

Socialist Challenge

1979

DEATH

TO

THE

SHAH

EDITORIAL

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1978: year of the Iranian masses

THE STRUGGLE in Iran dominated world politics in 1978. The uprising of the masses had one major aim: to bring down the Shah and abolish the monarchy. This now appears to be approaching a climax.

The first blows in the anti-Shah campaign were struck as long ago as October 1977, when tens of thousands of people started attending poetry readings. These 'cultural' gatherings became a focus of political opposition. The first mass street demonstrations began exactly a year ago on 9 January 1978.

Neither repression nor limited concessions were able to contain the movement. The Western press and media consistently underplayed what was happening in Iran till the situation exploded with semi-uprisings and general strikes. It was only after a lapse of seven months that the Western media began to take Iran seriously. The same unfortunately, can be said for the overwhelming majority of the left in Europe and North America.

Today it is perfectly obvious even to the most obsequious apologists that time has run out for the Pahlavi family. The bulk of it has already established its residence in the luxurious Beverly Hills suburb in California. \$2 million is being spent on a 'palace in exile'.

The overthrow of the Shah would destabilise one of the strongest pillars of the imperialist system in the Near East. Its oil supplies to South Africa and Israel, coupled with its strategic position vis-a-vis the USSR, South Asia, and the oil states in the Gulf, explain its significance for imperialist military and political strategy. This has been further stressed by the despatch of American warships to the Gulf to prevent 'outside interference'.

However, while Iran has become the central focus of the world political struggle, it has been followed closely by Southern Africa and the Central American states. The events in these three continents have cast a long shadow over the successes of capital in the West.

The defeat of the Portuguese revolution in 1975 and the failure of the Union of the Left to win the French elections last year have been clear signs of a decline in the level of political struggles in Western Europe. In general, the political grip of capitalist institutions is stronger than it was in the period 1972-75. The economic struggle has yet to find a real expression in national politics. This delay may only be temporary, but one of its repercussions can already be seen in the stagnation of the revolutionary left throughout Western Europe and North America. Its failure to respond to Iran is only one index of this development.

The development of 'Eurocommunism' has signified a further move towards social-democracy by the Western European Communist parties. The Eurocommunist theoreticians, however, have raised a number of important questions regarding the nature of bourgeois democracy. They have also challenged the very basis of Leninist political strategy.

It would be futile to deny that the pessimistic analysis of the Eurocommunists has found a receptive audience amongst certain layers normally responsive to the far left. What is required is a creative but concrete political perspective which shows the very real possibilities of a revolutionary alternative to Eurocommunism and social-democratic reformism.

The explosions in Iran, Southern Africa and Central America demonstrate once again that the imperialist chain suffers the severest stresses where it is weakest.

It is true that a successful revolution in the West would be of vital importance for the future of socialism. But the last year has shown the enormous recuperative power of the bourgeois-democratic institutions through which the ruling class mediates its rule in the West. To imagine that the mass struggle will automatically dispel all illusions in these institutions has been disproved by France in May 1968, Portugal in Autumn 1975, and Spain in 1976.

It is the lack of these mediations in the three continents, together with their dependent economic status, that makes them a source of constant worry for the United States and its junior partners in Western Europe. Thus at times of mass upsurges, dictators like the Shah or Somoza have only one means of quelling disturbances: naked coercion. This is only effective while the masses retain their fear. Once that disappears then everything is possible.

To summarise: 1978 showed the inter-relationship of world politics and world economics in a very vivid fashion. It revealed the continuing vulnerability of the semi-colonial world. It showed that despite grave economic crises in the West, the bourgeoisie still had enormous political reserves at its disposal.

The year should be dedicated to the Iranian men and women who have fought for 12 months without respite and without aid from anyone. It is they and their dead who are our heroines and heroes of 1978. The fall of the Shah in 1979 would be a good start to the year for them and for us.

THE FIRST WORD

Murder in Cambodia Who killed Malcolm Caldwell?

MALCOLM CALDWELL, who was shot dead in Cambodia on 23 December, was a well-known left-wing writer and lecturer. He was extremely active in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the late '50s.

He was an active and committed supporter of the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in the Sixties and played an important role in the Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal on Vietnam.

As investigators for the Tribunal, Malcolm and I travelled to Cambodia and North Vietnam in 1966-67.

We were together in Sihanouk's Cambodia at a time when that country appeared to be placid and unaffected. Malcolm was at that time a strong supporter of Sihanouk and his regime, which at that time was trying to steer a 'neutral' course.

At the height of the Sino-Soviet split Malcolm became an avid supporter of the Maoist line and remained committed to it until very recently. It was the recent Sino-Japanese rapprochement which compelled him to write the first critical article on the policies of the People's Republic.

The regime which he felt closest to in recent years was the Cambodian. He justified its record, downplayed its crimes, supported its political projects.

In fact, Malcolm became the leading apologist for the Cambodians in the Anglo-Saxon world. It would be dishonest to conceal these facts simply because of the tragic circumstances of his death.

Malcolm Caldwell was one of the few observers permitted to enter the country. He was a privileged guest. That is what makes his murder in a State Guest House in the Cambodian capital an extremely bizarre event.

UNANSWERED

There are a whole number of unanswered questions which remain.

The Cambodian Government and the Daily Telegraph have been eager to pin the blame on the Vietnamese government. But not a single piece of evidence has been cited to substantiate this fantastic claim.

It is an assertion designed to shift the responsibility for Malcolm's death. In the absence of any evidence we can do nothing but reject it as a convenient slander.

The questions which arise are the following: Was the State Guest House provided with guards? Given the Cambodian

assertion that 'enemies of the revolution are active', then surely some minimal protection should have been provided for its guests.

Why were there no guards? Is the situation so unstable that a few 'terrorists' can walk into the State Guest House and shoot an 'honoured guest' dead?

If it is, then clearly the regime has little support even in a depopulated Phnom Penh. And why did it take an hour and a half for government officials and armed men to arrive on the scene after the murder?

SPECULATE

None of these questions has been answered by the Cambodian government.

So all one can do is speculate about a number of possibilities.

There is a possibility that Malcolm was eliminated by the regime itself after he discovered some unpalatable facts and mentioned them in his interview with the Cambodian leader Pol Pot.

Malcolm was quite capable of getting very angry with regimes he supported. On his trip to North Korea he was disgusted by what he saw and told the Koreans so in no uncertain terms.

But the evidence of the American journalists with him would indicate that he was pleased with his interview and with what he was shown. He is even reported to have made a quip: 'I have seen the past and it works'.

So one would have to discount any notion of the ruling clique having him murdered. Apart from other considerations, the UN Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, is due to visit Cambodia soon and the regime stands to gain some international credibility through this visit.

So it was hardly in their interests to have such a scandal on the eve of Waldheim's visit.

Secondly it is always possible that a faction in the government hostile to Pol Pot carried out the murder to destabilise the hold of the ruling group.



Photo: SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

This seems to be the most likely possibility. The vicious character of internal struggles in the Cambodian ruling party is well-known and there has already been one massive purge in the leadership.

FREELANCE

The third possibility is that it was a group of freelance opponents of the regime who wanted to strike a blow.

But if they could carry out such an action in the heart of Phnom Penh with impunity, then all one can say is that the regime is extremely shaky and its base of support even narrower than one had assumed.

Whether we will ever find out who killed Malcolm Caldwell is

a moot point. The character of the Cambodian regime itself precludes any real inquiry.

But the fact that the Cambodian regime could not safeguard the life of even its staunchest supporter in the West should provide some room for thought for those who refuse to look at these governments critically.

We had deep and fundamental differences with Malcolm. He was in his last years extremely hostile to Trotskyism. But the manner of his death fills us with disgust and despair.

We offer our condolences to his wife, Lynn, and their children.

TARIQ ALI

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OUR POLICIES

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

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

* To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

* To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles. Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

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

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

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

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

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

Iranian oil worker speaks

'If our strike continues, the government will fall'

IT IS the oil workers, more than any other section of the population, who are holding the knife to the Shah's throat.

But it is rare for Western readers to get a first-hand account of what is going on in the oil fields. Last month a leader of the clerical workers in the oil industry in Ahvaz was in London and gave this exclusive interview to RICHARD CARVER.

He begins by explaining how the strike was organised.

Immediately the strike commenced the strikers elected some representatives. These people organised and planned for the strike together.

But these representatives were not the leaders of the strike. They came together to form the staff workers association, because under the labour law staff employees don't have any unions or syndicates.

You as representatives were directly accountable to assemblies of workers?

Yes. We started our strike and after three days the labourers joined us. The result was that oil production dropped to about 800,000 barrels a day — the average production is about 6.5 million a day.

About 250,000 to 350,000 of that is domestic Iranian consumption, the rest is exports. This meant that 40 ocean tankers were kept idle at Kharg Island because there was no oil to be exported.

What were your demands at this stage?

At the start our demands were welfare demands: for example, for increased wages, benefit schemes, housing and medical treatment.

But because our strike was a reflection of the movement of the masses in Iran, the strike became political.

There were three political demands: abolition of martial law, support for the teachers, who had been on strike for about two months, and unconditional freedom for the political prisoners.

What political forces are involved in the strike. We have heard reports that the Tudeh Party plays a role in the leadership.

No. No political party or group had any active role in our strike. The movement of the people in Iran is not followed any party.

There are socialists, there are Moslems, there are National Front but most people have taken part irrespective of what these people say.

How does the strike relate to the religious opposition?

When we went on strike we found that there were leaflets hanging on the walls. At first we decided not to let them put these up because some workers said that our strike was not political.

So the representatives got together and talked over this matter: do we have the right to take them away or should we leave them on the wall? The conclusion we reached was that we are fighting for democracy so these people can hang them on the wall.

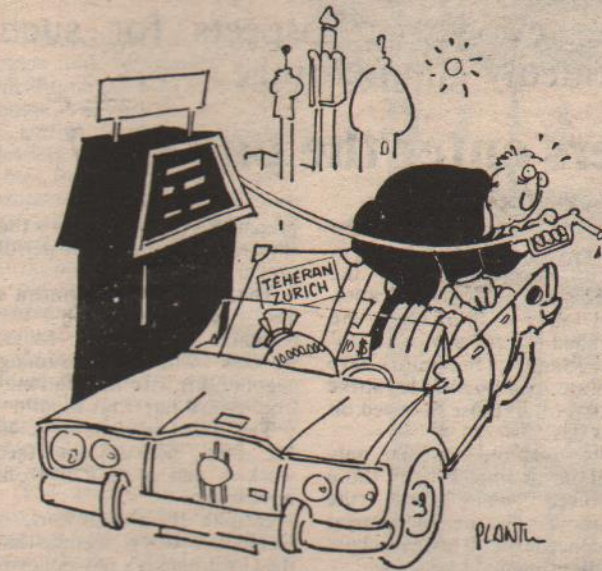
But would you say that the majority of oil workers are sympathetic to the religious leaders?

Yes, of course. Our religion is Islam and it is obvious that the majority would be sympathetic to them.

Did political discussions take place in the course of the strike?

No, but most of the discussions were about those three political demands. Sometimes speakers came to the strike and they would tell us what was happening and we would communicate with each other and they would advise us what to do.

I was wondering, for example, if at the point when the troops occupied the refineries the question came up of the workers taking over control of the oil industry for themselves? When they sent soldiers into



Ahvaz and Abadan, we went to the central office in Ahvaz.

Everybody gathered in the corridors of the main office, but they forced us to go outside. We gathered outside in the car park, but again they forced us to go back and after three or four days they didn't let us assemble.

In Abadan some of the workers went to the refinery and sat there in front of the main office. They let them sit there until night.

Curfew was at 12.00. At 11.45 they told them that they had to go out, because if they went out they would be arrested.

They refused to go so the

soldiers attacked them with bayonets and one of them was badly injured because the bayonet had torn off his kidney. They were taken to hospital and some of them were arrested, but fortunately nobody died.

It was not a matter of occupying the factory or offices — they just sat down and said we are not going to move.

How did the first wave of oil strikes end?

This was the first strike most workers had taken part in and after about 25 days they got tired and said they wanted to go back to work.

The company also tricked people by threatening to sack people if they did not go back to work. Some people who had 20 or 30 years with the company knew that if they were sacked they would lose everything and they had to think of their families.

So they went back to work, but some people stayed out saying they would stay out to the last. And they did.

But we found that about 4 million barrels a day was being exported. So we said: this is not a real strike because all this oil is being exported, so we had better go back and talk to these people and encourage them to go back on strike.

And that's what's happening now?

Yes. Another thing is that they brought in about 200 retired workers to come and operate the production units. They failed so they brought in 200 sailors to do the work. So we decided to go back and organise another strike.

What do you think will happen now?

I think if our strike continues, even for two months, the government cannot continue and has to fall.

Do you think the strike will continue?

Yes, I think so.

Until all those demands are met?

Yes.

Shah packs his suitcase

THE SHAH must be living out of a suitcase these days (though no doubt a very regal and well-packed valise). He is reportedly on the verge of leaving Iran to 'go on holiday' or 'for medical reasons'. RICHARD CARVER reports.

In fact, the Shah has just about had enough. And the emergence of Shapur Bakhtiar as a candidate for prime minister has given him a possible exit.

Bakhtiar, deputy leader of the liberal National Front, is an avowed monarchist. The Shah has reportedly assured Bakhtiar that he will leave, assigning royal power to a regency council.

But Ardeshir Zahedi, the ambassador to Washington and therefore an important gauge of imperialist thinking, denies this version of events.

LUCKY

Whatever the truth of these reports two things are clear: a Bakhtiar government will be at best a nine day wonder and the Shah will be lucky to last even that long.

The main power of the opposition lies with the working class, and particularly the strike wave headed by the oil workers.

For two months maximum oil production has been only half the normal output. Now it is between 5 and 10 per cent of normal — not even enough to meet domestic need.

Oil workers are backed by



strikes in other sectors, including the public services and Iranair.

The regime has introduced domestic oil rationing and cut all exports. But many oil workers suspect that the government is deliberately holding back on oil supplies to create greater domestic hardship.

CONSUMPTION

From Paris opposition leader Ayatollah Khomeini has called for workers to continue to produce enough oil for Iranian consumption. This is made possible by the fact that most Iranian 'strikes' are really work-to-rules or sit-down strikes.

Oil in 1977 accounted for 77

per cent of government revenue and 87 per cent of foreign exchange earnings.

EVIDENT

For all the evident distortions of Iranian development, industrialisation would have been impossible without oil revenues and the import of high technology from imperialism.

The military might and long stability of the Pahlavi monarchy was bought with oil money.

Iranian oil is also important to the world financial and economic system. Iran is the world's fourth largest oil producer and second largest exporter.

All the major imperialist powers receive a substantial portion of their domestic

consumption from Iran, including Japan (16 per cent of demand), West Germany (11 per cent) and the United States (3 per cent).

British Petroleum has a 40 per cent stake in the foreign consortium which controls the Iranian oil industry and Britain gets 14 per cent of its domestic need from Iran.

But Britain's oil revenues may increase because of the shortage. Although Britain is an oil producer, it is also a member of an oil consumers' cartel, the International Energy Agency.

One of the main ways Britain could meet the shortfall created by the lack of Iranian oil would be out of domestic oil production. But the IEA

obliges Britain to increase exports by the amount of the shortfall before it can keep more for domestic use.

As Britain's oil prices already exceed the new OPEC rates, the Shah's discomfiture could mean greater profits for at least one section of British capitalism.

SHORTAGES

This has been kept very quiet by the British press. With the threat of a tanker drivers' strike, they are extra keen to blame oil shortages on workers rather than oil cartels.

Nevertheless, international capitalism has no interest in the fall of the Shah. 'No winners in Persia without the Shah' commented the city pages of the Daily Telegraph.

The paper's geographical terminology might be outdated, but not its pungent economic analysis: businesses trading with the Shah are in a 'no win situation', it announced solemnly.

Vickers, British Aerospace and the Ministry of Defence must be wondering whether the Shah will ever pay for those Chieftain tanks and Rapier missiles that they continue to supply.

CRISIS

The oil consumers most disturbed by the cut-off are South Africa and Israel, with 90 and 60 per cent of their respective domestic needs supplied from Iran.

The apartheid regime is

reluctant to use up its stockpiles of oil with the protracted political crisis in southern Africa. It only staggers on because of the relatively small part played by oil in its overall energy needs and is still on the verge of introducing restrictions on oil consumption.

Israel has always tried to diversify its sources of oil to avoid just such a crisis as this, but Iran assumes an obvious importance as the main oil producer outside the Afro-Arab bloc.

The Israeli leaders have deemed it politically sensible not to publicise the problems caused by the oil shortage, but they have had talks with the US government in Washington on whether to launch a contingency plan for the emergency supply of oil.

PROBLEM

The US faces a political problem here, since it is also prevailing upon Saudi Arabia to increase its exports to cover the Iranian shortfall.

But political problems might yet be resolved by the old-fashioned method of the gunboat. The Pentagon has sent a naval task force from the Pacific to the Indian Ocean, accompanied by unconvincing denials that this has anything to do with Iran.

The coming days may be ones of celebration at the Shah getting his come-uppance. They will also have to be ones of watchfulness at what the world's rulers are up to next.

Season of industrial ill-will looms

In an interview on BBC Radio's 'The World This Weekend' last Sunday, the Prime Minister declared that for the success of his Government's pay policy, 'we rely on people's acquiescence'. Threatened industrial action by lorry drivers and public sector employees give the new year prospects for such 'acquiescence' a decidedly gloomy tinge.

Lorry drivers enter the pay fray

By our Labour Staff

The pre-Christmas pay settlement between the BBC and the Association of Broadcasting Staffs was the sort of Xmas gift Mr Callaghan could well have done without.

The settlement, averaging around 13 per cent, was especially significant in that it was the first wage increase in the public sector which was a long way past the five per cent barrier.

The outcome of the BBC strike can only have added to the determination of unions who organise manual public service workers. They are calling a day of action on 22 January in pursuit of a claim for a £60 minimum wage and a 35-hour week.

One and a half million workers are affected, and the National Union of Public Employees has stated that a failure of the employers to 'recognise the justice of our demands' will produce a series of strikes hitting at refuse collection, water supply, sewerage and hospital services.

The Government's strategy in dealing with the unions involved — chiefly NUPE and the General and Municipal Workers' Union — may involve attempting to split off the workers with more industrial muscle by offering them a settlement above the rest.

Thus the offer to the water and sewerage workers which will be made public on 9 January is expected to be in excess of five per cent by means

of 're-grading' proposals.

The union leaderships are, in some ways, adding to the confusion. A demonstration and lobby of Parliament are planned for the 'day of action' on 22 January, but unions have not specifically called for strike action of all those involved on that day.

It seems obvious that only militant action by all those involved will force the employers and the Government to concede the 40 per cent claim of these low-paid workers.

The suspicion is that already the union leaders are preparing for a 'compromise' and they are expected to meet Government ministers next week.

By then the Government may be facing a more immediate problem.

Haulage drivers in Scotland, Hull and Merseyside have voted to start strike action this week in pursuit of claims which in some instances are as high as 50 per cent.

Lorry drivers in other parts of the country are meeting this week to consider their positions. A national stoppage of lorry drivers could bring industry to a virtual halt within a couple of weeks as most of industry relies on daily deliveries for their supplies.

But to be successful a strike by haulage drivers would need to be accompanied by determined picketing.

Strikers would be faced with potential large scale scabbing, and there would be a definite prospect of the Government moving in the Army to smash such a strike, as it has already

prepared to do over the threatened action of the petrol tanker drivers.

To add to the Government's new year problems, the National Union of Mine-workers will be resuming negotiations with the National Coal Board later this month.

The NUM is claiming a 40 per cent increase for face workers and a £110 a week basic wage.

Despite these problems, it would be wrong to assume that the Government's pay policy is now in ruins. In his 'Weekend World' interview, the Prime Minister claimed that 90 per cent of settlements so far reached are within the pay guidelines.

Although this may be an exaggeration, there is no doubt that the type of militant action taken by the Ford workers is a necessary ingredient if the various claims now on the table are to be successful.

The Government is assisted by the continuing silence from the leaders of the TUC. Although committed by the votes at the last Congress to opposing the Government's pay policy, the leaders of the TUC are doing nothing to assist their millions of members now preparing to go into action.

Demands from every level of the trade union and labour movement for the TUC leaders to actively assist and coordinate the various struggles now on the agenda could prove a successful tactic for the overwhelming and final defeat of the pay policy.

Mr Scanlon declines offer to explain why he joined band of 'robbers and parasites'

By David Wax
Our Court Correspondent

The decision of Mr Hugh Scanlon, the former leader of the Engineering Union, to accept a life peerage has come as no surprise to those who have followed his career of late.

In his years as President of the Engineering Union, Mr Scanlon soon discarded his militant views and embraced the prevailing political orthodoxies of the TUC General Council.

He went on to become one of the staunchest supporters of Mr Callaghan's economic and social policies. His defence of wage restraint played an important part in preventing major trade union opposition to the Labour Government.

The peerage is clearly designed as a reward for responsible trade unionism.

Mr Scanlon's acceptance stands in contrast to Mr Jack Jones's refusal to enter the House of Lords. Mr Jones described the members of the House of Lords as 'robbers and parasites'.

Mr Scanlon refused to grant our correspondent an interview



and declined our offer of free space to explain his views.

Mr Ronald Thompson, a long-standing militant in the Engineering Union in Sheffield, told 'Our Times': 'As far as we're concerned Scanlon died some years back. If they

want to bury him in the House of Lords then it's their business.'

It is reported that Mr Scanlon is considering the title of Lord Tolpuddle, but this has yet to be confirmed.



Local journalists hold out for £20 claim

From Kathy Lowe
NUJ North London Branch

In the face of renewed determination by local and provincial journalists to continue their strike for a £20 a week across-the-board increase, the employers are beginning to break ranks.

The National Union of Journalists reports that scores of managements have now offered to do local deals with the strikers — many, like the Birmingham 'Post and Mail', offering to meet the claim.

Although they receive no strike pay, NUJ members are refusing to be bought off and the strike of the 9,000 journalists — the largest in the union's history — has stayed solid.

A major problem, however, is what an NUJ spokesperson described as 'a very disappointing lack of solidarity from the print unions'.

Certainly, pickets coping with freezing weather and heavy treatment from police, reminiscent of the bakers' strike, have dealt a serious blow to the Christmas profits of their bosses by stopping 120 papers around the country.

Help has come from the beginning from the Transport Union, whose members have been instructed not to deliver newspapers.

Magnificent support has also come from NGA, SOGAT and NATSOPA members in some parts of the country, who have forfeited pay, Christmas bonuses, and even faced the sack for refusing to touch papers produced by strike breakers.

But at many other printing plants, strikers have come up against 'an absolute absence of trade unionism', says the NUJ.

Printers with police escorts and with approval from their leaders are crossing picket lines, even where, as at London's 'Barnet Press', they witnessed the arrest of eight pickets just before Christmas.

Deeply concerned about the situation, the NUJ is preparing a special leaflet for rank and file members of print unions spelling out the journalists' case and pointing out that the need for solidarity is not a one-way requirement.

With the introduction of new technology hanging over the entire printing industry, the NUJ believes that the printers will come increasingly to journalists for help.

Meanwhile the employers association, the Newspaper Society, has graciously offered to return to the negotiating table — providing journalists call off their strike first.

The strikers are doing no such thing. Having long since thrown out the Government's 5 per cent guideline, they are equally adamant about not appealing to be a special case.

The local and provincial journalists have become in-

creasingly militant in the 1970s.

With fewer jobs available in Fleet Street, the incentive to 'get on' has been weakened, and the growing number of graduates who have been recruited have brought in some of the spirit of student radicalism.

Take home pay as low as £45 a week for senior journalists — in a sector of the newspaper industry which is highly profitable — is reason enough for the present picket lines.

Year after year at the NUJ's annual conference, the union leadership has been condemned for settling with the Newspaper Society employers well below the demands set by the conference.

The determination of members to prevent these behind-the-scenes deals has brought about more democratic forms of organisation within the union.

The £20 claim was decided on by a meeting of representatives from all local newspaper journalist chapels, and this same broad body will have to decide on any offer.

Four weeks on strike have made us even more anxious to win our demands.

But we need your help, on the picket lines and financially. There is a local paper near you, so why not pop along to see what assistance you can give to the pickets.

And while you're there, a cash donation would be highly appreciated. With no official strike pay, donations can make or break the strikers' unity.

Union solidarity outlawed by judges

By Geoffrey Sheridan
Legal Correspondent

The victory of the 'Daily Express' in winning from the Appeal Court legal protection against trade union solidarity action by its editorial employees will have important repercussions for all workers.

The decision, which came on 21 December, confirmed an earlier High Court ruling instructing the National Union of Journalists to lift the boycott of Press Association copy being operated at the 'Daily Express'.

Lord Justices Denning, Lawton, and Brandon unanimously decided that this boycott — in support of the provincial journalists' strike — was not justified by any of the Trade Union Acts.

Lord Denning, Master of the Rolls, who presided, said the boycott was too remote from the strike. 'It is not sufficient for a trade union leader to want to advance a dispute,' he said.

Denis MacShane, the NUJ president, described the decision as the biggest legal interference in an industrial dispute since the Taff Vale ruling in 1901.

'It means trade unions can't help each other,' Mr MacShane said.

So far the TUC has offered to do no more than finance an appeal to the House of Lords. Yet only four weeks ago it circulated a private document to union leaders accusing judges of whittling away workers' rights.

Citing cases such as that of *Gouriet v the Postal Workers*, which put paid to the boycott of South African mail, the TUC document nevertheless warns that the unions should emphasise the positive aspects of the legislation passed under the present Labour administration.

Those that remain, that is. Since the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act of the present Government has been a central plank of its pact with the unions, the union leaders clearly feel unhappy about the judges' removal of the immunities it offered.

Their recourse, however, is not to their own members, whose collective defiance of the Law Lords' decisions would render them unenforceable.



OTTO DIX's 'Portrait of the journalist Sylvia von Harden', 1926, showing in the excellent exhibition 'Neue Sachlichkeit and German Realism of the Twenties'. The exhibition, at the Hayward Gallery in London, ends on 14 January.

Many of Sylvia's present-day counterparts on 'The Times' would be more likely to be found on a picket line than at the House of Lords.

HOME NEWS

NALGO social workers

Fighting divide and rule in the union

SOCIAL WORKERS on strike for pay regrading have now been joined by colleagues in Rochdale and Manchester, bringing the total on strike to well over two thousand.

But the social workers, some of whom have been on strike for over five months, face a difficult new year, writes PETE CRESSWELL, secretary of the social workers' strike committee in Liverpool.

Social workers face a three-pronged attack from the employers, the Government and the leadership of their own union, NALGO.

Over the past few weeks the employers have shown signs of weakening on the demand to replace national negotiations with local ones. But now they are being whipped into line by the national employers' organisation.

A secret letter, sent to all employers, said that local negotiations must be resisted, as they would be used 'to maintain a constant upward movement throughout the

country'.

In other words they would lead to higher wages — precisely why the social workers want them!

This letter also reveals that the Government is now intervening in the dispute, saying that the regrading will have to come out of the 1979 pay claim. If accepted, this would mean that no deal could be paid out until next July.

Even then it would have to come out of the money allocated for the overall pay claim for all NALGO members.

As well as clinging to the

remnants of the 5 per cent guidelines, this would tend to divide social workers from other NALGO members.

Social workers have pointed out that this is merely the thin end of the wedge. It is the first sign of what will become an attack on NALGO's 1979 pay claim next summer.

If NALGO can't win this dispute — the first major national strike in its history — then there can be little hope of winning more than 5 per cent in the summer.

ENCOURAGING

Although some of the letter made gloomy reading for strikers, there was plenty to encourage them too.

The letter is clearly a last ditch attempt to hold the line against local negotiations, and refers to the problems of the growing number of authorities subjected to militant action.

The employers are feeling the pinch and this should be the ideal time for NALGO to ram home its advantage.

Unfortunately NALGO's leaders do not agree. Firstly, they forced Liverpool social workers to abandon their most effective picket lines by threatening to withdraw all strike pay.

Now they are pushing ahead with a special local government group meeting on 26 January.

At this meeting they hope to force the social workers to accept a slightly dressed up version of the offer they rejected at the end of November!

The striking social workers have responded by organising against this sell-out. A letter has been sent out to NALGO branches calling on them to support the social workers at the meeting.

A lobby and rally are also planned for 26 January.



Hugo Blanco for Socialist Unity conference

THE NEAR certainty of a General Election this spring makes the Socialist Unity National Conference to be held on 3 February an important event for the left.

Despite a growing discontent against the policies of wage freeze, unemployment, the bloody war in Ireland, and increasing attacks on democratic rights, the left has yet to build a coordinated national fight back, writes BOB PENNINGTON.

During the General Election millions will be discussing and debating political questions, so the left has to show that it has a coherent socialist alternative to the policies of the right-wing Labour leaders.

It has to hammer home that its alternative can only be achieved by mass action.

Speakers at the Socialist Unity conference, to be held in London, will include Hugo Blanco, a leader of mass peasant struggles in Peru and the chief spokesperson for FOCEP, a united left slate in the Peruvian Senate.

Another speaker will be Pat Arrowsmith, who is the independent Socialist candidate for Cardiff West and has been active in the campaigns against nuclear destruction.

She is a campaigner for women's and gay rights, and for the withdrawal of British Troops from Ireland.

The Socialist Workers Party

has been invited to send a speaker to the conference.

Workshops will include one on the election and Ireland. An invitation has been sent to Michael Farrell, a leader of Peoples Democracy, to participate in this session.

Another workshop will be on how to campaign for a socialist alternative where no Socialist Unity candidate, independent or class struggle candidate is standing.

Admittance to the conference at the Holborn Assembly Rooms will be £1 for the employed and students, 50p for the wageless. Bookings should be made through: Bob Pennington, SU, PO Box 50, London N12XP.

*There will be a Socialist Unity social on 3 February at St Matthews Community Hall, Brixton. The hall is opposite Lambeth Town Hall, five minutes from Brixton Tube.



PAT ARROWSMITH

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE TRADE UNION DAY SCHOOL

on

Rebuilding the Left in the Unions

Saturday 17 February 1979

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

Normansfield inquiry

THE FAILURE of the leadership of the health service union COHSE to back its members and officials who led the strike at Normansfield Hospital looks set to become a major issue within the union.

A regional executive committee has recorded a vote of no confidence in the general secretary's handling of the affair. MYRA TREVELYAN reports.

The committee of inquiry which reported on the tyrannical behaviour of the consultant psychiatrist at Normansfield Hospital for the mentally handicapped was careful to criticise the strike which led to the inquiry.

The report made it abundantly clear that the wretched regime at the hospital would never have been challenged and exposed but for the unofficial strike by nursing and ancillary staff.

Yet the report castigates those who led the industrial action, arguing that they failed to seek official approval for the strike and that the walk-out put patients at risk.

Incredibly, Albert Spanswick, the COHSE general secretary announced that the union would be holding disciplinary hearings to examine the actions of members and officials singled out for criticism by the report.

Now Spanswick and the union executive are in the firing line.

The executive committee for COHSE's South-west region, representing the members who work at Normansfield has passed a vote of no confidence 'in the way that the general secretary on behalf of the national executive has conducted this whole sad affair'.

The regional executive has offered its full support to the action taken by the two officials criticised — its regional secretary and chairperson.

It further 'strongly deprecates' Spanswick's move to put the whole issue under wraps, by forbidding the regional executive from discussing Normansfield.

They've ignored the ruling, informed the general secretary about some elementary principles of democracy, and will be presenting their resolutions to a full regional council meeting later this month.

If the union leadership is foolish enough to pursue its threats of disciplinary action, its anxiety to stifle independent rank and file action could well backfire at COHSE's annual conference.

An increasing number of union members have 'no confidence' in their national leadership.

Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

Cheshire Homes don't care about workers

FIFTEEN women workers at the Leonard Cheshire Home for the physically disabled in Liverpool, have been sacked for demanding union recognition.

Liverpool Women's Action Group have been supporting and talking to the women involved.

The women had all been recognised as members of NUPE for over two years, but

when they wanted the union to negotiate wages on their behalf they were sacked.

The Home pays between 81p and 89p an hour with nothing extra for working nights.

DETERMINED

The women workers have now been picketing the home for eight weeks and they are still determined to stick it out.

They face many problems — the Home is isolated, they are few in number, they don't have past experience in trade union activity and many of them have big family commitments.

Moreover in their 'caring' profession they come under heavy pressure not to cut off the hospital's supplies.

The Daily Mail in particular has already launched an abusive attack on the women —

even alleging that they were cruel to patients.

What the Mail and the rest of the press don't see is that it is precisely because the women do care about the patients that they are in dispute.

Their demands include an investigation of the standards of hygiene and medical care in the Home.

They feel that any existing problems are due to shortage of

staff and money. The workers, as well as the patients need recognised rights and decent working conditions.

CONTROL

The local authority pays 95 per cent of the cost of running the Home and yet has no control over running it or how the money is spent.

The women would like to

look into the Home's books.

In the meantime the women are determined to maintain and extend their picket while negotiations take place between NUPE and the Leonard Cheshire Foundation.

In January their case for unfair dismissal goes before an Industrial Tribunal. The home is being kept open by non-unionised workers and local volunteers.

1978 ends explosively Bombs and boasts

THE THURSDAY before Christmas Roy Mason, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, was interviewed on Ulster Television, reports GEOFF BELL.

In what Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein was later to describe as 'one long ego trip', Mason told a rather startled interviewer about the wonderful progress he had made in the previous 12 months.

There was, insisted the Minister, 'a return to normality'.

On the same day as Mason's interview, three British soldiers had been shot dead in Crossmaglan, and on the previous night five hotels in various parts of the North of Ireland had been bombed out of existence by the IRA.

As Mason spoke, eight members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary were being questioned in connection with a number of crimes, including the kidnapping of a priest.

On the previous weekend, England had suffered a number of minor explosions, for which the IRA later claimed responsibility.

If this constitutes Roy Mason's 'return to normality', the Labour Government must hope things don't get out of hand.

SPECTACULAR

In December 1977 Mason had said much the same. 'The tide has turned', he proclaimed, 'against the men of violence'.

Mason was speaking then at the end of a year in which 8,000 lbs of explosives had gone off in the North of Ireland. The total for 1978 was 12,000lbs.

1978 was also the year in which demonstrators in their thousands returned to the streets of the North of Ireland.

One of the most spectacular successes was the 15,000 who marched in August from Coalisland to Dungannon marking the tenth anniversary of the civil rights movement.

It is not just the resistance of

the minority in the North of Ireland which has shown the hollowness of Roy Mason's boasts.

The exposure of Britain's repressive policies, which the Amnesty Report and the publicity around H block helped to bring to light, started a process in which more questions were being asked in Britain about the Irish war than in any other year since 1972.

DIVISIONS

The now famous *Daily Mirror* 'campaign' — the newspaper's own description — to set a date for British withdrawal and the inability of the Labour Government to get a majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party to vote for more Westminster seats for the North of Ireland were further indications of a growing political disenchantment.

Despite serious divisions in the Irish solidarity movement, 1978 also saw a significant increase in the numbers willing to be involved in various Irish campaigns in Britain.

HEALTHY

The most non-sectarian, and accordingly the healthiest of the various organisations, the United Troops Out Movement, has now something in the region of 40 branches.

For the first time since the introduction of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, a trickle of Irish immigrants took part in marches and other activities.

Provos' statement

THE IRA's statement on the English bombs declared:

'To the English people. We were responsible for the widespread bombing attacks in your country on Sunday and Monday morning [17 and 18 December].

'Don't remain complacent because of the nature of these attacks. We deliberately choose the time and the targets.

'Your intelligence will continue to give us logistical problems which, however, we believe we can overcome.

'We now give due warning to you, the English people, that in

the future both the targets and the timing might be changed.

'For 10 years our people have suffered under your Army and despite propaganda misrepresentations of successive Governments we have exercised considerable restraint.

'We now ask you: Who are we to hold accountable for British murder in Ireland?

'And we warn you, almost certainly we will gear the severity of our future attacks to the performance of British soldiers and the British administration in occupied Ireland.

'Furthermore, any acts of brutality against defenceless prisoners of war would inevitably force us into considering inflicting heavy civilian casualties.

'Politicians who call for increased repression as a counter-measure to our struggle for national liberation should be aware that they gamble with English lives.

'We want peace but there will be no end to violence until the English people exercise a bit of humanity and get their administration at all levels out of Ireland.'

The growth of the solidarity movement should not be exaggerated. It is still tiny compared to what is necessary to have a significant influence in British society.

Nevertheless, a steady if unspectacular growth was discernable. There seemed no reason to assume this process would not continue in 1979.

Until, that is, the Provisionals' bombs exploded in the English cities and towns just before Christmas.

What political effect will these bombs have? Whether or not the Provisionals want to explode what turned out to be rather harmless devices is up to them.

A war is going on in Ireland and as instigators of that war, British imperialism has no right to expect their main opponents to operate within a set of rules drawn up by Britain.

It is self-evident that if Britain was not in Ireland; if the Irish people were given the right to self-determination, then bombs would not explode in Bristol, London, Southampton or elsewhere.

It is not bombs which have caused the 'Irish problem'. It is the British presence in Ireland.

Seen in this political context, the bombs and the statement issued by the Provisionals explaining the bombs become a tactical question.

For instance, in a comment on the bombs the Provisionals' Belfast newspaper *Republican News* says 'hopefully this extension of the struggle will provoke debate on Ireland by the working class of the colonial power'.

DEBATE

Certainly a 'debate' will occur, but what kind of debate? Unfortunately, for many British workers the 'debate' will be more likely to centre on whether to shoot or hang Provisionals, rather than on the cause the Provisionals are struggling for.

In this sense the bombs are a diversion from what socialists in this country are trying, or should be trying, to argue — the justice of the Irish struggle for liberation.

The history of the Irish solidarity movement in this country shows that when bombs go off, less people are prepared to demonstrate in support of the Irish liberation

struggle and less political debate takes place in the labour movement on Britain's Irish policy.

Indeed it is only comparatively recently that Sinn Fein in Britain has been willing — after a gap of a couple of years — to engage in ongoing political activity.

All Irish Republicans — and even vague sympathisers — in this country face deportation under the Prevention of Terrorism Act; bombs give the British authorities the excuse to use those powers.

Accordingly it is not surprising that as more bombs explode fewer people are willing to stick their necks out.

A solidarity movement — which can be defined as a movement composed of those willing to be active on Ireland on the side of the Irish people — is built by persuasion, by argument, by agitation.

It cannot be built by force or by threats. By planting bombs and by threatening 'heavy civilian casualties' the Provisionals put that solidarity movement at risk.

It may be that the Provisionals have decided that such a risk is worth taking; that,

in reality, the size and significance of Irish solidarity is such that there is not really a great deal at stake.

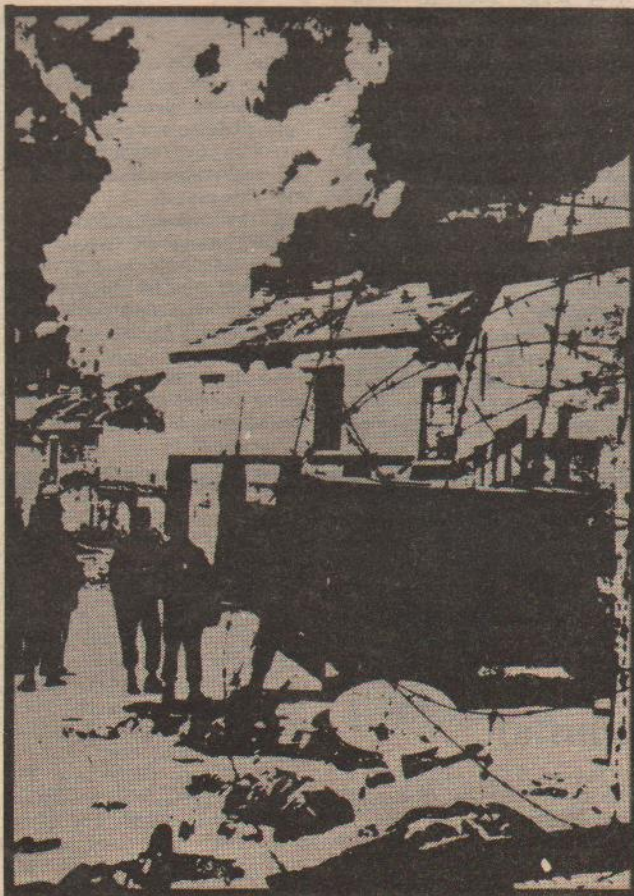
Certainly the unwillingness of the majority of the British working class to take up the cause of Ireland, and the open pro-imperialist views of the Labour Party and the Communist Party, are enough to try anyone's patience.

ALTERNATIVE

But the question remains: Is the planting of bombs a viable alternative? Will it produce a clamour for troop withdrawal?

Or will it, as it has done in the past, be effectively used by British imperialism and its supporters in the working class movement to confuse the issue, to stifle debate, to harass supporters of Irish liberation?

Only time will tell. But it could be that if the Provisionals carry out the threats contained in their statement then Roy Mason will find it a lot easier to attract support in the British labour movement for his policy of repression than seemed possible just four weeks ago.



WHAT'S LEFT

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PICKET GARNERS: Main pickets every day, noon to 3pm and 5.30 to 11 pm at 399 Oxford St., London W1 (opp. Selfridges); 243 Oxford St. (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 56 Whitcombe St. (Leicester Sq.). Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donations urgently needed as strike pay is only £8. All donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm 84, 12-13 Henrietta St., London WC2. 01-2401056.

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

ICAR MEETINGS are every two weeks: 27 Nov, 11 Dec, 8 Jan, at 374 Grays Inn Rd., WC1. 7.30pm.

SENIOR Administrator required by Film Work Group. Salary £64.67 weekly. Must be registered unemployed. Send curriculum vitae to 79/89 Lots Rd, London SW10.

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

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LONDON — second in the series of London forums held jointly by the Prisoners' Aid Committee and the Revolutionary Communist Group. 1968-78 Part 2: Civil Rights to War of Liberation. Speaker: Tony Sheridan. Mon 8 Jan 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Adm: 20p.

OWLS Against the Nazis. We are fighting the NF at Sheffield Wednesday F.C. Badges 15p plus postage. For more details PO Box 174, Sheffield 6.

EDINBURGH Revolutionary Communist Group. Second in a series of monthly public meetings: The Capitalist Crisis and the Working Class. Edinburgh Trades Council, Picardy Place. Wed 10 Jan at 7.30pm.

THE STRUGGLE for a revolutionary programme: debate between the Revolutionary Communist Tendency and the Spartacist League. Fri 12 Jan, 7pm at Essex Rd Library, 115-177 Essex Rd, London N1. Angel tube.

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

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'As a woman doctor I'm often not taken very seriously'

Most of us only see what happens in hospital from flat on our backs in bed - and usually we aren't entirely happy with what we see.

Sue is a junior doctor working as a gynaecologist in a London hospital. Here she describes what hospital life is like from her point of view

As a woman doctor I am often not taken very seriously. Applying for jobs I get asked questions like: Are you pregnant? Do you intend to get married? When will you have children? I'm sure male doctors aren't asked these personal questions.

The social segregation and hierarchy in hospitals is unbelievable. At the bottom of the pile are the ancillaries — the porters, cleaners and kitchen staff. They are nearly all immigrant workers.

In all the hospitals I've been in they have a separate canteen and a grotty bar in the basement alongside the heating system, while the consultants have a well furnished dining room with waitress service. The consultants are nearly all white men. Many of them have been to public school.

BARRIERS

When I was a medical student, I thought it was possible to change the ideas of my colleagues because I had this narrow view that it was medical education that was responsible.

I worked in NUS with health students, and within my hospital we tried to break down all the barriers between the doctors and nurses and porters. We had a campaign for a joint student union and a joint bar.

We thought if we could remove these barriers it was one way of getting rid of elitism in medicine. We really worked hard on that, but we were

completely voted down by other medical students.

I think we were quite a threat in the medical school. The dean was worried and told other students that they shouldn't have anything to do with us; that we probably took drugs and were communists.

DAZE

I was friendly with one of the lecturers and she was warned not to be friendly with me. Anyway, that whole experience made me feel that it's not worth bothering about the medical profession. I was knocking my head against a brick wall.

Now, I go round in a daze towards my medical colleagues; I don't relate to them at all. If change is to happen in the health service it will be because of the health workers taking action as they have in some of the hospital work-ins, such as at Brookwood.

By joining a trade union as a doctor, and not a professional body, you are allying yourself with other workers and making a point. I belong to the Confederation of Health Service Employees which has quite a lot of nursing and skilled staff. But even in the union people tend to be deferential — I am usually the only doctor at my branch meeting.

STAND

Sometimes one tries to take a stand about something, as in the second job I had where I worked with consultants who

did a lot of private work.

The very first morning I told them 'I'm perfectly prepared to look after your NHS patients but I don't want to look after your private patients'. They said 'Do you mean in an emergency? If one of my private patients goes into hospital, you won't go and look after them?' My reply was: 'They're your private patients. You got them in here, you look after them.'

They really freaked out. They had a meeting with the management. Without ever asking, they'd always relied on the junior doctors — and the nurses — to do the nitty gritty for them.

Anyway, I thought that right was on my side; that they didn't have a leg to stand on. Even the latest Government promises were to reduce private beds. So I did it without any qualms.

And then I found out — and this was really disillusioning. I went to my union and they studied it. It turned out that I was in the wrong.

WOMAN

On the whole, I get on better with the nurses than I do with the medical staff. I work with them rather than feeling that I am ordering them around. This kind of relationship is probably easier because I am a woman.

But many nurses and sisters resent women doctors — they actually prefer the flirting Emergency Ward 10 relationship. They are not jealous of the male doctors, I suppose.

I am a gynaecologist, so my

patients are women. The caricature of a doctor is a big male, often rather forbidding character, whom people are scared of. But they're not scared of me.

They ask me questions. And sometimes people tell me their real worries and anxieties, which I don't think they would do if I was intimidating. So in some ways it's almost an advantage being a woman and looking quite young.

FEARS

It means that they'll tell me what their fears are. Just silly little things, usually, that are terribly irrational; which one can get rid of quite easily they will come out with it and say.

Especially now that childbirth is completely monopolised by medicine, a lot of women who become pregnant don't know anything about it. They ask me: How will I know when I'm in labour? What's a contraction? Of course, the fault for this doesn't lie with women — medicine has taken the knowledge of childbirth away from women; ordinary women have come to know less and less about it.

For me, medicine is full of contradictions. One of the biggest is that before you begin your training you think that medicine cures people. When you go in to it you find that most of the things you are confronted with are social or to do with the political system.

It's more stark in the developing countries, where malnutrition causes a lot of things. But even in my first job the kind of people who came in were often old people, not with severe illnesses, but because they couldn't cope with little derangements of health while living alone in a cold house on a poor pension.

OVERDOSE

At night when I was doing this job I sometimes used to get up eight times a night, for somebody who had come in after taking an overdose of tranquillisers. That wasn't a medical thing. You often understood why they had taken it and that it didn't have a medical solution at all.

At the moment women come in to ante-natal clinic with high blood pressure. That means they should come in to hospital to rest. If they're wealthy they can get somebody else to look after their kids, but if they've got to look after their husband and they're not very well off they can't come in.

Then they come back four weeks later with tremendously high blood pressure and maybe a dead baby.

POLITICS

The awareness that every disease we come across is more common in the lower classes — it's that kind of thing that I find most difficult to cope with.

This whole area is ignored, yet it's where most of one's work is. Doctors have to choose between cynicism or politics. It's my reason for fighting for socialism. Even when you're working really hard you are aware that you are just patching up.

I do abortions as well, and that has raised some problems. I am completely in favour of a woman's right to choose, but in practice it's actually very difficult when one has to cope with delivering something which is alive, or could be alive.

I've only had one case of really late abortion and it sticks out in my mind. I've a real reputation in the hospital as an abortionist because of it.

It was a 14-year-old girl. I think she missed school one day to come up to the hospital, because she thought she was pregnant. She was nearly 28 weeks pregnant and hadn't told anyone. She lived with her father, whom she didn't get on with. Her mother was in Nigeria.

ABORTION

There were great arguments. The consultants didn't know quite what to do. Somebody else said that we should not give an abortion — she should be sent back to Nigeria with the kid, in Nigeria they didn't mind that kind of thing.

I stuck my neck out, saying that she should have it, I felt that it was important for her. A social worker there at the time tended to agree, so we really pushed for it.

In the end the consultant got a psychiatrist to see the girl, and the psychiatrist came out agreeing with us. So we did it, but it was a bit macabre.

All the nurses from that whole operating theatre came to watch. The consultant explained it all and made it into something awful. And then it came out and the heart was beating.

The nurses, who were mainly Catholic, became hysterical saying 'We must baptise it'. The whole scene was horrible and it made me feel bad.

PROBLEMS

Although it did not stop me from feeling that she should have had it, I think the abortion campaign has got to realise the problems that the people on the receiving end are going to have — how should we cope with it, what we should have done, whether the same people who are going to resuscitate babies at 30 weeks should be the same people who let one go at 28 weeks? Maybe there should be different kinds of staff?

The attitude of the nurses is very varied. There are some who are completely for abortion, but there are others who obviously don't like it, especially the Catholic nurses. The view is that it's not a medical thing. It's the same attitude if they have to deal

with people after taking overdoses.

The nurses feel that they went into nursing to do other things. Some of this attitude is passed on to the patients. The fact that when people come in they're not a person, just a termination.

EFFICIENCY

In the labour wards, too, there's always this orientation towards efficiency — doing things quickly. Recently I was reading *Experiencing Childbirth* by the Community Health Council in Islington, about women's experiences of childbirth.

They all make these points about doctors not having time to talk to them; the feeling of just being another baby machine; of everything being in a hurry.

It's all quite true, but the solution they portrayed was that it was just up to the doctors to be nicer. It's not that at all. After reading it I decided that I must really ask people more questions. In my clinic that night I asked the women whether they had any worries.

It was very good, but my clinic didn't finish until 8.30pm. It's not just a question of doctors being nicer — it's a matter of having more staff.

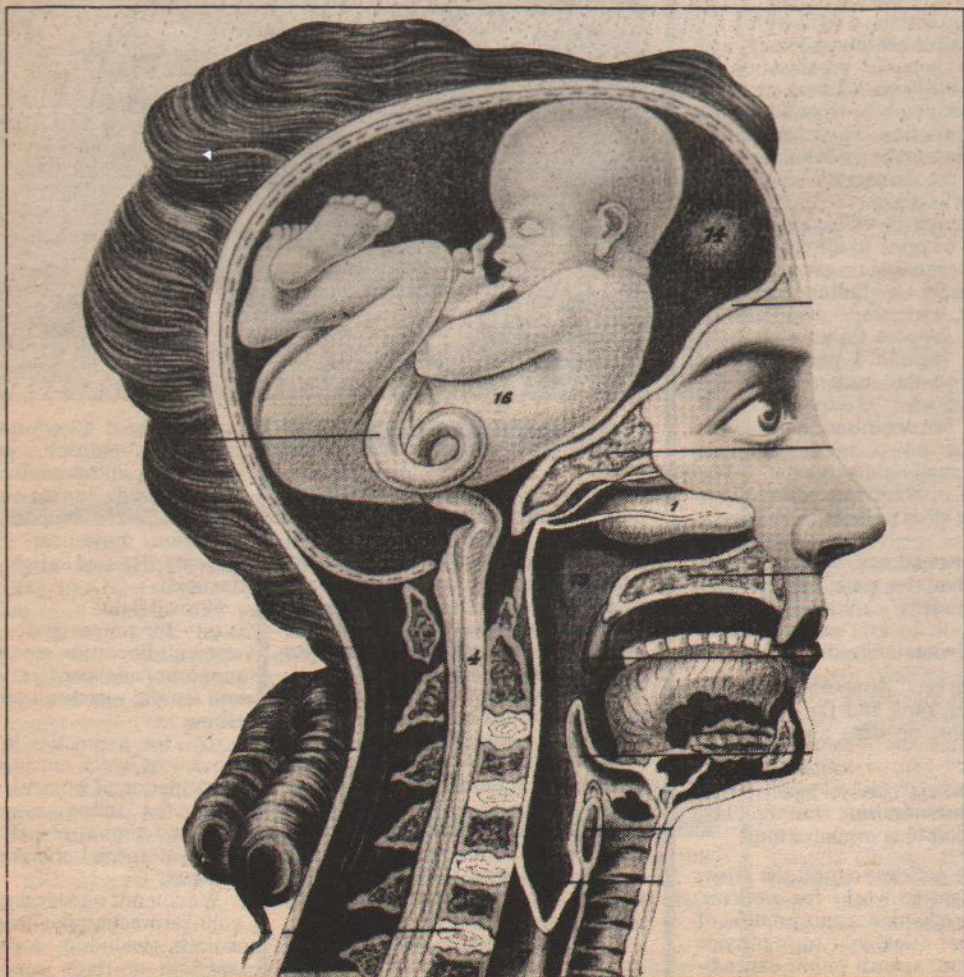
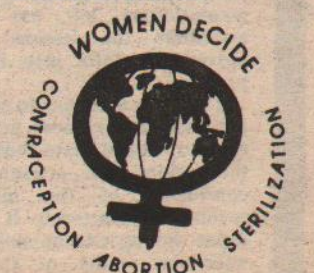
DIVIDED

I suppose I just feel divided all the time. There are lots of aspects of medicine, particularly the area that I'm involved in with women, that in theory I really like. I'd like to learn all the skills involved, how to operate and all that, and I'm fascinated by the way the human body works.

It's a job I really like to do and I think in whatever system there will be a role for medicine. But the situations I find myself in make me resent my work; they make me over-tired and there are all these contradictions which make me feel that I'm failing. I'm aware of all the problems and yet as an individual it's quite difficult to know how to counter them.

You thought you were going to cure people, and then you realise that you don't really do much, that the causes of the problem are something else anyway.

This contribution by SUE is taken from a conversation with JUDE WOODWARD. If you know someone — perhaps yourself! — who could make a good subject for our At Work series do let us know.



A NEW YEAR REVOLUTION

AFTER a lengthy discussion, the International Marxist Group and the International Socialist Alliance have agreed to issue the following joint appeal to aid the process of revolutionary unity in Britain.

Neither organisation believes that this appeal constitutes a

programme for a united revolutionary organisation. However, it does offer the basis for developing joint work in order to test out in practice the viability of building a unified organisation.

We will be circulating this appeal to many non-aligned militants in the labour movement as well as those already active in different

THE YEAR leading to the fall of the Heath government saw some of the greatest working class struggles in Britain since the 1920s. But there is still no revolutionary socialist organisation in Britain which has won the confidence of even a significant minority of working people. Indeed, since 1974 the Labour government, aided by the union bureaucracies, succeeded in imposing cuts in living standards and attacks on democratic rights.

This has led many in all parts of the British left to re-examine or question their assumptions. But, to be fruitful, this re-examination must start from the fact that the last 10 years of world politics have shown yet again the capacities of the working class and its allies for independent struggles against the class enemy and its state.

The struggles in the imperialist countries, France in 1968, Italy in the autumn of 1969, Portugal in 1975, Spain in early 1976, join and surpass the struggles in Britain up to 1974 as examples of this, and follow on the continuing post-war colonial fight against imperialism and against Stalinist domination in Eastern Europe.

The Labour government's attacks have succeeded through a combination of the manipulation of traditional loyalties and outright wrecking by the trade union bureaucracies of each attempt at a fight back by militant sectors. But the reformist left, whether Labour or Communist, was prevented by its 'pressure politics' from leading even token resistance due to its inability to break with the politics of the bureaucracy.

The revolutionary left does not suffer from this disadvantage. But it too has not succeeded in winning the confidence of workers so as to realise the potential for action of all those willing to fight.

In the past period, movements such as the women's movement have challenged aspects of capitalist society that the traditional left has tended to ignore. But the revolutionary left has failed to assimilate the lessons of these movements fully into its political practice.

The left's tendency to sectarianism and disunity has been an important cause of its failure to build a base in the working class, or even to win the confidence of the majority of revolutionary activists. It is only one cause among others, and does not alter the reality of the political differences which do exist — not only

on certain points of programme, but also flowing from differences in history and tradition. Nonetheless, it is an important factor.

But despite these failings a whole layer of activists exists on the shop floor, in the unions, in community struggles against the cuts and for new resources, in the movements around sexual politics, and in those against racism and fascism — who are broadly sympathetic to revolutionary socialism.

Significant, if limited, developments towards united activity in a number of areas of struggle lead us to hope that it may now be possible to make progress towards building a united revolutionary organisation, which is urgently needed.

We believe that the extent and significance of divergences which still exist can only be tested through joint work between revolutionaries, as well as continuing political discussion.

In this process, we may learn in practice how to overcome some of the problems of revolutionary organisations:

*the political problem of the roots of reformism and the left's failure to overcome this except in a temporary and limited way;

*the development of a healthy and democratic internal life in revolutionary organisations, and how to maximise the involvement of those new to revolutionary organisations, as well as combining those with an active and effectively united practice;

*the relationship between revolutionary organisations and wider class struggle organisations such as rank-and-file trade union groups, women's organisations;

*and how revolutionary organisations relate to personal and sexual politics.

The signatories to this document believe that these problems, and the differences that divide us, can be overcome on the basis of joint activity, given that we accept the fundamental positions of revolutionary Marxism, and share a common political orientation on key questions. Such activity must of course be rooted in local work. But we believe that the time has come when its impact must also be maximised by a national political agreement.

The statement that follows is an attempt to outline the policies which we believe can form such an agreement. It is in no way meant to be the programme of a united revolutionary organisation. Con-

siderable political discussion and clarification will be required before substantial moves in that direction are possible.

But we believe that work around these policies will in itself take forward the class struggle, and will provide the basis for testing out the possibility of further advance towards such a united organisation. We appeal to all those in agreement with them to join us.

1. We will work to build rank-and-file mass organisations of workers on the shop floor, in struggle and in the unions, and organisations in the community to defend and extend public and community services. We will fight to build rank-and-file based oppositions in the unions opposed to class collaborationist policies.

The struggle against the employers for the defence of jobs, conditions and social services cannot be waged successfully without a fight within the unions against the bureaucracy, and maximum possible organisation at rank-and-file level. All shop stewards committees, combine committees and other organisations of struggle of the working class in the trade unions must be under the democratic control of rank-and-file workers.

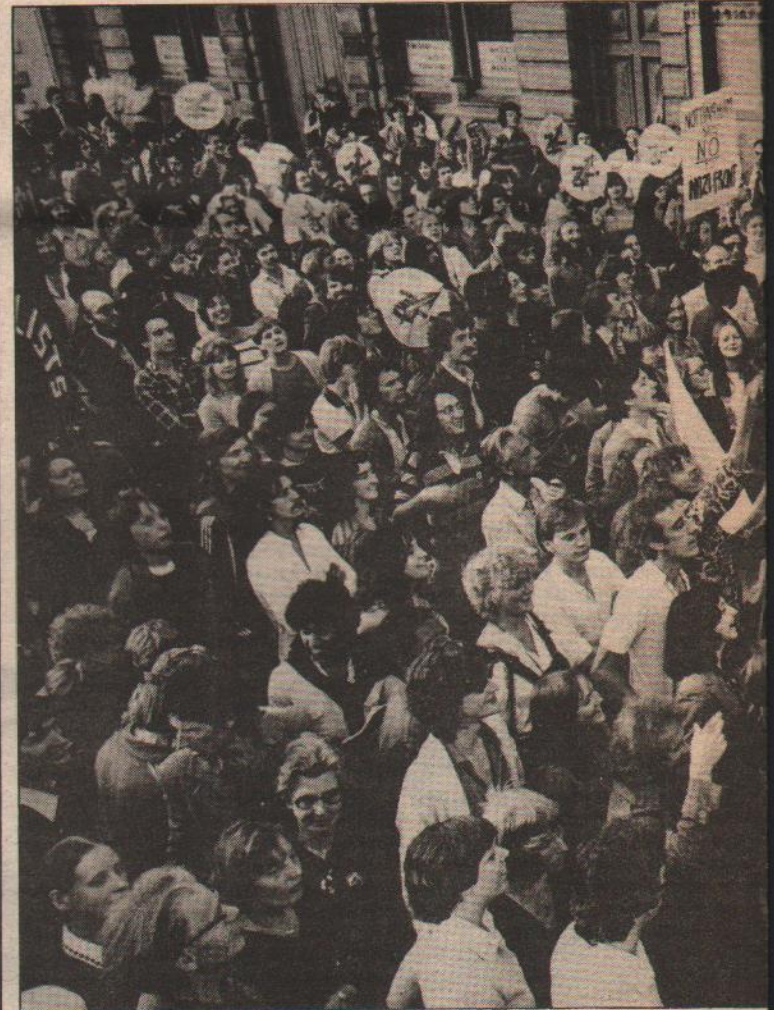
Oppositions in the unions must genuinely be open to all prepared to fight, regardless of political affiliations, not excluding sections of the union leaderships who may be forced to support fighting policies, and must include a perspective of fighting for the leadership of the unions. Such groupings must therefore be organisationally independent of any political groupings and internally democratic. The defence of workers' interests requires among the chief policies to be fought for:

(a) independence of the trade unions from the state; no incomes policy under capitalism; wage increases that at least preserve workers' living standards;

(b) workers' democracy; election of officials, rank and file control of negotiations; no bans and proscriptions;

(c) workers' unity; against racism; against sexism; for building effective combine organisations.

(d) for policies to meet the crisis; for the right to work; for workers' plans of production; expropriation of all firms unable to provide employment; against public expenditure cuts, except military.



2. We will work to build the autonomous organisation of women both locally and nationally. In particular, we will attempt to build organisation amongst working class women and to take issues raised by the women's movement into workplaces, the local community and the labour movements. We will work to build an autonomous gay movement.

The growth of the autonomous movements of women and gays is one of the most hopeful and important of recent political developments, which calls into question the continued oppression of women in the family, on which capitalism draws for its ability to perpetuate itself. Supporting and building these movements must be central to the activity of any new organisation.

Socialists, while seeking to build socialist currents within these movements, must respect their

organisational autonomy from any particular political organisation. Only such autonomous movements can succeed in uniting all the oppressed. We support a women's liberation movement open to all currents prepared to fight for its severe demands.

We will fight:

(a) for the seven demands of the women's liberation movement and support of all those fighting for them and for the socialisation of domestic labour;

(b) for a practice in the labour movement which encourages the full participation of women;

(c) for union branches, shop stewards committees, etc. to take up issues of special concern to women workers.

We commit ourselves generally to political practice that does not exclude women, including organisation of meetings at times compatible with child-care commitments, proper

RESOLUTION ON REVOLUTIONARY UNITY

organisations.

Signing this appeal means an active commitment to fighting for revolutionary unity in the coming months. We will publish the names of signatories in the next issue.

A series of meetings is being organised in a number of towns in

the next few months. These will be advertised in this paper and speakers from both the ISA and the IMG will explain the basis of the appeal and its implications for the future of the far-left in this country.

Editorial Board



run creches at conferences, etc. We will fight for these practices in labour movement organisations.

3. We will work to build democratic and active organisations including the ANL to fight racism and fascism both at local and national levels. We will work to take the struggle against racism and fascism into workplaces, the local community, and the labour movement.

The fight against the growing racist and fascist activity is central to any attempt to build a socialist alternative; the far right feeds off the consequences of Labour's policies and is the most ruthless opponent of black and other minorities including gays; and women and the entire working class.

We will fight:
(a) to destroy the National Front and other fascist organisations; for mass mobilisations to stop the

fascists;

(b) against immigration laws, police harassment and other aspects of state racism;

(c) for labour movement defence against the fascists;

(d) for black self-defence;

(e) for support for autonomous organisations of the black community;

(f) to build the Anti Nazi League with an effective democratic and broadly-based structure together with other organisations committed to the campaign against racism and fascism.

4. We will work to defend and extend democratic rights which are increasingly coming under attack from the state.

We will fight for:

(a) opposition to all state bans on labour movement activity; against

any reliance on the state to ban fascist activity;

(b) for the repeal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the conspiracy and 'sus' laws, and of the Official Secrets Act;

(c) the democratic right of self-determination of the Scottish and Welsh people; support for Welsh and Gaelic language rights;

(d) opposition to capitalist development of nuclear power.

5. We will work to build solidarity with workers and oppressed people in struggle in other countries. In particular we will work to build a movement against British imperialism in Ireland and to raise the issue of Ireland in the workplace, the local community, and the labour movement.

The interests of the working class are international, and the British labour movement's failure to recognise and act on this fact has exacted a catastrophic price from workers in Britain and throughout the world.

In addition to working for withdrawal from NATO, for support for all anti-imperialist struggles, for the withdrawal of all British troops from overseas, and the building of an effective workers' unity across national frontiers, we have a particular need and duty to concentrate on:

(a) Ireland: for the withdrawal of British troops; for the release of all Irish political prisoners; solidarity with those fighting British imperialism; for the building of an effective troops out movement in Britain; support for the right of self-determination for the Irish people;

(b) solidarity with the struggle in Southern Africa;

(c) support for the struggle for democratic rights in the states under Stalinist domination.

Socialists are the best defenders of democratic rights in the knowledge that the lack of them in any society bears down most heavily on the oppressed and exploited.

The experience of Stalinism in Eastern Europe makes it essential for socialists to get across the fact that socialism is only conceivable as an immeasurably more democratic society than what we have today, and that every major revolutionary struggle (Russia 1917, Spain 1936, Portugal 1975) has created democratic forms much more advanced than the institutions of bourgeois democracy.

Joint work along the lines of this

programme involves coordinating work of all our members in these areas; seeking to involve to the maximum all non-committed militants and members of other organisations who agree in whole or part with these demands; and producing whatever joint publications are necessary.

The experience of joint work, together with concurrent political discussion, should enable us to test out the possibility of moving towards a united revolutionary organisation. The fundamental policies which in our view divided revolutionaries from reformists and centrists in today's conditions are outlined in the document **Our Common Ground** which appeared in **Socialist Challenge** (6 October 1977).

A united revolutionary organisation must in our view accept the following basic principles:

(a) Internationalism: any revolutionary organisation must see itself as part of an international class struggle and must organise so as to draw from and contribute to the development of an internationally relevant political practice.

(b) In all sectors seek to build the independent power of the exploited and oppressed, proving our right to lead in political practice rather than by setting up fronts, taking every opportunity to build unity by involving all those who agree on demands and actions that can take the movement forward.

(c) Genuine internal democracy in the revolutionary organisation. Only on that basis can the fragmented experiences of militants in different sectors be pooled and centralised and a political response developed. This implies as a minimum certain organisational rights: rights of tendencies and factions, represen-

tation of minorities on leading bodies, and among full-time workers, regular and open election of leaderships, etc. But it is not merely a question of the 'right to oppose', but of a regular practice that involves all the membership in deciding the basic political line and perspectives of the organisation.

In order to develop this joint work and move towards a united revolutionary organisation, the signatories will undertake not only local work and activity in particular sectors but also the following national projects:

(a) supporting and building rank and file based opposition groups in the unions and industry, such as the Ford Workers Group;

(b) building the Socialist Unity electoral campaign;

(c) building a united revolutionary youth organisation.

For a United Revolutionary Organisation

To achieve all these aims, the organisations and individuals who are signatories to this appeal will work towards the creation of a united organisation. We will also approach such revolutionary organisations as the Socialist Workers Party and Big Flame for a programme of joint work as a first step towards revolutionary unity.

While we consider that the formation of a new organisation will be a significant step forward, we do not believe it will be 'the' revolutionary party in this country. We will have to continue to work for the unification of all revolutionaries into a single revolutionary socialist organisation in Britain. We call on all revolutionary organisations and independent revolutionaries in Britain to join with us to build a new organisation.

SIGN HERE

If you agree with this joint appeal and wish to aid the process of revolutionary unity, please sign and return this form. We will be publishing the names of signatories in forthcoming issues.

NAME

ADDRESS

TRADE UNION OR OTHER ORGANISATION

POSITION HELD

Send to: Joint Appeal, PO Box 50, London N1.

A look back at Fords

THE STRIKE OF '78

What happened and when

- 24 August Claim is submitted to the company.
- 21 September Ford rejects the claim and offers 5 per cent. Immediate walk-out by 2,500 body plant workers at Halewood.
- 22 September Mass walk-outs at most Ford plants. Union representatives on negotiating committee pledge backing for industrial action.
- 25 September Mass meetings at Ford plants vote solidly for strike action.
- 26 September AUEW executive votes unanimously to make the strike official. Other unions follow suit in the next few days. Dockers at Harwich and Liverpool vote to stop movement of all Ford products.
- 27 September Dockers at Tilbury, Dagenham and other Thames ports, airport workers at Southend, and drivers for key Ford distributors all vote to boycott Ford products.
- 29 September Harwich seamen prevent discharge of Ford cargo; Hull dockers also join boycott.
- 1 October International Metalworkers Federation calls for ban on overtime in Ford's other European plants to produce vehicles or parts for the British market. West German Ford stewards pledge 'all possible assistance' at meeting with British stewards in London.
- 2 October Labour Party conference motion rejecting all wage restraint and calling on NEC to campaign against the 5 per cent is carried by 2 to 1.
- 9 October Ford declares that it is prepared to ignore the 5 per cent and meet the unions on the basis of free collective bargaining.
- 10 October Talks begin but are adjourned to the 13th. A leaked telex reveals that Ford's European operation is grinding to a halt. Day of Action and solidarity demo with Ford workers in London.
- 11 October Ford offer of 8 per cent rejected by the unions.
- 13 October International conference in London of Ford trade union representatives from plants in Belgium, France, Germany and Spain discusses strengthening solidarity with British representatives.
- 20 October Motor Show in Birmingham opens with Ford stands empty after boycott action.
- 21 October Demonstration by anti-strike Ford workers' wives in Southampton is met by bigger mobilisation from pro-strike wives.
- 23 October 'Exploratory' talks take place between the company and union representatives Ron Todd and Reg Birch after an exchange of letters in which Birch describes the situation as a 'ghastly mess'.
- 25 October Union negotiators decide to reopen proper talks.
- 27 October Talks reopen with new company offer of 4.5 per cent 'attendance allowance' with penalty clauses on top of 8 per cent on basic rates. Talks are adjourned after unions reject penalty clauses.
- 31 October Company comes up with 'final' offer of 16.5 per cent, made up of 9.75 per cent on basic rates, 5.15 per cent attendance allowance, and a revision of holiday pay arrangements.
- 1 November The executive council of the electricians' union, EETPU, sends out letter announcing that strike pay will only be backdated to 21 October, 'when the contract with the company expired', as 'to pay benefit from the date the strike began would create a precedent for breaking union agreements that could not be sustained in the light of union policy'.
- 3 November Mass meetings at Ford plants reject the 16.5 per cent package on their negotiators' recommendation.
- 6 November Union negotiators decide not to approach the company for further talks. 'We are not going to discuss the ABC of the attendance allowance', says Birch.
- 14 November TUC General Council rejects 'understanding' with the government on pay.
- 15 November Talks resume with the company but are adjourned to the 17th.
- 17 November Talks are again adjourned to the 20th after another eight hours discussion.
- 20 November Union negotiators vote 33-12 to recommend acceptance of a 17 per cent offer with a slight increase in holiday pay and removal of some — but by no means all — penalty clauses.
- 22 November Mass meetings at all plants vote for a return to work on the basis of the offer.
- 24 November Ford workers go back nine weeks to the day after coming out on strike.

THE ERUPTION of the Ford strike took British politics by storm. No one, whatever their politics, forecast that the consequences of a 5 per cent offer would be so explosive.

Coming in the wake of the TUC decision against incomes policy and for the 35-hour week, a strike by this traditionally well organised and militant section of workers promised to be a powerful counterweight to the Labour government's wage-cutting schemes. All eyes turned to Ford's. Could they break through the 5 per cent ceiling?

Company chairperson Terence Beckett expressed the situation as he saw it: 'All key plants are on strike over what has been made into a political rather than industrial dispute.'

POLITICAL

Within a matter of days, the political impact of the strike had become even more sharply expressed. On 2 October, the Labour Party conference voted by 4,017,000 to 1,924,000 against the government's pay policy.

With literally hundreds of thousands of workers with wage claims pending, surely this was the green light for a generalised offensive against Callaghan and Healey... A united struggle by all workers over their own claims would strengthen the case of them all.

The Labour Party NEC and all the trade union leaders understood this; they stated that they would completely ignore that part of the resolution calling for 'an active campaign against the 5 per cent'.

To back up their insistence on the pay policy, the Labour leaders launched a huge political offensive: the Ford Motor Company might have big profits but the economy cannot afford wage rises of more than 5 per cent.

SPIRAL

If such rises are imposed, they argued, two things will happen. Firms will be less profitable and will shed workers to lengthen the dole queues. Others will put up their prices, taking us back to the inflationary spiral of a few years ago.

The Labour government, they said, stakes its whole future on its ability to prevent a return to the hyper-inflation caused by the previous Tory government.

The only answer to Callaghan was and is a thoroughgoing socialist one putting forward a solution of the crisis in the interests of the working class.

The Ford strike firmly implanted two key elements of such an alternative which militants can now build on. In the first place the £20 rise as presented by the Ford Workers Group blasted the special case argument.

REPLY

Twenty pounds was needed to restore living standards to pre-social contract levels. This is the only answer to the productivity mongers: tie wages not to profit or output but to the rise in the cost of living. Some people call this a sliding scale.

The 35 hours demand also put forward at Ford is an equally powerful reply to the 5 percenters. Solve unemployment not by tightening belts and boosting profits, hoping that benevolent bosses will then shower us with jobs. Cut the working week and share the work, that's the socialist answer.

Clearly other elements need to be added in. The problem of the motor industry can't be solved in one plant — however profitable. Nationalisation of the whole motor industry, including components, is the only sort of answer that Vauxhall or British Leyland workers will respond to.

Furthermore, the weight of this industry (together with steel) would pose the question of a workers plan



Photo: BOB MURPHY (Socialist Challenge)



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

which breaks with the capitalist profit logic for the whole economy. A massive programme of useful public works is needed to improve social services and employ the jobless by, for instance, building more hospitals, schools, and houses.

Such policies need to be fought for by militant forms of action including strikes and occupations, not by relying on negotiations.

This was not the approach of the trade union leaders, who instead went along with the Labour government's attempts to isolate the Ford strike. From the very first day, Ron Todd, chairperson of the union side of the negotiating committee, argued that

the claim was justified on the basis of the company's ability to pay.

The leadership inside Ford did not help. They completely embraced the special case argument of Todd and Co. They failed to organise flying pickets to factories like Vauxhall and Leyland calling for joint action.

With the exception of a demonstration called ten days after the strike began, they made no attempt to launch a serious campaign in the labour movement to spread the struggle.

They turned down the offer of Ford's staff workers for 'assistance'. They turned down the offer of Essex

Fire Brigade not to cross picket lines. They made no appeal through mobilising lobbies, etc. to turn the TUC resolution against wage restraint into action.

Even the letter they handed in at Downing Street in the first days of the strike simply concluded by appealing to Callaghan to change course.

But Callaghan and Co. cannot be fought through appeals. The final outcome of the strike proved this.

Without doubt, it represented a victory. Seventeen per cent is a long way from the original offer. Many thousands of workers have been inspired by it. But equally, it is a long way from the original claim.

Union leader speaks

'An atmosphere of success'

JONATHAN SILBERMAN interviews Sid Harraway, chairperson of the shop stewards at the Ford body plant in Dagenham.

Meeting the press on the first day of the strike, you were very confident about the relevance of the full claim and the Ford workers' commitment to it. In view of that, how do you regard the settlement?

The settlement was obviously a satisfactory one. Of course we didn't achieve every aspect of the claim.

But to move from the position of the original 5 per cent to ultimately the settlement of 17 per cent — made up by 9.6 per cent improvement in the basic rate, with a 5.6 per cent supplementary payment and with improvements in holiday pay to 'time and a third' — meant that there was much satisfaction and the atmosphere within the factory is one of success.

On the question of the penalty clauses, the original attendance allowance contained 13 disqualifications. It took us a couple of weeks to negotiate the elimination of the best part of them, and ultimately we finished up with just five.

And of course now the workers' position within the factory is to begin to look for ways of eliminating them in the next agreement.

Another dissatisfaction was the question of hours. We've had a 40-hour week since 1961. The degrees of

mechanisation between 1961 and 1978 made it important that we get some reduction in the working week.

In 1961, we were producing the current model at 39 an hour. At peak volume prior to the strike, we were producing at 76 Cortinas an hour.

We found the company extremely rigid in all the negotiations on the question of hours. They wouldn't budge one iota.

Ultimately, on the trade union side of the Negotiating Committee, we unanimously agreed a resolution to retain the question of hours as a priority, and now — in the new year — we will be beginning a campaign of conferences, propaganda, broad activity.

I've just recently returned from a two-day visit to Germany, where I met Ford workers in both Cologne and Saarlouis.

There is a general recognition of the need to effect international links of the nature that could assist us in putting pressures on the company to achieve a reduction in hours, because we're both in the same position, we produce the same models, and Ford production is extensively integrated on a European scale.

So there is a need to develop a campaign on a national scale which we would do in conjunction with workers in the motor industry and on an international scale.

The current dispute of the

steelworkers in Germany has led to us sending them messages of solidarity and we would be expecting reciprocation if we were to find ourselves in a struggle around hours.

Can I ask you about the negotiating procedure and the state of the National Joint Negotiating Committee during the strike?

This was a radically different NJNC to the one that existed in 1971, with a significantly expanded 'lay' section. Yet there were certain inconsistencies between this move towards greater lay representation and what went on.

There seem to have been points in the strike when the full NJNC had decided against further negotiation with the company, or negotiations only on the basis of the full claim, and then individual full-time officials — Ron Todd or Reg Birch — acted to reopen negotiations...

You're right, the full NJNC had completely changed. The day of the submission of the claim on 24 August was the first time we'd reconstituted the NJNC with full-time officials, lay representatives plus the full-time convenors.

The union side grew to 56-strong. Some people would say it's a bit cumbersome with that many people involved, but actually it's an improvement, because prior to that the convenors were completely outside the negotiations.

We've improved the industrial

democracy by involving the convenors of each plant as part of the NJNC negotiating with the company. If we could get that nationally throughout industry, that convenors of plants were engaged in negotiations with the employers, I think that would be a valuable development.

Now the NJNC agreed that the chairperson, Ron Todd, the secretary, Reg Birch, and the vice-chairperson, Doug Cornwall, were available to meet the company at any time. And they met the company on two separate occasions.

This was three officers meeting three people from the company to discuss various questions. They had no powers of negotiation. They were purely in a position of attempting to establish whether there was any flexibility in any aspect of the situation.

After the two exchanges with the company they reported back to the full NJNC. It had been agreed by the NJNC



SID HARRAWAY

that these three officers would be available any time the company might wish to meet them.

Obviously 56 people can't do that major negotiating with the company, and so the chairperson and secretary would make the presentations. During adjournments the trade union side would have its discussions and decide on formulations that would be put to the company.

In a recent pamphlet, Dan Connor and Bernie Passingham put forward the view that what we should be looking for in the end is an NJNC which is completely lay, presumably with full-time officials only in an advisory capacity.

Do you think an NJNC organised

along these lines would have made any difference to the course of this year's strike?

No, I don't think so. Because what's most important is the involvement of the membership in determining and securing the wage claim.

The claim originates on the factory floor. By this Easter, meetings will be being held where people can put forward their aspirations for the 1979 claim.

These will then go through all our structures from meetings of the convenors to meetings of all the shop stewards. So it's the continuous involvement of the membership, reporting back to them the claim, reporting back the negotiations, which is the key to the overall situation.

I very much agree with your stress on membership involvement. But wasn't this a problem during the strike itself?

During the strike the workers in the main attended the factory once a week to collect their tax rebate and strike pay.

Almost each week the shop stewards produced a weekly bulletin which was distributed to the workers which reported what the situation was. So in that important sense the membership was involved through what we could call informal consultation with the stewards.

It wasn't until the company made the improvement to 9.6 per cent plus the attendance allowance that we decided to formally consult the membership. The membership broadly — out of the 23 factories, five small ones voted to accept — rejected any strings or penalty clauses, which brought us back to the negotiating table again. Then we had the final mass meeting when the NJNC recommended acceptance.

At the previous mass meeting, the NJNC had recommended rejection on the basis of the penalty clauses. When we felt we had got as far as we could in eliminating them through negotiations, we went back to the membership. And overwhelmingly the membership voted to accept our recommendation and to return to work.

Here to stay, here to fight

THE FORD WORKERS Group [the Combine] is the most important gain from the strike. The militancy of the 1971 strike was as great, but quickly dissipated after the return to work.

Now there exists an organised and militant left-wing minority in virtually all the key plants.

The first vital step has been taken in transforming the union leadership in Ford, writes JAMES DRAKE.

The combine was based on the clearest and most decisive demands for defending the standard of living of Ford workers — £20 on the pay and one hour off the day.

Having worked out its demands, the combine set its sights on the Coventry conference which was to decide on the claim. The Communist Party leadership advanced the vague demand for a 'substantial increase'.

A vigorous fight was waged among the mass of Ford workers and the stewards committees to mandate the convenors to vote for the concrete demands advanced by the combine.

The combine won. There was then a mighty campaign of leaflets and badges throughout Ford to convince every worker that the claim was not only right but could be won.

This was the origin of the apparently 'spontaneous' walk out in Ford plants up and down the country in the days immediately following the company's five per cent offer.

WALK OUT

Rumour has it that it was confusion between a combine-led picket of union-company talks shown on TV and an actual walk out at Dagenham that led Halewood workers to down tools and start the walk out which really did precipitate the strike!

Throughout the strike the combine produced thousands of weekly bulletins, lobbied all talks of the National Joint Negotiating Committee and won new supporters in the various plants.

In London, weekly meetings were held of Dagenham and Langley supporters to decide the content of the mass leaflets.

This insistence on democratic functioning and the combine's genuine independence from any one socialist grouping made it more attractive to non-aligned militants inside Ford, and allowed the majority of the left opposition to the CP's stranglehold to work effectively together.

GROUPS

By the end of the strike, new groups had been set up in Halewood; supporters won in most of the smaller plants; and the basis laid for separate groups in a majority of the five plants at Dagenham.

All this from two small groups in Dagenham and Langley in just over a year.

If there is a criticism to make of the combine it is that, given its impact before the strike, it should have been even bigger after it and with a larger number of active supporters among Ford shop stewards. Why didn't this happen?

Before the strike it was obvious that a militant campaign had to be waged both among the rank and file and within the stewards committees and the Coventry conference — the real rank and file leadership, whether we like its present composition or not.

The combine ran a successful struggle. However, during the strike this approach was not so obvious and it was in fact questioned by some combine supporters.

SUBSTITUTE

The result was a tendency for the combine to substitute itself for the stewards committees, and through them the active involvement of the



mass of Ford workers.

Thus the combine took upon itself the task of mobilising the support of other trade unionists. Combine supporters constituted flying pickets.

DEMOCRACY

Only once, in the third week of the strike, did the combine's **Ford Strike News** raise the demand for either regular mass meetings or a recall of the Coventry conference.

A consistent fight against the bureaucratic leaderships of strikes, for democratically elected strike committees, for the right of workers' delegates to discuss and vote on any company offer and instruct their negotiators, is not simply 'traditional Trotskyist dogma', as its detractors maintain.

Coupled with the imaginative tactics and activities at which the

combine excelled, this approach is the only way the existing rank and file leadership — the shop stewards committees — can be challenged and transformed and the workers' demands won.

Otherwise we needlessly limit our impact among the 57,000 Ford workers to those few thousand who have a militant combine supporter for a steward, and who puts up a tough fight on the line.

This last point is deliberately overstated. But the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Towards the end of the strike, Transport Union official Mick Murphy told the Dagenham shop stewards committee (which technically has over 600 stewards on it) that Ron Todd had reopened negotiations with management over the attendance allowance.

MANOEUVRES

This was at a time when the NJNC union side was still formally committed to the full claim. Murphy was able to win the backing of the stewards committee for this manoeuvre by arguing that as in 1971 there was a danger of the union chiefs intervening over the heads of the NJNC negotiators.

Faced with a choice between the NJNC negotiators and the trade union executives, the stewards chose the former.

But there was a third option: fight off the union chiefs by recalling the Coventry conference, electing a new strike leadership, and taking the fight through mass meetings.

However, for this option to be credible it would have had to have been fought for all along; in the **Strike News**; in the lobbying of the NJNC; in all the stewards committees.

ISSUES

Two crucial issues have been decided which will allow the combine to continue to increase its influence among Ford workers and build up its support inside the stewards com-

mittees: the fight for the 35-hour week, and the struggle against the penalty clauses attached to the attendance allowance.

Badges are being produced on these themes, and it is hoped to produce a regular four-page **Ford News** early this year. This will help break the isolation that surrounds the struggles in one plant.

CONFERENCE

A national conference of all combine supporters in mid-February will finalise a platform for supporters and what needs to be done to prepare for the 1979 claim.

Two other things show why the combine is here to stay. Its militant opposition to racism should put it in a good position to fight for positive discrimination for black and Asian workers — both within the company and the unions.

At Dagenham the workforce is close to two thirds black and Asian, but this is not reflected in the composition of the stewards and convenors committees — let alone among the full-time officials.

Secondly, the combine remains determined to fight sexism. This takes predictable forms in the brutalising atmosphere of male-only production lines and night-shift working.

SEXISM

But it is also within the combine itself that the principle is being maintained that wives and girlfriends (and husbands and boyfriends) of Ford workers can attend, speak and vote at all combine supporters' meetings.

The potential of such measures was shown by the swiftness with which women combine supporters snuffed out the media-inspired wives 'back to work' campaign at Southampton during the strike.

In 1979 the combine looks set to grow apace. A number of established supporters will be contesting the stewards elections in May, and then it will be roll on the next pay battle.

INTERNATIONAL

WHAT can revolutionaries do when they are elected to parliament?

That is one of the questions **Hugo Blanco**, the Peruvian Trotskyist, will be answering when he visits Britain in early February.

But part of the answer is given by the women workers of the **Lolas textile factory** on the

outskirts of Lima, who are occupying their factory.

The **Workers, Peasants, Students, and People's Front (FOCEP)**, of which Blanco is a leader, is the only party to have helped them.

Here one of the strike's leaders talks to **GUNILLA BERGLUND** of 'Intercontinental Press/Inprecor'.

Peruvian women workers occupy

Why did you occupy the factory?

We occupied the factory on 29 August 1978 after having been laid off since 7 November 1977.

At that time the management said we were only being given a month's leave. But when we came back we found the factory closed.

When we were laid off, we were already owed ten weeks' wages. But we got no warning that the factory was going to close.

BENEFITS

We asked the Minister of Labour if Lolás had the right to shut down a factory like that.

On 22 November we got a reply. The management did not have the right to do it, and the plant had to be reopened and the workers' wages paid.

But nothing happened.

What Lolás wanted was to get rid of the older workers who had earned social benefits and were employed on a permanent basis. (You don't get any benefits until you have worked here for three years.)

After its first appeal was turned down, Lolás appealed again and declared bankruptcy. Once again its claims were rejected, and on 29 August the ministry announced that if the factory did not open as soon as possible, the owners would be fined.

The very same day the doors to the weaving shops were opened. Lolás was afraid that otherwise the police would have broken in and destroyed the doors.

So that made it possible for you to get in?

Yes, there was nothing to prevent us. But when we went in, things looked quite differently than we remembered.

Practically all the machines were gone. The office had also been emptied out and the walls were covered over. There was no electric power.

We called a general assembly to discuss what we should do. It was decided that we would not leave the factory.

Later we found out that our machines, or at least some of

them, had been removed to the cutting department. So, we decided to keep a watch on them, too.

When was the attack on the factory?

It came on 19 September at fifteen minutes past midnight. We were attacked with tear-gas grenades, stones, and clubs. Lolás had hired 200 goons to do the job.

But there were also tanks and police cars out in the street, and these government forces made no attempt to stop the attack — even though we appealed to them directly for help.

The battle lasted four and a half hours. Finally they managed to drive us out of the cutting shop and dig in there.

The cutting shop is now considered the property of **Textiles Populares**, which is also owned by Lolás. Fifty-two of us were injured in the fighting, some seriously.

Is there any chance that the workers at Textiles Populares will support you, so that with their help you can occupy the

cutting department and get at the machines?

This is not likely. Lolás has refused to recognise the union chosen by the workers there. It recognised another one and then signed a sweetheart contract.

For example, the contract provided for laying off a lot of workers and included no provisions for social benefits.

So the workers there do not dare support us, because they know that that would lead to their being laid off.

SOLIDARITY

Where are you getting help and solidarity now?

From the people. We get food from the markets. Other unions help us financially.

The FOCEP is the only party that has helped us. The day after the goons stormed the factory, it helped us take our people out to hospitals, and we can always count on the FOCEP to publicise our case.

IMG RALLY AGAINST IMPERIALISM

Speakers: **Hugo Blanco**, Peru; **Mike Farrell**, Ireland; Iranian revolutionary; and **Tariq Ali**, Socialist Challenge.

Friday 2 February, 7.30pm **Camden Town Hall**, London NW6. From 5.30 to 7.30pm there will be anti-imperialist exhibitions, Latin American folk music and dancing, and films.

Admission £1. Two tickets for £1.30, three tickets for £1.60. The reduced rates apply only to tickets bought before 31 January and the requests already received indicate you should book now.

Tickets from **IMG**, PO Box 50, London N2 XP. Make cheques payable to 'The Week'.

THE African Study Group's Publication No 2 is a special issue on women. The Group hopes that these articles will contribute to highlighting the struggles of half our society against oppression and exploitation.

Obtain copies at socialist bookshops or order from Box 24, 182 Upper Street, London N1 at 40p p&p.

AFRICAN STUDY GROUP
VOL 1 NO 2



Teachers' hunger strike in Lima

The danger of 'criminal' sectarianism

An article in the latest issue of the **Conference of Socialist Economists journal 'Capital and Class'**, entitled 'Trade Unionism and the struggle for Liberation in South Africa', raises questions of the greatest importance to the possibility of social revolution in South Africa.

JOHN HUNT discusses it.

The author is **David Hemson**, a former official of the **Textile Workers Industrial Union of South Africa** who is now in exile in Britain. He is a leading activist in **SACTU**, the banned South African trade union federation, which is politically aligned with the underground **African National Congress**.

The ANC has long been dominated by the **South African Communist Party** — one of the most pro-Moscow CPs. The SACP leadership of the ANC has advocated a blind reliance on a strategy of guerilla warfare as the answer to all political problems of the South African revolution.

This meant the ANC's energies being concentrated on military preparations at the expense of developing a strategy of mass action against the regime.

The SACP even denied that such mass action was possible before armed struggle was launched. Neither the mass strikes by tens of thousands of workers in 1973, nor the strikes and demonstrations by millions of blacks in 1976, moved the SACP away from this strategy.

This failure by the ANC's effective leadership to assess the importance of these events created a considerable debate among militants and sympathisers of the ANC.

CRITICAL

Hemson's article is the product of such critical thinking. He does not directly attack the policy of the ANC or SACP leadership. Rather he turns his considerable polemical skills against an article on trade unionism in South Africa by **David Davis**, which

appeared in the SACP's journal **African Communist**, and which extends the logic of the SACP's politics into this field.

Davis argues that the semi-legal 'unregistered' black unions in South Africa are at best militantly economic, or at worst operate to displace **SACTU** as 'international representative of the South African working class'.

He claims they played no significant role in organising and raising demands in the 1973-74 strikes.

To back up this approach he has argued 'within the movement', Hemson says, either that the trade unions are not productive of socialist consciousness or revolutionary action and therefore obstruct building the party or that the South African state is so strong that all trade union activity is useless and that therefore advanced workers should leave the country to seek military training.

Hemson refutes the charges against the unregistered unions

by showing that in fact 'Independent trade unions have deepened the struggles of the black working class by raising working class issues and structural demands (such as the struggle for union recognition, against shop steward victimisation, in defence of strikers, and the permanent organisation of workers).'

Through an analysis of the history of working class struggle in South Africa he demonstrates that 'mass strikes have at times paralysed state repression and have shown the potential of developing into insurrections.'

CLASSICAL

'These strikes are not the complete expression of resistance to apartheid (the problem of developing mass struggles together with armed struggle has been faced by the underground since 1961) but no decisive challenge to the state is possible without this proletarian form of action to disorganise production and the

state.'

Hemson's position is both clear and classically Marxist. He writes:

'Lenin argued that trade unions should be organised by industry, that they should be broad organisations, as open as possible in order to mobilise the workers effectively.'

'The aim of the unions is directly connected to their mass character: their object would be unobtainable if they failed to unite all those who understand the necessity of struggling against the employers and the state.'

'It is for this reason that Lenin argued that Communists should support non-party unions, and distinguish the party from the trade union even in conditions of extreme repression...'

'Lenin describes trade unions as a "tremendous step forward for the working class" and argues that the proletariat cannot develop without trade union organisation.'

'The work of the trade unions is to educate and give

all-round political development and training to workers, and when workers are being organised Lenin argues it is fundamentally incorrect "even criminal" to be "critical" and disparaging. "The task of revolutionaries is to convince the backward elements, to work among them, and not to fence themselves off with artificial and childish 'Left' slogans." (Lenin)

COMBINE

'When revolutionaries are forced through repression not to declare their intentions openly, work in open and legal (even "downright reactionary") organisations is absolutely necessary...'

'The task of revolutionaries is not to adopt one form of struggle and to reject the other, but to combine illegal forms of struggle with every form of legal struggle...'

'Both the party and the trade union are integral to the development of a revolutionary working class movement.'

Chinese Marxist interviewed

'Without internationalism, Socialism is doomed'

THE TURMOIL of debate in China, including fascinating contributions such as the 'China Youth' article reprinted in a recent 'Socialist Challenge', raises the problems of how far the bureaucracy is prepared to go in overturning Mao's heritage — and how far the intentions of the masses are independent of those of the bureaucracy.

We put these questions to SHUAN SHAN, a Chinese Marxist living in Hong Kong.

What are the main features of the present political ferment?

The present ruling faction consists chiefly of two kinds of cadres of the Chinese Communist Party. One is the beneficiaries of the cultural revolution, with Hua Kuo-feng at its head. The other is the victims of it, represented by Teng Hsiao-ping.

GRAVITY

At the beginning the specific gravity of the 'beneficiaries' within the combination was much greater than that of the 'victims'.

Gradually, however, with more and more 'victims' rehabilitated and with the ever-increasing pressure from below for more democracy and legality, the relation of strength within the ruling party in Peking has changed in favour of the Teng Hsiao-ping faction. Hence the new political explosion in China, particularly in Peking.

Now we see that the Teng faction has become so strong that it has reversed the decision on the Tien An Men incident on 5 April 1976: from counter-revolutionary it now becomes revolutionary.

It has begun to challenge the authority of Mao and to re-evaluate the meaning of the cultural revolution.

Will that lead to the downfall of Hua Kuo-feng and his group and to a whole-scale de-Maoisation?

I don't think so. Although I don't want to guess exactly what kind of reshuffle will be made, I do believe that the Hua group can easily and willingly compromise with the Teng group.

As for the Teng group, in spite of their having been victimised at the hands of Mao and his cronies, all these rehabilitated old cadres are basically Maoists.

Neither politically nor ideologically can they afford to break with Mao — much less so than their Russian counterparts, the Khrushchevs and Brezhnevs, did in relation to Stalin.

Since the establishment of the People's Republic of China all policies adopted by the CCP have been aimed at the

modernisation of China. And all political and ideological differences among the leaders of the CCP can be reduced to how to achieve the modernisation.

As the supreme leader of the CCP Mao had thought out and put into effect nearly all possible ways of modernisation.

In foreign affairs, first one-sided reliance on the USSR, then self-reliance and finally making friends with the Western world, especially with US imperialism.

In domestic affairs Mao tried a long series of methods, from the rather liberal ones to the most tyrannical. Each phase of his policy was replaced by another because of failure.

Now the way adopted by Teng and his group for modernisation is nothing but either the direct continuation of Mao's (in foreign policy) or a return to one phase of Mao's old policies (in domestic affairs the recent events quite naturally remind us of the 'hundred flowers' days).

Therefore there is no reason for the 'orthodox' Maoists represented by Hua Kuo-feng not to comply with Teng's line. And there is also no reason for the 'dissident' Maoists headed by Teng to detach themselves from Mao.

That is to say, there will be no so-called 'de-Maoisation', though there will be a campaign to disclose and confirm the mistakes Mao made during the



WILL Mao be consigned to the dustbins of history?

last years of his life.

Will these policies which failed in their own time succeed this time under Teng? I think not.

Over 26 or 27 years Mao's policy went in a sort of vicious circle, jumping from one extremity to another, from ultra-left to ultra-right and vice versa. The most important reason here was also his position of 'socialism in a single country'. As Stalinists and Maoists on the fundamental question, Teng and Hua will definitely repeat Mao's failure.

CAPITULATION

And the result of the present policy of the Peking leadership will be either in the same vicious circle or capitulation before the ever-increasing pressure of world capitalism.

In spite of all this, the struggle between the so-called Maoists, and de-Maoists, especially between the old bureaucrats of the CCP and the common people (youth in particular), is of great importance.

It represents a new phase of the development of revolution in China. It offers a new opening to the working people and all genuine revolutionaries in China to advance the socialist cause.

Will the Teng-Hua bloc clamp down on the new 'hundred flowers' movement as quickly as happened 20 years ago?

It depends on the scope of the movement and how independent it is from the Teng faction, which has benefited from it and therefore more or less supports it.

Once this movement opposes the bureaucracy in general it is quite probable that it will be suppressed.

What is your assessment of the 'China Youth' article?

Its primary aim is to provide the policies of the leadership, particularly the Teng group, with a theoretical basis.

But it reflects in a very compact form popular dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic regime and gives systematic expression to the feelings and ideas which up to now were only vaguely expressed in Tien

An Men Square poems and wall posters.

Besides, it represents a serious and bold attempt to trace out the origins of the bureaucratic and even autocratic oppressions China has suffered under the 'socialist' regime.

It also proposes a number of measures which its authors believe might help China advance onto a socialist and democratic road. In this respect it is a very brilliant and important document.

It is mainly official, but partly unofficial. That is to say it serves the interests of one group of the bureaucracy, but at the same time it has more or less passed the limits of criticism set down by the bureaucracy.

This 'unofficial' element represents the genuine anti-bureaucratic and even autocratic oppressions China has

The article correctly points out the objective reason for bureaucratisation and tyranny: the extremely long and unique tradition of autocracy in China and the economic and cultural backwardness of the country.

IDEOLOGY

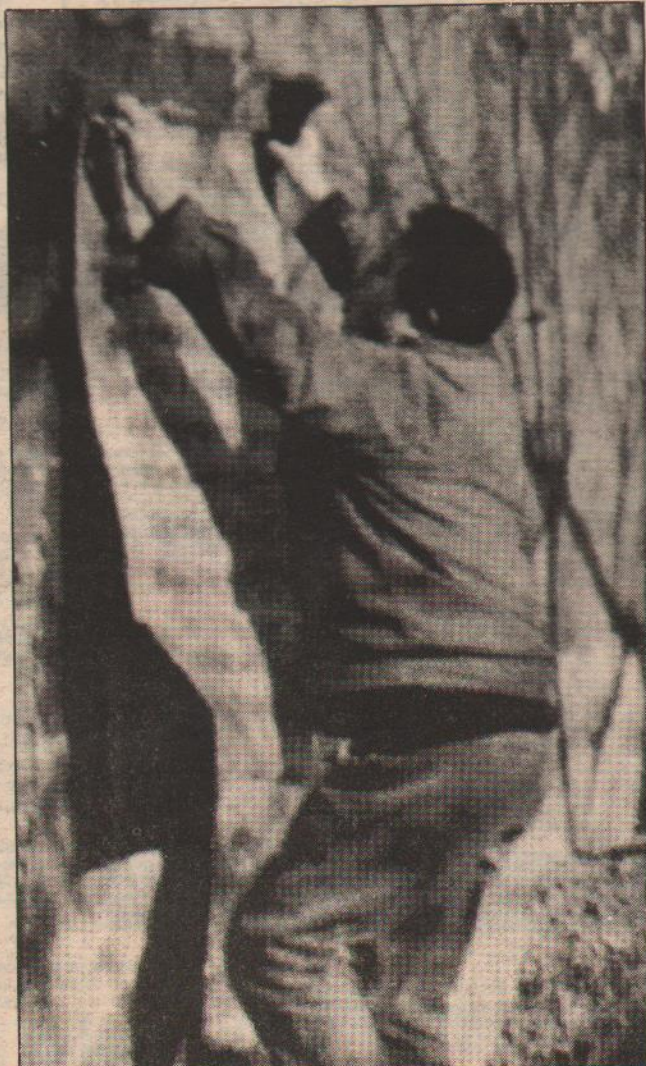
But it fails to point out that the Stalinist ideology of the CCP and the Stalinist-type structure of the state also constitute an important reason for its bureaucratic distortion.

And the fatal fault of the article is the authors' position of 'socialism in a single country'. They want to fight against all those evils simply by 'extensively developing democracy and strengthening the legal system', and think that this struggle alone is quite enough to construct healthy socialism within the boundaries of China.

To construct socialism is an international task. The idea that it is impossible to construct healthy socialism in a single country is absolutely foreign to the two young authors.

To develop democracy and strengthen the legal system is important, for which the Chinese revolutionaries should fight with all their strength.

But this struggle can bear fruit only if it is properly placed in the strategy for world revolution. Otherwise it is foredoomed.



PUTTING up a wall poster in China.

Farewell Teng

THE article on this page will be the last to appear in this paper using the old Wade-Giles system of transliteration of Chinese names.

The Pinyin alphabet, now being used by Reuters and the New China News Agency, renders old friends almost unrecognisable: Deng Xiaoping, Hua Guofeng, Jiang Qing.

Other names, however, will not change: Mao Tse-tung and Peking for example. We will also be spared the confusion of the Chinese word for China: Zhongguo, meaning the Middle Kingdom.

This week's article was written and typeset before the changes were released — but take extra care when reading future coverage on Zhongguo.

Charter 77

THE Charter 77 opposition group in Czechoslovakia has recently published a document condemning official discrimination against travellers or 'gipsies'.

It blames the authorities for the 30 per cent illiteracy rate among travellers and for the policy of forced sterilisation of traveller women in some areas. The document compares the racism towards travellers with that shown towards Jews in the past.

Czech mates

STILL in Czechoslovakia and still on the subject of racism, recent visitors to the country were four former SS members, including Hauptsturmführer Werner Kalleis. One of the places of interest they visited was the site of the Terezin concentration camp.

The whole affair was, of course, an oversight on the part of the Czechoslovak authorities — too busy harassing oppositionists, no doubt.

Petrol prices

Our Coals to Newcastle correspondent writes: British Airways has been shipping petrol from Heathrow to Iran, apparently to fuel its own planes. Last Thursday, for example, it transported over 500 gallons in passenger planes.

Safety regulations demand that the petrol must be put into one litre containers — which pushes the price up to £30 a gallon!

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LETTERS

'Theory' and experience

YOUR first article on 'Marxist theory and the British labour movement' (23 November) conveniently invented its own tradition of an anti-intellectual, parochial reformism which you counterpose to the disembodied 'Marxist theory' which you presumably have up your sleeve to educate us with.

By collecting quotations at random you've produced a caricature of the British socialist movement which arrogantly dismisses the complexity and richness of the movements which produced, to name just a few, William Thompson, Kate Barmby, Robert Owen, Ernest Jones, Eleanor Marx, Isabella Ford, William Morris, Edward Carpenter, Tom Maguire, Hannah Mitchell, Noah Ablett, Sylvia Pankhurst.

Against Ben Tillett there was also a strong strand of internationalism in the Independent Labour Party. For example, Annie Davison, a Glasgow socialist Jean McCrindle and I interviewed in *Dutiful Daughters*, remembered one of the precepts of her ILP Socialist Sunday School as saying: 'Do not think that those who love their own country must hate and despise other nations or wish for war which are the remnants of barbarism.'

The writer of the article talks about lack of theory affecting 'even those attempting to be revolutionaries'. Your use of 'even' implies that Marxist theoreticians avoid the errors of 'common sense'. In reality, of course, Marxist theory is no guarantee against all kinds of blind spots, and while 'common sense' won't take us all the way it is not to be sniffed at.

As for your 'even' in relation to the early Communist Party, I don't know enough to be sure if it was so anti-intellectual, but if it was, so what? It was a tiny part of a much larger movement. It doesn't mean that all those Plebs readers, Ruskin College students, Glasgow political

economy classes, South Wales miners, Clarion theatre groups, members of the Herald League, the British Socialist Party, left ILPers, Workers Esperanto, the Society for the Study of Sex Psychology, and Socialist Sunday Schools were insular and dismissive of ideas.

Perhaps you might have explained the difference between being anti-theory and being against blinkered middle class theorists who dismiss people's experience. An understandable antagonism to the latter has given rise to a crumpled form of class consciousness which it is wiser for socialists to respond to by creating a movement which uses Marxism as a means of seeing beyond the limits of our own experiences of life rather than asserting 'Correct Theory'. Indeed, the writers of Marxist education series in *Socialist Challenge* are not exempt from such limits.

SHEILA ROWBOTHAM [London E8]

Rank and file in NALGO

IT WAS unfortunate that your otherwise full report (7 December) of the day of action by social workers on 29 November was marred by some important political inaccuracies.

1. Contrary to first impressions, the 'ludicrous 5-level pay scheme' was not thrown out on 29 November by the NALGO negotiators, but was not accepted; talks are continuing!

2. Your Liverpool reporter, Pete Cresswell, rightly describes the recent mobilisations around this national dispute as 'the most concerted demonstration of rank and file power in NALGO's history', but fails to give any credit for this to the union's rank and file group, the Nalگو Action Group.

The call for a day's strike and action on 29 November came out of a rally and conference of social workers, organised by NAG in Liverpool on 18 November and

attended by 250 rank and file members. Pete knows this very well since he was there (and voted against the call!)

3. The standing conference, which Pete counterposes to NALGO's official leadership, is not a rank and file organisation, but a committee of delegates from strike committees. Whilst it is useful for liaising between strikes, sharing information and attempting to give a lead, it is not accountable to, and has not produced a single leaflet for, the rank and file.

NAG, on the other hand, is an organisation of and for the rank and file, which has produced 15 national leaflets in the course of this dispute, as well as many local bulletins, through which the necessary contacts have been made with other departments.

Surely the whole point about rank and file activity is that links and support for disputes in one section or department can be built in others. Whilst agreeing with Pete about wanting the strike spread to other districts, it is now absolutely vital to get support from other trade unionists, both within and outside the councils, so that the strikes which are so costly and already several months old have the necessary effect on those councils.

By isolating social services departments and stopping deliveries of fuel, paper and other essential supplies to all council departments, by stepping up picketing with help from neighbouring authorities not on strike, the rank and file will wage a much more economic, concentrated and politically effective strike, one which will have a much greater chance of being won.

KATY GOLD (Camden NAG)

Role of state racism

COLIN Talbot's article (16 November) is another welcome contribution to his series of articles on black liberation and socialism, emphasising the need for a specific political strategy to defeat racism.

It is, of course, true that socialists can in no way rely upon the state to defeat racism. It does not, however, follow from this that the state cannot be, or should not be, pressured into taking anti-racist measures.

What differentiates British racism from racism in, say, South Africa or Rhodesia is precisely the minimal role of the state. When we talk about state racism in Britain we are talking essentially about first, racist immigration laws, and secondly, the racism of the state apparatus — most importantly the courts and police.

There can be no doubt that the presence of racist immigration law legitimises and massively reinforces racist ideology throughout the whole of British society. The role of the state is indeed crucial in this respect and the struggle to abolish racist immigration law a key element in the anti-racist movement.

Similarly, no-one can underestimate the importance of the intimidation of the black communities by the police and courts. However, I would suggest that this continuing intimidation does not so much follow from direct action by the ruling element within the state, but from the all-pervasive presence of racist ideology within British institutions, including the police and the courts.

Racial domination in Britain is, in the main, enforced through the agency of non-state institutions — the press, employers, trade unions, landlords, etc.

As black resistance grows the balance must shift towards more direct forms of repression, with profound consequences for the nature of the British state as a whole. However, it would be a mistake to argue that at the present time reformist demands are impracticable or that state racism constitutes the principal form of racial domination in Britain.

TERRY DAWSON (Bradford)

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

Plaid Cymru and the left

STEVE BELL's article on Plaid Cymru (23 November) seems to be saying to left Plaid that it is useless to work with Plaid Cymru and thus they should leave immediately to devote their activity to building a united revolutionary organisation. Certainly particular left Plaid supporters do realise their incompatibility with the right. What they're not sure of is whether Plaid can be reformed and won.

In no way should we pit the strategy of a united revolutionary organisation against the many and varied tactics of building it. The majority of left Plaid probably don't yet see this strategy as an alternative. But the revolutionaries and Marxists among them are confronting the problem.

Revolutionaries outside Plaid, particularly as many of them are English, should realise that just as an emergent class struggle opposition in the Labour Party can eventually become a part of a united revolutionary organisation, so the same holds true in Plaid Cymru. Let's not discourage comrades from fighting for such an opposition inside Plaid as long as, at the same time, they come to see it not as the be-all and end-all but as just one particular tactic, one stream, that will come together with others in a united organisation.

The achievement of such an outlook depends a great deal on the revolutionary left outside Plaid. The usual array of small groups can hardly encourage many of them even to view it as a realistic strategy. The revolutionary groups in Wales have reinforced this by their failure to discuss and formulate positions on the Welsh language, bilingualism, the Welsh Development Agency, farm tenancies, etc.

Often failure has been turned into outright rejection of Wales's specific national problems at the very first hurdle. Witness the abstentionism of the Socialist Workers Party and the International Communist League on the referendum, hidden behind phrases like international unity of the working class and building the revolutionary party (and not even an international one at that!).

Little wonder that left Plaid supporters are unclear on the next step and see the party as something worth preserving amidst a sea of chauvinism that washes the shores of the labour movement and even its socialist and Marxist allies. *Socialist Challenge* has to turn the tide through discussion and work with left Plaid and the paper *Y Faner Goch*.

DEREK DAVIES [Cardiff]



SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

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

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

YORKSHIRE

SOUTH WEST

SOUTH EAST

NORTH WEST

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

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

ISLE OF WIGHT readers can buy *Socialist Challenge* from the Oz Shop, 44 Union St, Ryde.

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

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

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

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

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

NORWICH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday in Davey Place (opp market) and bookstall Thursdays at University of East Anglia.

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

SCOTLAND

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge sales regularly Saturdays 11am-1pm in the Piazza.

SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday from 10am-1pm above bar, Post Office, Bargate.

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

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

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

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

PORTSMOUTH Socialist Challenge sales, Saturdays, 11.30pm-1pm, Commercial Road Precinct.

LONDON

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

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

MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters throughout the Midlands contact the *Socialist Challenge* Centre, 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham (021) 643 9209.

SWINDON supporters sell *Socialist Challenge* 11am-1pm Saturdays, Regent St (Brunel Centre).

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

NEWCASTLE Socialist Challenge local supporters are active! If you want to join them, phone Pete on (0632) 29057.

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

FOR INFORMATION on activities in the South-West, write to Box 002, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Bristol 6.

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

UNDER REVIEW

Teenage mags and comics

A weekly dose of sexist crap

OUR NEWSAGENT has rows of them, brilliantly coloured covers displaying slim, pretty girls made up to their eyeballs, goggling longingly at tough handsome guys, unless he already has his hand up her jumper, write VIV, STACEY, SARAH & CJ, and RATS.

They are the British teenage girls' weekly dose of sexist crap and stereotyping, all designed to show 'how to get a boyfriend', whether through subtle encouragement or blatant 'go out and get him'.

Fashion, slimming, even keep-fit are all there to make a girl more attractive to boys — and to make those females who are uninterested in proving themselves on the disco floor or draping their slim and clear skinned [vital] bodies with uncomfortable, impractical garments feel like freaks.

How can women expect to break free from their roles as the weaker sex, housewives to be and future Miss Worlds when they are being moulded like pink jelly into a walking fashion shop with a one-track mind — boys, of course?

We took two of these mags and two comics to show where sexism and stereotyping cropped up. You will be amazed — read on....

LOOK NOW

I OPENED **Look Now** and the first thing that hit me was 'find out what sex means to you'. Well, why do I have to find out? I know, at least I thought I knew, but **Look Now** seems to think otherwise....

Turned over. 'Maxi-thick mascara — the short cut way to big fat lashes'. Wot I always wanted, then I'd get a boyfriend who'd love me for my thick lashes...could lead to marriage? and maybe a mortgage?

Clothes ad... who'd wear that in winter?

Turn page. Well, at last, a reasonable feature. Interview with Henry Winkler. Now I know wot he does every second of the day (and nite) and wot he used to do every second of the day and nite.

Turned over. Bra ad. Oh, how I want firm flattering support and 'nobody understands girls like we do', they say, 'a guide to glamour'. I'll have a flawless 'Style 7' in sahara with halter neck option.

More fashion for the stereotype... my brains 'urt.

And now a saga of love and war, 'torn between love and her King, Frances takes matters into her own hands'.

MORTGAGES

Turn more pages. At last something for a girl with a small piece of her own untouched brain. Two Hollywood type luv stories where Dan Stracy, a journalist, meets Nancy Schmouldrik, an orphan, and they fall in luv, end with marriage...clouds, doves, flowers and mortgage, etc.

Well, you can't have everything!

Wait, it gets better. Hear Now, for girls with complete control of their brains. Well, I think we will give them a star for effort.

But I turn over and Acne KIL ad follows, and why not rid yourself of that fuzzy legged look this summer? More fashion and Anti-Acne League ad.

I must stop, parts of my brain are shutting down... but something is compelling me to have hair like Farrah Fawcett Majors, a bust like Raquel Welch, and a loyal robotoid boyfriend.

Turn pages. Hey, if I use Lilllets will I be able to swim, ride and end up on a sun-kissed beach? Maybe not.

SUPERGUYS

Your Superguy...what a brain rotter. Could you resist a smile like that? No. Neither could we. That's why Paul Hartburn gets this irresistible perfume to woo many a mindless moronette.

Enter another bra, nails, and hair ad. It seems like someone bears a grudge against people looking like wot they want to look like. They say: 'Be yourself but keep within the

stereotype'.

Turn more pages. Problem Page. 'Please help me. I'm in luv with my grannie's chiropodist, wot shall I do? — Carol'

'See head shrinker, then buy new bra, nail-varnish, hair colour, lipstick or even better drop dead. I don't care about your pathetic problems. I'm just here to pass off products to plebs like you — June.'

Turn page quickly. I thought Hear Now would break up the monotony of bra ads, but I turn the page and... Playtex rules OK.

Jobs. How about a cookery course? Or make-up? Or shorthand? ...modelling even?

Why can't I be a mechanic? I don't care if some bloke wants to do a cookery course, so why can't I do wot I want?

I will not submit to this fiendish method of brainwashing called **Look Now**. I'm me, and nobody is gonna stop me. I have spoken. SARAH.



BEGINNING OUR NEW ROMANTIC SERIAL

Ah! But now the glorious Valentino was mastering the girl's resistance. Lost in wonder, Lucy forgot her playing

Oh, wouldn't it be lovely, just me and him!

Berlei announce the secret of invisible support. Secrets.

4 shimmering bras with seamless cups that subtly shape you. And matching moulded pants so smooth they won't show through the tightest clothes.

Only some women have it.

If you want to look ordinary use an ordinary hairdryer.

When a face can look as fresh at dinner as it did at breakfast, that's not just a great face. That's a great make-up.



2000 AD AND STAR WARS

HMM, **2000AD** and **Star Lord** should be an interesting one for my survey...and fairly neutral. So I paid up my 10p (earth money) and proceeded to peruse the contents. Title first...noticeable omission of Lady — but forgivable, I suppose.

The cover robot looked very decidedly male, although I don't suppose robots have a sex, they're just there to help the goodies and duff up the baddies.

The inside cover provided an encounter with Barag Thungg, warning me about 'the annual' that could 'overload my thrill generators'.

The front shows a bloke astride his super cc motorbikecumspacecraft cum legless rocking horse rushing to the rescue of a beautiful, helpless maiden chained to a rock being mercilessly attacked by overgrown sea horses wearing goldfish bowls. Puke.

At last I am ready to start my first story! Judge Dredd. Third time

through reading this story I just about began to understand it — it seemed to be mainly about escaped judges and giants kicking people's faces in and leaping on high powered motorbikes to secret passages — very moving!

So moving in fact that one judge burst into tears, and was severely reprimanded for doing so — maybe they thought he was being soft.

This looks like something I can write about — the Robusters. Naturally all the soldiers are tall muscly men, violent — and I thought that I detected a moustache on one of the robots. Must be male.

After a lot of action and violence they win (getting boringly predictable) and are congratulated by the happy townsfolk. The blonde girl kissing the Robot ecstatically and the old woman offering a live hen around. The men (naturally) grin reservedly and wave wine bottles in the air.

Huh, read on. Ahh... Flesh — lots of blood, goody. No wait, it's Elliot's brother guarding the gold — yawn.

Strontum Dog — a story about a person-sized dog cross teddy bear tribe who have caught two men, together with their 'gronk' (an overgrown hairy leek with an empty cream horn for its nose and spaghetti arms).

Non-existence of female influence except for one part. The baddies get drunk and start singing songs 'bout how evil they are and how 'strong men tremble when we howl'. Obviously strong women don't.

Seriously tho' folks, this comic is obviously aimed at young boys. If it had been for both sexes there would be characters of both sexes. The blokes are encouraged to be strong and violent, unemotional and modest.

Christ, wot chance do they stand of being themselves when they are presented with this sort of muck to live up to? Here's some stereotyping for boys that both sexes could do without. Lotsa Luv, CJ.

JACKIE

I WAS pleasantly surprised when I first opened **Jackie** to find that page two had an article on careers. The advice was good.

'Don't think this isn't for you because you imagine you're going to meet a really nice boy, fall in love and be happy ever after.'

I did find it very hypocritical, though, when the article stated that you should be you and do what you want, when on most of the other pages I was being told what I should wear, which make-up I should put on, how I can solve my 'problems' of spots, shapeless eyebrows, dark hair on my face, nasty nails and horrible hair.

Funny. Those things never struck me as 'problems'.

I wondered if they had changed the meaning of the word, but I was assured by some acquaintances that the aforesaid things were indeed matters difficult of settlement or solution.

The next thing I came across was John Travolta and most of his private life and what sort of girls he likes. They omitted the bit about his whirlwind and passionate affair with Dorothy Squires.

From this page on I became increasingly disgusted. Page 23 was entitled 'Boys, Boys, Boys' — shall I go on?

The stories were awful. 'It'll give a great chance to show you off to the lads' and 'but only as long as you hold my hand'. No prizes for guessing which sex said which.

The problem (that word again) page encouraged the 'typical' heterosexual relationship — 'sounds as if Carol hasn't cottoned on to the joys of chatting up boys yet!'

I was surprised and troubled by the amount of suspicion that seemed to exist in the boy-girl relationship. 'He's hinted at engagement ... I've got a feeling he's seeing my best friend behind my back ... I don't want to talk about my suspicions because I'm scared he won't trust me any more.'

The advice didn't encourage complete openness either, which I feel is needed in situations like this.

To sum up: **Jackie** left me in no doubt as to why most girls grow up in the way they do. It is to feel they belong to normal society. I now understand why I can never belong to this sort of 'normal' society. It's because I want to be who I want to be — me! VIV.

WE PROMISE YOU A HAPPY ENDING

Socialist Challenge would like to thank the youth paper, **Revolution**, for supplying these articles on comics.

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UFOs - the Shah's last hope?

MAYBE the Shah is not alone. The sighting of UFOs over the space of Godzone has prompted the following speculation from DAVE WAX.

The Shah was sitting in his palace. His family had fled to the United States.

The people were defacing monuments erected in his

honour and chanting 'Death to the Shah'. His Chieftain tanks did not appear to be doing the necessary.

True, Jimmy was on the

phone from Washington every day. True, Callaghan had promised him the English Queen as a New Year treat.

But the Shah was still unhappy. He needed more dramatic support.

Why was Jimmy denying him marines to occupy Mashad and Tabriz? Why was Begin reluctant to paradrop Israeli commandos on Tehran? Why, why, why?

The answers might have been provided by Alun Chalfont, but even *The Times* was not being published any more.

Shah turned on his diamond-studded TV set to watch the BBC news specially recorded and relayed by his private TV station.

His face lit up. UFOs had been sighted over New Zealand. He even smiled.

'Zahedi', he said to his closest friend, 'we are not alone.'

Shah relaxed for the first time in six months. He is still waiting.

Our Inter-Planetary Correspondent JOHN POSA DAS writes:

The above is a load of unscientific poppycock.

The sighting of UFOs in our hemisphere is certainly an important event. In fact it was predicted by me many years ago.

INTER-STELLAR

But the question which arises is the following: if the UFOs have reached us from another star, then their inter-stellar traffic is a few light years ahead of ours (which is non-existent - Ed).

Is it not obvious that these are the ambassadors of a superior civilisation? And if that is the case, is it not obvious that this civilisation must be 100 per cent communist?

Of course it is perfectly clear that the UFOs are the first visitors from the High Command of the Inter-Stellar Commune. As such they are not likely to aid Shah in keeping his throne.

They are our comrades, and we must welcome them as beings-in-arms, spatial internationalists. Together we will win.



AIR FORCE

The air force chief was ordered to the palace. He was instructed to send the Iranian Phantoms immediately to New Zealand to establish contact.

The UFO leader was to be promised anything if he (being sexist, Shah assumed it was a he) could save Shah's throne.

The Phantoms left and the

OUR FUND DRIVE

Stop the cuts — build the Fund Drive

BIG CUTBACKS now threaten *Socialist Challenge* after a large shortfall in our quarterly Fund Drive.

With only another £165.29 in over the last three weeks, the final total was a mere £1,401.96 — compared with our target of £2,500.

This doesn't mean that we have to close down right now. Income from bankers orders and pledges over the last quarter came to just over £1,000.

This figure is slightly up on the last quarter, and probably accounts for a portion of the decline in the regular Fund Drive, as some supporters have turned casual donations into a regular commitment.

But, while this money can help to tide us over, it was not budgeted for under the Fund

Drive (nor was it in the previous quarter, when we raised more than £2,500 on top of this source).

So cutbacks of various kinds will have to be made to cover this loss. This will almost inevitably mean a reduction in the quality of the paper.

All we can do now is to appeal to our readers and supporters to **help us stop the rot**. This quarter we must get in an absolute minimum of £2,500 if the whole future of the paper is not to be threatened.

CUTBACKS

And we hope to be able to raise more than that in order to restore at least some of the cutbacks we'll be forced to make in the coming weeks.

A major role in this effort

will have to be played by local Socialist Challenge supporters groups. In the past, while some groups have been consistently good fund-raisers, the overall response has been somewhat patchy.

In the coming quarter we would like every supporters group to organise two fund-raising events. These can range from jumble sales to parties to film shows — obviously the scale of the event will depend on your size.

And you can be sure of one thing — we will provide any information or other assistance you need to help to get these off the ground. Just write to us or ring Dodie on 01-359 8371.

Meanwhile, our thanks to those who did contribute during the final weeks of 1978. A happy New Year to them —

we just hope there'll be one for us too.

Ed Mahood	£10
Alloa supporter	£5
Tom Roche	£3
Robin Blackburn	£5
Anon	£5
Anon	£1
Anon	90p
Anon	£1
L. Hodges	£5
Oxford SC group	£36
R. Ford	£9.14
J. May	£1
Middlesbrough reader	£5
C. Hapanovich	£1
S. Smith	£10
Chris Bertram	£10
A. Tortorella	£1
James Carroll	£1.25
J. Strauther	£10
T. Khamis	£5
Cambridge supporters	£10
Southampton IMG	£30
TOTAL	£165.29

Lottery winners

Just before Xmas we held the draw in our bumper lottery. The winning tickets were as follows.

First prize (a portable 12-inch black and white TV): 1707 (H. Sheret, Stirling).

Second prize (a case of French wine): 4284 (Tessa van Gelderen, London).

Third prize (an autographed copy of *The Second Slump* by Ernest Mandel): 1534 (M Simmonds, Manchester).

Fourth prize (a record token): 0685 (Robert Jones, Cardiff).

Fifth prize (subs to *Socialist Challenge, International, and Socialist Woman*): 3159 (Richard, London).

THE ALTERNATIVE IN WESTERN EUROPE

One-day school on Eurocommunism and revolutionary strategy in the West

Introduced by ERNEST MANDEL and followed by discussion

10am Economic Policies of Eurocommunism and the Socialist Alternative

2 pm The State and Revolutionary Strategy

Saturday 13 January, 10am-5pm

Holborn Assembly Rooms, London (2 minutes from Holborn tube)

Tickets £1.50 at the door or in advance from Socialist Challenge,

PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Please supply tickets at £1.50

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I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of:

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