngugi deals with the continuity of oppression in post-colonial

Kenya, presenting a thorough portrayal of class relations in an imperialist-dominated semi-colony.

Ngugi identifies with the world revolutionary forces and aligns himself with the working class and peasantry. His writings are a testimony of his allegiance. His prison diary *Detained* shows a clarity of purpose and personal strength. However, where his political statements become explicit as in *Writers in politics* his literary vision is clouded over by political confusion.

Despite his subjective aims Ngugi remains a radical nationalist. His criticism of the Kenyan government is not that it is capitalist but that it is not patriotic enough. Thus one of the chapters in *Writers in politics* is a tribute to J M Kariuki. Kariuki was a populist member of the Kenyatta regime whose radical rhetoric got him into trouble with the ruling class. Like Edgar Tekere in Zimbabwe, Kariuki insisted on reminding the government of its promises to improve the quality of life of the African people. Kariuki was however no revolutionary. He was a successful businessman who wanted more opportunities for indigenous capitalists. Nor was he above attacking Asians to appeal to popular prejudice. All in all Kariuki was an opportunist demagogue who used nationalist sloganising to establish a place for himself in Kenyan political life. But Kenyatta's regime could not tolerate Kariuki's criticism: in 1975 he was assassinated.

Ngugi's identification with Kariuki stems from his own ingrained populism. As a result *Writers in politics* is a statement of cultural nationalism, not of anti-imperialism. It is true that imperialist ideology permeates the culture, media and education system of Kenya. But denouncing the use of British textbooks in Kenyan schools and the domination of Western theatre and films misses the real problem. Imperialist ideology cannot be fought with a counter-culture, only with anti-imperialist politics. When workers become more conscious and the peasantry is drawn into the struggle against the ruling class then the influence of imperialist ideology will collapse.

Ngugi attempts to solve this problem by going back to indigenous culture and values. But two can play this game. In the 'seventies the ruling class used the ritual oaths developed by the Mau Mau to consolidate its position among the Kikuyu people. Traditional culture and values can be used by the government as much as Ngugi. Ngugi is too preoccupied with finding his roots: he repeats time and again his desire to learn from the people. But this modesty risks turning into an avenue of escape. By all means let him assimilate the experience of workers and peasants. But what the people of Kenya need is not to absorb Ngugi into their ranks. They need clarity, inspiration, audacity – leadership. Ngugi should go back to what he does best – writing stories that almost tangibly capture the fears, hopes and vision of the people of Kenya.

Mary Karanga



1954: Mau Mau slaughtered by the British

Middlesex Poly victimisations

I am writing to let your readers know that seven students including union officers, at Middlesex Poly have been suspended for a year and face a whole series of disciplinary charges and crippling legal costs. The National Union of Students bureaucracy has turned its back on us and most students in other London colleges don't even know the victimisations have taken place.

The suspensions arose out of a campaign for nursery facilities at the All Saints site of Middlesex Poly, in Tottenham. The entire administration block was occupied early this year, in spite of strenuous efforts by various union bureaucrats to prevent us from doing so. The occupation received solid support at a series of mass meetings and it looked like we'd got a good chance of winning. Then two things happened. Firstly, a hysterical campaign was launched against us after one of the union meetings voted to donate £1000 to the Irish Republican Socialist Party's London support group to cover fines imposed for spray-painting slogans. A nursery campaign was just about tolerable, but this was too much for the NUS leadership to stomach! Then the Poly closed for the Easter holidays, leaving about 40 students in occupation. That's when the authorities really put the boot in.

Seventeen students were summoned to a disciplinary hearing, which we boycotted. The matter went to the courts which predictably ruled in favour of the college authorities. Then on 14 April the Director (one DMW Rickett) and two security staff personally broke into the occupation. Scuffles ensued and the Director called in the police. At this stage they couldn't force us out as they hadn't a possession order. But meanwhile the Director took out GBH charges against the students involved (these were eventually dropped) and obtained a possession order. Six weeks later we were all thrown out.

The upshot is that seven students have been suspended, the occupation has been defeated – and the NUS have washed their hands of the whole affair. It's clear to everyone concerned that the NUS wants to forget the whole embarrassing episode, particularly because the 'ring-leaders' are identified with supporting the republican movement.

James Hughes
East London

The Middlesex 7 urgently need your support. Supporters of *the next step* in colleges should raise motions demanding all charges are dropped and the seven are reinstated – and that the

LETTERS



NUS takes on the full cost of their legal defence against the college authorities. Invite them down to speak at your next UGM!

STOP PRESS...

The Irish Society has been banned by the Poly authorities. Despite this a meeting on the hunger strike went ahead. Watch this space...

Terror in Iran ~ and in Britain

Fifty-four progressive Iranian students, supporters of People's Mujaheddin Organisation of Iran, were arrested on Monday 7 September following their peaceful occupation of the Iranian Consulate. The action was in protest against the repression inside Iran and also the activities of the regime of Khomeini in Britain.

Since 20 June at least 2000 revolutionaries have been executed in Iran, the majority of them PMOI supporters. On Sunday 20 September 83 PMOI supporters were executed in Tehran alone, 150 were recently secretly executed in Evin prison. The religious judge of Tehran, Mohammadi Guilani has announced that political prisoners caught injured in the street should be beheaded or otherwise finished off. He said that trials were no longer necessary before execution, hands and feet of political prisoners should be cut off in the prisons.

Khomeini has asked all parents to hand in their revolutionary children for execution. On school opening day 70 000 school children were dismissed because of their past political activity. Last week the paper of *Ettela'at* reported that 180 Kurdish guerrillas were killed in Kurdistan. All these measures indicate that Khomeini in his last days has to resort to daily massacres to stay in power. However, the Iranian people's struggle has also entered a new phase with daily demonstrations; and now industrial strikes are on the increase, after the call to strike by Massoud Rajavi, who is in charge of the National Council for Resistance.

In Britain, revolutionary opposition to Khomeini has been under great pressure. Meetings and pickets in London, Leeds and Manchester have been attacked by thugs hired by the Iranian Consulate. Students' money and passports have been withheld and others have been beaten in the Consulate. Following the visit to London by Hadi Ghaffari, one of the leaders of the Hezbollah thugs in Iran, an 'Organisation of the Fighters on the Path of Islam' has been set up to monitor opposition activities in Britain. The progressive students who had seized the Consulate found extensive files on opposition activities.

After the occupation, in collusion with the Iranian Embassy, the police and therefore the press tried to portray the action as criminal and terrorist. Later the media blanketed the whole issue. The police recommended that the students should be refused bail, claiming that they might do it all over again (which means they must either be kept in jail forever, or be deported) and that they had no community ties in Britain (which implies no foreigners should be

granted bail). Later, some students were granted bail but they had to lay sureties of £1500 in cash each – an unusually high sum. This shows the extent to which the imperialists appreciate Khomeini's executions. The court cases will be coming up in October.

F Mahmoud
Moslem Students Society
BM Box 270
London WC1N 3XX

Ghost train

The People's March for Jobs will be continued under the guidance of the inventive logic of the trade union bureaucracy and reconstructed into an ongoing campaign in the pursuit of TUC policy. Under the approved slogan 'Give us a future' the people's campaign for jobs is to focus on youth unemployment. All aboard for the jobs express! Four hundred jobless youths will tour the unemployment crisis spots, presumably to rediscover what they already know. Judging from the number of full-time trade union officials involved in the project it appears to be more like jobs for the boys.

In an effort to be more effective at policing the unemployed bureaucratic centralism is to be given a local character. The organisers urge us to establish Town Committees based on the TUC movement but open to any group willing to work for a successful campaign and observe the policy and discipline of the TUC. Just about everyone is invited to take part in this campaign from the women's groups to the churches and as a last resort they even appeal to the unemployed. The initiative for all this activity comes from the Communist Party of Great Britain – the same organisation that offers us the alternative economic strategy, selective import controls, limited immigration laws and the prospect of community policing. In an attempt to assure everyone that they will not use their positions in the regional TUCs to further their own political ends, the CP trade union bureaucrats have insisted that the uniform of the march remains deepest green in colour. Perhaps they believe the unemployed are equally green and will enthusiastically lend their support to this 'malignant wart on the side of the labour movement'. I understand that a film has been made of the People's March for Jobs. If the regional TUC and their Stalinist allies get to read this letter I am sure my face will be edited from their Hammer House of Horrors.

David Isiorho
(a disillusioned marcher)
Nuneaton

stepping out

Ulster Chronicle

We commented in *the next step* last month on the way the radical left in Britain likes to use Irish clergymen to put across its own feeble criticisms of the British Government in its pamphlets, leaflets, etc.

Well now the Government has tumbled to this trick. A new Central Office of Information propaganda film, provisionally entitled *Ulster Chronicle* and aimed mainly at an American audience uses 'moderate' spokesmen to denounce the republican movement. Such condemnations, observes the official notes on the film recently leaked to *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, are 'far more cogently made by say a Catholic bishop than by any Government spokesman'.



O'Faich mobilising for the hunger strikers – or is he condemning the IRA?

For God's sake!

In a recent sermon Tony Benn described himself 'as a socialist who owes more to the teachings of Jesus... than to the writings of Marx whose analysis seems to lack an understanding of the deeper needs of humanity' ('The moral basis of democratic socialism', in *Arguments for democracy*, Cape, 1981).

A 'Women's Fightback' conference of feminist Bennites recently held in the premises of the diocese of York, tried to cater for these 'deeper needs'. According to Glenda Bennett, a 'sister from Leicester' urged delegates 'not to mystify with the use of jargon such as "dialectical materialism"'. While Marxism was out, Glenda reports that 'we were embraced by Mother Church in the figure of the patriarchal rector'. However the rector was sensitive to his radical congregation: while they 'bowed submissively to grace at mealtimes' his benevolence extended to making jokes 'to ease the embarrassment' (*Socialist Organiser*, 10 September).

Ever since CP historian James Klugman encountered left-wing priest Paul Osterreicher back in the 'sixties no broad democratic alliance has been complete without a radical cleric. Thus Benn's Christian witness was welcome on the *Morning Star* whose reviewer (Bert Pearce) anticipated that it 'must revive much of the valuable fruits of the earlier Christian-Marxist dialogues and cannot fail to stimulate Marxists (and others) to examine afresh their own theory and practice' (10 September).

Labour weakly

Get an interview with Tony Benn (better still an article by him), a piece from a 'socialist rate rises' Labour council leader (Sheffield's David Blunkett for preference), an account from a trade union chief about how they're fighting the Tories (say Alan Fisher or Alan Sapper), a view on the problems of the inner cities from a sociologist or a community relations expert – and you're all set to produce a new Labour Party periodical.

There has been a lot of this recently. First Michael Foot launched the *New Socialist*: its editor couldn't think of anything to say so thanked the Labour Party staff for making this 'independent' magazine possible. Then Ken Livingstone launched *Labour Herald* alongside his co-editors ex-International Socialist Matthew Warburton and ex-Socialist Labour Leaguer Ted Knight.

All this is bad news for the CP's *Marxism Today* which has just about managed to sell more copies in Britain than in Eastern Europe over the past couple of years by including features by Benn, Blunkett, Fisher and all the intellectuals of the labour movement who are now flocking to the greener pastures of the *New Socialist*. Just when *Marxism Today* gets its big break with W H Smith! Editor Martin Jacques was really choked but he managed to bite his lip and tell the *Morning Star* that 'it is particularly encouraging to see the style of *Marxism Today* now being used as a model for various new left publications' (2 September).

RCP ACTIVITIES

WORKERS AGAINST RACISM



WAR is a national campaign. To join it costs £1 (50p unemployed). For that we send you up to date information on our campaign and keep you informed of all our activities. Contact any local WAR group.

EAST LONDON WORKERS AGAINST RACISM

Public meeting
Tuesday 20 October 7.30pm

FIGHTING RACISM IN THE UNIONS

Oxford House
Derbyshire Street, London E2
(Bethnal Green tube)

Speakers:

Jim Thakoorin (secretary Luton Trades Council, chairman Luton Defence Committee)
Judy Harrison (ELWAR)
plus speakers from the Bangladeshi Welfare Association and local trade unionists invited.

MANCHESTER WORKERS AGAINST RACISM

Day of Action!

Saturday 24 October

- Come to the meeting in Moss Side Precinct 10.30-12.30am
- Jumble sale at Moss Side People's Centre, St Mary's Street, Moss Side 2pm
- 'Put the police in the dock!' WAR's inquiry into the Scarman inquiry on the Brixton riot. See Lord Scarman discuss community policing with Ted Knight, and see police chief McNee reach for his machine gun and the gutter press. 7.30pm
Moss Side People's Centre
Admission: £1; food and music provided.

- Stop the deportation of Nasreen Akhtar! Demonstration called by the Nasreen Akhtar Defence Committee
Saturday 17 October 2pm
Assemble at the church stile behind the town hall in Rochdale.
March with Manchester WAR and call for opposition to all immigration controls.

- Drop all the charges! Stop the criminalisation of black youth!
Thursday 22 October 10am
Picket Coventry magistrates court
Bayley Lane
In support of youth arrested on 13 July riots. Called by Coventry WAR.

WAR BENEFIT! IVORY COASTERS and TALKOVER

Come and hear two great bands!
Friday 16 October 7.30pm

New Merlin's Cave
Margery Street, London WC1
(nearest tube: Kings Cross, Angel)
Admission £2 (£1.50 unemployed)

FREE THE BRADFORD 12!

Twelve black activists from Bradford have been charged by the police for 'conspiracy to endanger life and property'. The charges carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. All anti-racists must demand that the charges be dropped and the 12 released immediately. Fight the police's attempt to imprison the Bradford 12 and intimidate all who oppose state harassment of the black community!

WAR is holding the following meetings with speakers from the Bradford 12 Campaign to publicise the case:

- Thursday 8 October 6.30pm
Polytechnic of Central London
Wells Street, London WC1
- Wednesday 14 October 1pm
Lanchester Polytechnic
Priory Street, Coventry
- Thursday 15 October 7.30pm
Warwick University
Gibbets Hill, Coventry



Regular WAR meetings

- South London WAR meets on alternate Wednesdays at 7pm to discuss local activities. The next meeting is 14 October. If you want to fight against police terror and the criminalisation of the black community, then join SOLWAR.

- East London WAR meets on Fridays at 7pm. Join the fight against racist attacks and police harassment. Join the fight to mobilise the unions against racism.

- Coventry WAR holds weekly planning and discussion meetings on Tuesdays at 7pm. Newcomers welcome!

You can find out more about WAR and get involved in our activities by writing to:

ELWAR Box 22, 136 Kingsland High St, London E8
SOLWAR BM RCT, London WC1N 3XX
COVWAR Box 79, Students Union, University of Warwick, Coventry
MANWAR Box 33, 164-166 Corn Exchange Building, Hanging Ditch, Manchester M4 3BD
Wycombe WAR BCM JPLTD, London WC1N 3XX
or phone 01-274 3951

SMASH THE PTA CAMPAIGN



After the successful Workers March for Irish Freedom to the TUC in September, the Smash the PTA Campaign in October is organising numerous meetings and activities to win support for the Irish hunger strikers.

- The Irish hunger strike began on 28 October 1980 against Britain's criminalisation policy and to demand political status. Commemorate the first anniversary of the hunger strike on Saturday 28 October. Phone 01-274 3951 for details of activities.
- Torchlight procession to remember the Manchester Martyrs and support the hunger strikers and republican prisoners today, on Thursday 19 November through the town centre.
- SPTAC conference in Leeds on 5 December. Write to SPTAC c/o Box LAT RCP, 59 Cookridge St, Leeds LS2 3AW for further details.

SPTAC national speaking tour with relatives of the H-Block prisoners and prominent hunger strike activists from Ireland and Britain

- LONDON**
- Tuesday 13 October 12.30pm
City of London Poly, Calcutta House, Old Castle St, London E1
 - Tuesday 13 October 3pm
North East London Poly, Barking Site, Students Union Building, Longbridge Road (near Barking tube)
 - Tuesday 13 October 7.30pm
Stoke Newington Town Hall, Stoke Newington Church St, London N16 (British rail: Stoke Newington)
 - Wednesday 14 October 12.30pm
City and East London College, Pitfield St, London N1
 - Thursday 15 October 6.30pm
Polytechnic of Central London, Wells St, London W1 (nearest tube: Oxford Circus)
 - Tuesday 27 October 7.30pm
East Ham Town Hall, High Street South, London E6
- MIDLANDS**
- Friday 16 October 7.30pm
International Community Centre, Mansfield Rd, Nottingham
 - Monday 19 October 1pm
University of Warwick, Students Union building, Coventry
 - Monday 19 October 7pm
Cinematograph Club, 689 Foleshill Rd, Edgewick, Coventry
 - Tuesday 20 October 8pm
Vine Inn, junction of Broad St/Stafford St, Wolverhampton
- NORTH OF ENGLAND**
- Wednesday 21 October 7pm
Leeds Trades Club, Savile Mount, Leeds 7
 - Thursday 22 October 12.30pm
Manchester Polytechnic, Aytoun St, Manchester
 - Thursday 22 October 7.30pm
UMIST Students Union, Sackville Row, Manchester

Coventry SPTAC week of action on Ireland

2-6 November at the University of Warwick, Students union building

Every day from 12-2pm, photo display, video films on Ireland and the War, bookstalls and discussion

Monday 2 November 7.30pm
Film and discussion about the hunger strike and the Irish War

Tuesday 3 November 7.30pm
Famous play about the death of Terence MacSwiney in Brixton prison in 1920 after 74 days on hunger strike. Look at the labour movement response then and what we have to do now.

Wednesday 4 November 7.30pm
Join in the fireworks before the fireworks at a debate over the TUC's policy on Ireland between the Communist Party (for) and SPTAC (against).

Friday 6 November
Get British imperialism out of your system at the social in the evening with an Irish band.

Regular SPTAC meetings

- Coventry SPTAC meets on alternate Wednesday evenings.
- Manchester SPTAC meets on alternate Friday evenings. Come and join us to build on the success of the Workers March for Irish Freedom
- East London SPTAC meets on alternate Sundays at 2pm

For further details, phone 01-274 3951 and ask for Keith Thompson.

OTHER RCP ACTIVITIES

Manchester

The following meetings are each at Manchester University, Students Union building, Oxford Rd, at 7.30pm.

- Lessons of the Laurence Scotts dispute
Speaker: Dave Hallsworth, Thursday 8 October.
- Pacifism or class war: debate on CND
Speaker Frank Richards, Thursday 15 October.

- How to fight women's oppression: feminism or communism?

Speaker Kate Marshall, Thursday 29 October.

- Imperialism and the Middle East: the struggle for Iran

Speaker Nick Jenkins, Thursday 5 November.

the next step

Coventry the next step discussion group meets every Wednesday at the University of Warwick, 2pm. Details from sellers of the next step or phone 01-274 3951

East London the next step discussion group meets every week. Phone 01-274 3951 for details.

London colleges

If you are a student at NELP, CLP, PCL, NLP, Middlesex Poly, LSE, QMC, City & East London College, South Bank Poly... then you should join the Workers Against Racism, Smash the PTA Campaign, or Revolutionary Communist Student societies at your college. Phone Anne Burton on 274-3951 for more details.



PREPARED FOR POWER?

If you weren't able to attend *Preparing for power*, or if you want to continue the discussion on the key issues facing revolutionaries today, then come to the weekly series of nine educational starting on Monday 12 October until 7 December.

The time is 7pm, the place is Polytechnic of Central London, Student Union building, Room 1F, Bolsover St, London W1 (nearest tube: Great Portland Street), the schedule is:

Can Mitterand deliver the goods? Will French workers accept his social contract?

What's going on in industry? How long can the bureaucrats make the running?

The working class and black oppression. The Labour Party - party of workers or party of bosses?

World war on the horizon. Pacifism or class war?

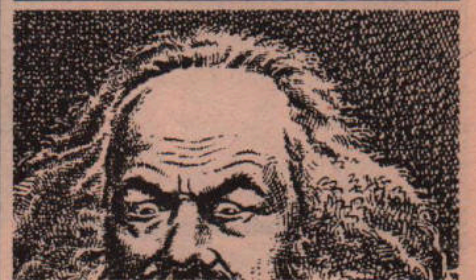
Imperialism - the latest phase. Revolution in southern Africa.

Eastern Europe - towards capitalism or revolution?

The far left in Britain. Has it a future?
Registration: £10. Cheques and postal orders made payable to RCT Association.

Editor of *Revolutionary Communist Papers*, Frank Richards, will chair the series. A reading list will be made available on registration and all the material can be obtained through the RCP.

Write to BM RCT London WC1N 3XX, or phone 274 3951 for more details.



JOIN THE PARTY

Find out about the Revolutionary Communist Party! Write to: BM RCT, London WC1N 3XX or phone 01-274 3951.