

Socialist Challenge

ZAIRE: BRITISH PRESS ATROCITIES

INSIDE: 8 MAY

ERIC HOBSBAWM, ALAIN KRIVINE, SHEILA ROWBOTHAM & TARIQ ALI ON MAY 68



INTERVIEW WITH TOM ROBINSON
NEXT WEEK

BAD TASTE

BY CORMAC

CORMAC WILL BE APPEARING REGULARLY IN SOCIALIST CHALLENGE



OUR READERS will have been shocked to read detailed press reports of the massacres in Zaire. The only question is: were they true?

British press coverage has been a model of gutter journalism. Just change the odd word here and there and you have the classic atrocity clichés which date from 1914, or probably for as long as wars have been going on. Raped nuns, pregnant women with their bellies split open and so on.

TESTIMONY

A new one has been added: "Their faces were swollen and distorted from smoking hushish. When they do that they simply go mad."

That was the testimony of a Belgian factory owner who is

obviously not a student of medicine.

His was one of many refugees' accounts reported in the British press. Like all the others it appears in different versions depending on which paper you buy.

Take the case of the American Bill Starkey who, on his own testimony, was variously shot in the thigh, stomach and back. But each time he is emphatic he only received one wound!

Many of the unattributed accounts, which read as though reported by eyewitnesses, are from French and Zairean military sources.

For example, the Sun reported last Saturday that rebel leader Nathaniel M'Bumba had said: "We must kill all whites". It does not add that the report came from a leading official of the Zairean ruling party.

With the exception of the

Guardian and Evening Standard, the investigative spirit of British journalism could not be bothered to look at reports from US and refugee sources that a large part of the killing was carried out by Mobutu's troops.

The refugee accounts in the popular press clearly stated that the killings were prompted by the French attack.

Briton Kevin Press even added that the rebels had been quite friendly until the attack.

INVASION

The other aspect which nobody made much of was the attitude of the local population. Only the Guardian reported that when the paratroopers dropped local people cheered, thinking they were Cuban!

The French invasion (with Belgian and British back-up)

had little to do with rescuing the civilians.

The defence correspondent of Le Monde, the French daily, explained that the operation was not a typical commando rescue raid but was aimed at recapturing and consolidating Kolwezi.

We do not deny that these killings took place and that they were mainly carried out by the rebels. (Though the disgruntled Belgians claim 11 European deaths at French hands.)

Even more revealing is the testimony of a Belgian mine technician: "This was revenge. We knew they were going to come back after what happened last year."

"What the government troops did to the population down here after that was unbelievable. One whole village was massacred. Even the Moroccans (sent at the French behest) were disgusted. They always

said they would come back and they have."

Several refugees confirmed that the rebels specifically sought French and Moroccan nationals.

It is also worth remembering that the Zaire killings came only a few days after a large scale massacre of civilians by Rhodesian troops. This was virtually ignored by the press.

LIES

It is difficult to communicate these facts amid the hysteria of lies and half-truths. But the truth points in one direction.

If the killing is to stop the imperialist troops must leave. Now. And so must the brutal Mobutu regime.

*What makes Kolwezi so attractive? See page 12.

IMPERIALIST TROOPS OUT NOW!

EDITORIAL

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A woman's right to choose

THE HIGH Court case of Joan Paton, whose husband is seeking an injunction to prevent her having an abortion, raises several vital issues. Primarily it shows that, following their failure to change the law in Parliament, the new onslaught of the anti-abortion forces is going to come through the courts.

White and Benyon failed to reopen the discussion on the 1967 Abortion Act. SPUC threatened that it would use the courts. It has been looking for a test case for some time. William Paton has provided them with what they need.

Even if the judge does not find in William Paton's favour, he is likely to grant an appeal. Meanwhile Joan Paton is staying pregnant against her will. The only way to defeat this tactic of the anti-abortionists is to go ahead and perform the operation, ignore the ponderous legal processes which eventually will rob her of her choice.

Secondly, it is necessary to differentiate between the demand that women raise for men to take more responsibility in childcare, and the right of every woman to choose whether or not to bear a child. In the best of worlds a woman would probably not decide to have a child without discussing it with the people who she hoped would share its upbringing. This is not to say that those people can in any sense decide that a woman should start or continue with a pregnancy she doesn't want.

Free Orlov

THE JAILING of Yuri Orlov is a contemptible crime against socialism. By crushing civil rights campaigners like Orlov the Kremlin simply highlights its own utter bankruptcy.

The Orlov case also casts a sharp light on the attitude of the Labour Lefts and the CP leadership towards working class interests in Eastern Europe. On one side they have moved swiftly to condemn the jailing of Orlov.

But what do these condemnations represent? A serious, principled stand on the side of those struggling for democratic rights and socialist democracy in Eastern Europe? Not in the slightest. The Left bureaucracy offers no programme for such a struggle and with one or two exceptions like Eric Haffner, the Labour Lefts have a record of trying to avert their gaze from victims of Stalinist repression in the East.

Even in the case of Klebanov and his comrades in the Trade Union Association, the Lefts have been dragging their feet. The CP leaders have played the same role, notably in its refusal to lift a finger for the defence of Bahro, a Marxist fighter for socialist democracy in East Germany. And like the Lefts, the CPGB offers not one line of programmatic perspective for those struggling for socialist democracy in the East.

Instead, by their silence they leave the issue of workers' rights in Eastern Europe in the hands of Thatcher, the Foreign Office and the bourgeois press. Then, when these people bang the table — and they have really hammered it over Orlov — the Lefts and the CP leadership fall over each other to deplore the repression. And afterwards, back to silence.

Socialists should demand the immediate release of Orlov and other jailed civil rights activists in the USSR. They should also campaign systematically in defence of all in Eastern Europe who are repressed for trying to exercise democratic or working class rights. The work of 'Labour Focus on Eastern Europe' and more importantly of the recently formed Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign gives a framework for such activity.

In addition we must seek to engage in a dialogue with those fighting for democratic rights in Eastern Europe, and in doing so we must put forward a clear programme for a struggle for socialist democracy in the East.

Such an internationalist approach on the part of the labour movement will bring us an added bonus: its progress will also undermine the Cold War lobbies in the West that feed greedily off the bureaucratic repression in the East.

Rights under attack

IT IS TYPICAL of this pusillanimous Labour Government that it would not only seek to greatly extend police powers over demonstrations, but that it would attempt to do so in a clause buried in proposed legislation supposedly updating local bye-laws.

If senior police officers and the Home Office get their way, anyone planning a demonstration will have to give at least seven days' notice of the route and nature of the 'procession', and the name of the organiser, to the police and the local authority. Failure to comply will carry a fine of up to £200.

There is already an array of police controls over demonstrations and pickets, not to mention the recent blanket bans. The Labour Government continues to display its contempt for the democratic rights of those elected to it. It must not go unanswered.

HOME NEWS

HOUNSLOW LABOUR COUNCILLOR

'I won because of my stand against racism'

IN THE MAY council elections, ENDA DONNELLY, a Labour Party candidate and Socialist Challenge supporter, was elected to the Hounslow Council in London.

She talked to Socialist Challenge about what she hopes to achieve in her local area, where Hounslow hospital is still occupied and where there is a large immigrant population.

Why did you decide to stand for the local council?

The main reason is that I wanted to draw attention to two major issues in the Hounslow area. One was the Hounslow Hospital defence campaign, which has been in existence for three years and has generated wide opposition in the area to cuts in public expenditure.

The other was the question of racism, which again is particularly significant in Hounslow because of the high immigrant population and the fact that the National Front is fairly active here — they stood 17 candidates in this borough alone.

My ward and the constituency party has had formal opposition to the '68 and '71 Immigration Acts for the past couple of years, and they are affiliated to the local anti-racist committee.

I am opposed to all immigration laws, because I think they are inevitably racist, and I have made it clear that I would use my position on the council to fight against this legislation.

What was the response to your views on racism and immigration controls when you were out canvassing?

Unfortunately a fair number of white working class people were convinced that the problems of unemployment and the rest are due to the number of immigrants in the country. At the same time, the Asian community was extremely worried about the implications of Thatcher's recent provocative statement, and I think appalled at the Select Committee Report.

The latter was most disturbing to anti-racists because it reinforced the view that immigration is the problem and it was signed by five Labour MPs, including Syd Bidwell, who bears a special responsibility towards the Asian community in Southall, and is a member of the Tribune group.

How much effect did your election campaign have on the results?

It is difficult to assess. I think the local elections are always coloured by national politics, and people tend to vote for the party as opposed to individual candidates.

Nevertheless, the fact that we won three Tory seats suggests that people voted for us because of the clear stand against racism and the fact that we were committed to the re-opening of Hounslow Hospital as a community hospital.

In that sense, it was a positive vote for us. I might also add that the NF vote in Hounslow was on average a little over 100, a significant drop on past results. It demonstrates the effect that a campaign like the Anti-Nazi League can have in a short space of time.

What do you hope to achieve on the local council? And what do you think needs to be done in the Labour Party?

I have been active in the Hounslow Hospital campaign for some time, and at the moment we are launching a new initiative with specific proposals for the development of a community hospital.

I intend to ensure that the Labour council honours its commitment for the re-opening of the hospital through its representatives on the area health authority and that these proposals get the attention they deserve.

As far as racism is concerned, there are a number of ways in which, I, as a councillor, can fight against it. Obviously, I will oppose any discrimination that might occur at the level of services which the council provides, for example, in education or housing.

More positively, I would like to see the council adopt a policy of positive discrimination towards all minority groups, along the lines of Camden council's in relation to blacks.

The Hounslow Anti-Racist Committee — which is sponsored by both the trades



ENDA DONNELLY

council and the local community relations council is at present considering proposals for a local festival in late summer as a follow-up to the Carnival, together with the local ANL.

In building such a festival, we will be attempting to get the broadest possible involvement and sponsorship from local labour movement, political, and community organisations to take the next steps in anti-racist activities.

However, it is also necessary to wage a fight inside the Labour Party against the view that immigration controls are in any way a solution to the problems of this society. For this reason, I think the Labour Party as a whole should reject totally the proposals of the Report of the Select Committee on race relations and immi-

gration.

There exists an embryo of this kind of opposition in the Labour Party Race Relations Action Group that needs to be generalised on a national level. It is intending to launch a campaign against racist immigration laws in preparation for the next General Election.

Needless to say, I believe that as many representatives as possible from constituency parties should get involved in this campaign, the next meeting of which will be held on 30 May in Surrey Hall, SW8.

Through this campaign, we can ensure that the question of immigration controls is a key debate at the next Labour Party conference and, at the very least, call on the Labour Government to repeal the '68 and '71 Immigration Acts.

SOCIALIST UNITY STEERING COMMITTEE

Sunday, 5 June 1pm
328 Upper Street, London N1

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

* I am interested in more information about activities in my area.

* I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.

[Delete if not applicable]

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

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

OUR POLICIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable in a world-wide capitalism. 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 ever 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.

CLOSE GARNERS

Four hundred people turned out last Saturday to support the Garners' Steak House strikers' solidarity march through Central London, reports MIKE TAIT.

Now in its 16th week, the strike is for the reinstatement of 84 workers sacked for joining the Transport and General Workers Union. The workers are demanding union recognition and reinstatement.

At the Trafalgar Square rally after the march the chairperson of the strike committee repeated the issues which have made this dispute the Grunwick of catering: £28.49p for a 55-hour week; the sacking of an employee for the unauthorised eating of a tomato; the complete refusal by management to accept the union.

POLICE

Grunwick was very much in people's minds when Tom Durkin of Brent Trades Council told of an incident on the Garner's picket.

A police officer said to him: 'I am against the union and



Scene from last Saturday's demonstration

strikers.' The cop insisted on trade union cards being presented to him before allowing people to join the picket.

But the most illuminating speech was the one delivered by Ron Todd, new national organiser of the TGWU and number two to Moss Evans. He had clearly learned a lot about Grunwick and was reminded of

that dispute by heckling from the crowd.

Todd said that the TGWU had 'made every endeavour to get management round the table'. Garners was an attack on the Employment Protection Act, he declared, omitting to mention whether it was also an attack on the Garners' workers.

He went on to say that he did not believe the action to be

taken was mass picketing. Todd wanted 'effective controlled picketing'.

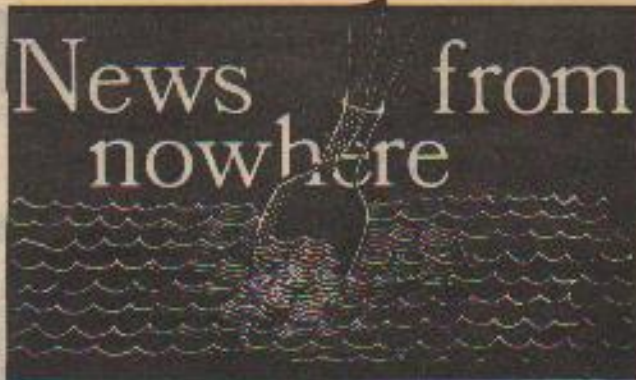
The TGWU is paying £6 a week strike pay. Over a month ago, the union bureaucracy refused a regional levy. Apparently the union leadership say that if they imposed such a levy, 9,000 other members of the union currently in dispute might demand the same — ignoring the fact that the Garners' strike is for recognition and that this is traditionally given priority in all unions.

STEM TIDE

Socialists as well must recognise that unless we take Garners seriously there is no chance of pushing the organised labour movement into stemming the tide of the recent setbacks at Grunwick, Claridges and Trust House Forte.

Unless we have the strength of purpose, there is little point in laying the blame elsewhere.

Donations and messages of support to Garners Strike Committee, c/o 12/13 Henrietta Street, London WC2.



King of Shaba

IF THE Shaba rebels in Zaire can find their way past Kolwezi, to the north west they will discover the strangest territory in Africa. On the maps it looks like any old bit of Zaire, but the 10,000 square mile area to the north of the tenth parallel and bordering Lake Tanganyika is run like a sovereign state by OTRAG, a West German missile company.

Zaire dictator Mobutu leased the area in 1976 for around £35m a year on an unprecedented contract. The population is subject to the company's legislation and law enforcement. The company can exclude anyone it chooses from the concession, which is also a free customs zone.

Ostensibly the company's business is testing cheap rockets for communications or weather satellites for sale to the Third World countries.

The West German Government, backed up by Washington, has always repeated this story, but top Washington officials told *Penthouse* reporter Tad Szulc that the company was testing cruise missiles and Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles. It seems that West Germany is using OTRAG to circumvent the 1954 ban on its development of nuclear weapons.

They have yet to explain why a photographic blow-up of a cruise missile appeared on their stand at the 1977 Le Bourget air show. US specialists reckon the missile was flying over African terrain.

Or why OTRAG, as a 'private company', enjoys full tax exemption in West Germany.

And why the first OTRAG test launch was preceded by tests at the German national aerospace authority at Lampoldshausen.

The second major launch was due to take place this month. It would be such a pity if it were delayed because of the political situation.

Foreign Legion

THANKS to *Penthouse* (not a journal we are in the habit of thanking) and other papers (including our own) extensive details of the OTRAG concession have already been published.

One paper which has been less enthusiastic is the *Observer*. The day before the *Penthouse* article was to appear the *Observer* published a furious rebuttal of the 'rocket hoax'.

Its only substantial argument was that because of the weight of fuel the OTRAG rockets would only be able to carry a small payload. It confronted none of the crucial questions, and particularly failed to explain why such a large patch of ground was needed to launch orbital rather than ground-to-ground missiles.

Instead the authors, Andrew Wilson and Colin Legum, concentrated on exposing the *Penthouse* article as Soviet and East German propaganda. This falls a bit flat since all *Penthouse's* major sources were from the Washington defence and intelligence community!

Before he came to Britain Legum lived and worked in South Africa. In the 1940s he was a city councillor when the squatters' camps were destroyed. In 1952 he was a co-founder of the Africa Bureau, an organisation used by black nationalist leaders — and for a time the CIA — to

pressurise the British Empire to decolonise.

One author who submitted a piece to *African Contemporary Record*, edited by Legum, was surprised to see the article appear with all references to the CIA cut!

Legum has acquired a considerable reputation as an objective commentator on Africa, and is now the *Observer's* Foreign Editor. As a token of that high esteem he has addressed the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations African Sub-Committee, the Royal Defence College, the War College, the Military Academy in Camberley and the NATO Defence College in Rome.

Legum was one of the journalists who used material from the now-defunct Information Research Department — a government propaganda agency used to spread dirt on Eastern Europe and the left.

A number of papers, including the *Leveller*, carried stories on the IRD when it was wound up recently. So did the *Observer* — but for some reason they didn't bother to include the *Leveller's* list of journalists who had received IRD material.

All of which leads us to conclude that Legum has an axe to grind. Whose is it?

Will Zaida Curtis be Next?

AS IF the Communist Party didn't have enough problems with the crisis of the Morning Star, the recent executive committee of the CP reported that membership has now fallen to 21,145.

This is a drop of 4,148, or 12 per cent, in the six months from the 1977 Congress, when the party's membership was 25,293. The adopting of the new British Road to Socialism seems to be having a dramatic effect.

Spot the piper

THE CAMOUFLAGE net which the mass media has thrown over the Irish struggle has evidently not escaped the attention of Derek Jameson, editor of the *Daily Express*. 'Fleet Street newspaper make mistakes and distortions in their coverage of Ireland', Jameson, former editor of the *Young Communist League's* journal, told listeners to Radio Telefis Eireann earlier this month.

'That is due to historical reasons tied up with myths about what the British represent to the Irish and vice versa', he added.

Readers of the *Daily Express* are likely to have to wait a long time before such sentiments find their way into the newspaper. Even if Jameson and the rest of the editorial staff were to show any sign of challenging the Tory propaganda that the paper churns out, they would meet a small obstacle in the shape of *Express* Newspapers chairperson Victor Matthews.

The latter's view of press freedom (RIP) was being spelled out about the same time as Jameson's on Irish coverage. 'The ultimate sanction is the proprietor, not necessarily the editor,' said Matthews. 'Why should the editor and the journalists have the necessary authority that we have to accept what they say?'

'The proprietor, whose money is on the table, must have the authority... I will stand by it for ever.'



EGA workers and their supporters block Euston High Road.

... OPEN THE EGA

PAM JONES of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital in London said in a park outside Euston station last Friday:

'Tell your friends the news, spread the word, the EGA is still open and is staying open.'

Pam Jones was speaking at the end of a meeting and demonstration which showed the determination of the EGA workers and their supporters to resist the latest attempt to close the women's hospital.

Seventy-two hours earlier, the Labour Government's Health Minister, David Ennals had said the hospital would be closed on 21 July.

The next day a joint meeting in the hospital involving the unions NUPE, COHSE, ASTMS, and NALGO de-

clared: 'The EGA will continue to work normally, to accept patients and to make appointments for the future.'

This expression of opposition caused Ennals to think again. At a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party on Thursday he indicated he was willing to reconsider the date of the closure, although he later made it clear that as far as he was concerned, sooner or later the hospital would close.

RUBBISH

For over two years, the Labour Government has been attempting to close the EGA — one of two hospitals in the country for women and run by women. As the latest issue of *EGA News* put it:

'They say we don't need a women's hospital in this day and age; they reckon there are enough women doctors in the

health service.

'This is rubbish. For example, there are only ten women surgeons in the whole country, two of whom work at EGA. And we need a women's hospital that will treat women sympathetically and with understanding.

'The real reason they want to close the EGA is cash. The area health authority in Camden and Islington has been instructed to cut their spending by a third.

'The money needed to get the EGA fully functioning is £120,000 — peanuts. But because they want the hospital closed they are not prepared to spend it.'

Over 300 people attended the hastily arranged protest on Friday. The main road outside Euston was blocked for 15 minutes by the demonstrators.

At the meeting afterwards,

NUPE shop steward Arthur Churchley indicated that this was only the first example of such tactics. 'We will only win this by creating disturbances,' he said.

The EGA workers together with the body representing London health shop stewards are now calling for strike action to save the hospital.

OFFICIAL

London NUPE has given official backing to such action and at a health shop stewards conference planned for 10 June resolutions will be put calling for rolling strikes from 5 July and a national stoppage on 21 July.

No. 8 divisional council of ASTMS — representing western and central London — is already pledged to strike on 21 July.

Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)

Photo: MARK RUSHER (FPL)

HOW WILL THE LEFT LEAD THE CIVIL SERVANTS?

THE CIVIL and Public Services Association grew out of being a professional association for civil servants into a trade union affiliated to the TUC.

Unlike the Society of Civil Servants, which organises the higher grades, the CPSA organises among the growing army of clerical workers and typists who increasingly have more in common with workers on the dole queue at the Department of Employment offices than with their employers.

The dramatic changes which have taken place within the civil service are reflected in the political debate inside the union.

The right wing, drawing much of its base from the Ministry of Defence, is financially supported by the employers organisation Truamid, and its main policies are vicious red-baiting about the left being financed by Russian Gold, rather than any positive policies to defend members' interests.

With thousands of civil service jobs now being lost due to Government cutbacks, warnings against the 'communist threat'

are increasingly unconvincing to the membership.

In the past few years open and public groupings of the left and right have emerged in the union — with the struggle for different political positions taking place openly before the membership.

This was capped at the CPSA's conference earlier this month by the newly-formed Broad Left, in alliance with the Redder Tape rank and file group, dramatically reversing the right wing's majority on the union leadership to win 20 out of 26 positions on the national executive.

The twenty positions held by the left include five members of the Communist Party, four supporters of the Militant tendency, one Socialist Workers Party member, one Socialist Challenge supporter, and three militant left wingers.

On this page, three members of the CPSA's national executive describe how civil servants came to elect the most left-wing leadership of any union in Britain, and the tasks now facing it.

Peter Coltman CP 'An opportunity to deliver the goods'

THE immediate task is to repair the damage done by the right wing, considers PETER COLTMAN, vice president of the CPSA and a member of the Communist Party.



PETER COLTMAN

By and large the right-wing leadership did nothing constructive at all. We have to support members' interests, which has not been done at all over the past 12 months.

I see the outcome of the elections as giving an opportunity to the Broad Left to deliver the goods. It gives us a chance to show that we can lead the union.

The Broad Left in the CPSA is a development from the usual Broad Left election machine. We had our own conference for Broad Left members to establish policy, which was very open in terms of members' participation.

Individuals have a right to attend, speak, debate and vote. The concept of the Broad Left conference is to identify rank and file aspirations and put them into practice.

Broad Left members on the executive are members of the rank and file, not an élite, and we have to hold ourselves accountable to the Broad Left conference.

Viv Lacey IMG 'We must be fully accountable'

THE MAJOR electoral gains made by the left in the Civil and Public Services Association have much to do with the membership's revulsion at the activities of the right wing, which up to this month's conference 'led' the union, writes VIV LACEY, newly elected to the national executive of the CPSA and a Socialist Challenge supporter.

At the last Trade Union Congress, the right-wing leadership of the CPSA cast the union's 235,000 votes in favour of wage restraint, breaking the mandate established at our 1977 conference.

There was no centralised leadership on this year's pay claim, and the right has looked on askance at major struggles.

BULLDOZE

The witch-hunt of Terry Adams, a full-time officer and member of the Militant tendency, was particularly repulsive — as were the right's attempts to bulldoze postal ballots into the union.

The campaign of socialists in the CPSA has been considerably strengthened by the fact that over the past 12 months the Broad Left has emerged as an open and democratic organisation.

It was an open Broad Left conference which drew up the list of left candidates for the section and national executive elections, which marks a significant break in the practice of the Communist Party in the union.

CLEAR

The Broad Left manifesto put a clear line on: pay, cuts, jobs, and on conditions of service and hours. It also took up trade union democracy, racism, and women's rights, and included the demand for the union's affiliation to the Labour Party.

Over the past year, the left has waged active campaigns against the assault of the right, helped by the establishment of the Broad Left's bi-monthly newspaper, which has gained a circulation of 3,500.

The issues now facing the union present the left with clear tasks. The CPSA is still shackled by the Pay Research Unit, a system of so-called fair comparisons by which our pay is determined, effectively removing all negotiations from the hands of the rank and file.

The left has to fight for the best possible settlement within the framework of Pay Research, mounting a big campaign on pay at all levels in the union, because there is no way a realistic settlement will be agreed to by the Government next year without a fight.

OPPOSE

The left will have to actively oppose all the Government departments trying to implement cuts, especially the fortnightly signing-on for the unemployed, and these can only be effectively prevented by encouraging members to take action.

A priority this year is to really start the struggle for women's rights, including nursery provision and abortion rights. There has to be a fight for women to be fully represented at all levels in the union, and to counter the sexism of male trade unionists.

Delegates at the conference called for a national meeting of women activists in the CPSA.

ACTION

Building rank and file action against racists and fascists is another priority, and this campaign will probably take the form of building on the widest possible basis Civil Servants Against the Nazis as a supporting group in the Anti Nazi League.



PHOTO: ANDREW WARD (REPORT)

They said no Anti Nazi badges, so everyone wore one ...

THE LOCAL employment exchange in Holloway, North London, is threatening to lock out any of its workers who wear Anti Nazi League badges.

The final warning came on Friday when management in the shape of benefit manager Ms Wolsey said that the four or five members of her staff who were wearing the badges would be suspended at the beginning of this week.

The staff involved — members of the CPSA — voted to defy the ban. When Ms Wolsey turned up on Monday morning she was confronted by 15 members of her staff wearing the badges of the ANL and a 30-strong picket staged by the Islington Anti Nazi League.

As Socialist Challenge went to press the threatened suspensions had not yet been carried out, but a spokesperson at the Department of Employment said: 'If a ruling has been made, that is that. It will be carried out.'

Apparently the suspensions were threatened

because the badges were deemed to be 'political', and local management said they might offend some of the claimants. But, argued the sub-branch CPSA secretary at the employment office, Ian Muir: 'The only comment we have had from claimants was "Where can we get the badge, mate".'

At this month's conference of the CPSA, the union voted to affiliate to the Anti Nazi League and an emergency meeting of the CPSA executive to be held later this week is expected to back their members in Holloway.

CPSA executive member Mike Duggan says: 'We see this as an attempt by management to stop our members campaigning against racism.'

Stewart McLennan, secretary of the Broad Left in the union, adds: 'If management intends to pursue these suspensions, they will have to suspend our entire conference. Almost the entire platform was wearing ANL badges.'

I am opposed to the political 'neutrality' that is enforced on civil servants, curtailing almost any public political activities.

I think the left on the national executive will face an assault on two fronts. First, from the full-time officials who already have a stranglehold on any independent activity by the membership through their rigid control of the national disputes committee — a body which has to authorise any industrial

action. This underlines the importance of fighting for the election and accountability of all officials.

Secondly, the right wing with their Truamid financiers will be aiming to isolate the new executive from the members. We will have to fight for open negotiations on all major issues, to make the union leadership fully accountable to the rank and file.

Having a left NEC is useless

without a broad-based well organised rank and file to whom we are accountable. The critical question is how the Broad Left organises campaigns among the members.

On all these issues, battling it out in a single union is not sufficient. I am arguing that militants should attend the Socialist Challenge Trade Union conference on 1 July, in order to fight for a class struggle left wing in the movement as a whole.

Mike Duggan SWP 'United front is required'

'United front is required'

THE CPSA election results do not mean an acceptance of socialist policies, argues MIKE DUGGAN, who is newly-elected to the executive and a member of the Socialist Workers Party.

The central fight has to be over living standards.

There will be a major battle over pay this year, whichever system is used to determine the claim. This means gearing up the membership for the battle, and improving the organisation of the union.

LEFT

Communist Party members in the CPSA are well to the left of the CP in most other unions, and have offered the right of Redder Tape to be inside the Broad Left.

This has not been summarily rejected. There is a discussion among the SWP and other members of Redder Tape about involving ourselves far more closely in the Broad Left, without necessarily committing ourselves to its policies.

We recognise the importance of this involvement from the need to build a united front on certain issues.

LINKS

The emphasis has to be on building links locally as well as nationally with those prepared to fight on issues such as pay, cuts, racism, and women's rights.

In the National Union of Teachers there's a big possibility of united action between SWP and International Marxist Group comrades because people have woken up to the need for this.

In the CPSA there has never been violent, sectarian disagreements, but fraternal discussion over differences.

HOME NEWS

ASTMS Conference WONDERFUL CLIVE, BUT WHERE'S THE ACTION?

JANET MAGUIRE, a delegate to last week's ASTMS conference, reports on what happened.

The executive of the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs is against unemployment, opposed to wage control, favours equal rights for women, wants a better NHS, and rejects racism.

But do not get too excited. The union leadership did not put forward one single practical proposal on how to put any of these sentiments into practice.

Every year since Labour took office, we have had a resolution against wage control. Every year we have finished up with the amount in our wage packet that the Labour Government decided we could have. This year will be no exception.

CORONARY

General secretary Clive Jenkins — hand on heart — opposed the wage freeze. Then he pointed to the dire consequences of confronting the Government, saying how the fire fighters had been

isolated and smashed. Of course, the members do not want to be smashed or isolated.

But a public sector alliance based on an across-the-board increase could break that isolation and help to build a united fight back.

CYNICALLY

McCusker, the union's assistant general secretary, cynically dismissed the struggle at Speke, explaining that sometimes you have to go 'to a funeral'. Policies like occupations, work-sharing with no loss of pay and solidarity strikes by our members in other industries were ignored.

The executive's annual report merrily 'celebrated 30 years of the NHS'. And to show how seriously it takes the fight against hospital closures and the rest of the health cuts, the union leadership made sure that for the third year running the conference was unable to discuss any resolutions on the health service.

However, the union leaders are not without some fighting spirit. Reg Bird, the officer responsible for the NHS, and a member of the Communist Party, launched into a spirited attack on the London Health Advisory Committee.

This is one of the union's committees involved in organising action against closures like the EGA — a struggle ignored in the annual report.

Women's rights, a vital issue particularly for a union like ASTMS that has a high percentage of women members, got its usual short shrift. Last year the delegate from my branch moved the reference back of the NEC report on this question.

CLOSED

This year we could not even do that, because conference did not even reach that item on the agenda before the chairperson closed the proceedings for another year.

The executive will continue along its present course — long on rhetoric, short on solutions.



CLIVE JENKINS

The task now is to build a socialist opposition inside the union.

CIRCULATE

Next year the conference will be discussing rules revision. We must organise inside the branches to fight for matters like the election of full-time officials, the right to circulate material, and to organise inside the union.

A fight also must begin around implementing those fine — but often simply pious resolutions — we keep passing every year. Red Collar is one of the means whereby we can begin constructing such a national opposition.

ASTMS members are therefore urged to attend the Red Collar conference in Conway Hall, London on 24 June. Further information c/o EOA Books, 34 Cowley Road, Oxford.

Working Women's Charter Newspaper needed

THE 1978 Working Women's Charter conference takes place on 17 and 18 June.

CELIA PUGH discusses some of the problems raised, and what she hopes will come out of the conference.

The forthcoming national Working Women's Charter Conference looks like being fairly decisive for the future of the campaign.

Despite notable achievements by the campaign in the past, in particular in campaigning to force the unions to adopt policies to meet the specific needs of their women members, some people now question the need for the Charter campaign to continue.

Since the early days of the campaign in 1974, when many unions were forced to at least pay lip service to the needs of their women members by adopting the 10-point Charter or similar policies, and since the drafting of the Women's TUC Charter in particular, there has been a need for a change in direction by the campaign.

BUILDING

In the past it has concentrated on building Charter groups in the localities, grouping activists from many different unions on a geographical basis.

At a time when the unions had no official policy other than a paper commitment to equal pay, and when there were few activists campaigning on these issues within the unions, these groups played an extremely useful role.

The Charter was important, and still is, as a means of explaining the links between issues like abortion, contraception and nurseries, and the more traditional labour movement issues such as equal pay and sex discrimination.

CLOSE LINK

Through the Charter, the close link between women's oppression at home and at work could be explained to trade unionists. Women in the women's movement and women who are primarily trade union militants can be drawn together in common struggles.

The Charter retains its importance despite the adopt-

ion of the TUC Women's Charter.

This now includes free abortion on request and has moved from its tendency to seek to ease rather than challenge women's dual role.

FOURTEEN

But the major advantage of the WWC is that it already has the support of a large number of activists, both inside and out of the trade union movement. This means that it starts out with a base for initiating campaigns in localities and particular unions.

Fourteen major unions have already adopted the Charter, but this is only of limited use if they aren't forced to start campaigning. The fact that these unions do pay lip service to the Charter gives activists a base for initiating debate and activity in their unions.

What has changed since the launching of the Working Women's Charter is that there are now thousands of women activists waging a consistent battle within the official structures of their unions for action on the wide variety of issues contained in Charter.

EXCHANGE

More than ever before they need from the Charter campaign the exchange of experiences that can aid them in that fight, whether they are most active in their union branch, women's sub-committee, union women's group, or women's liberation group.

It is the paper of the Working Women's Charter Campaign which must provide the link between these militants wherever they are active.

Transforming the campaign's paper into a forum of debate for activists in the unions and the women's movement; making it into a weapon for those who support a real fight around the Working Women's Charter — that is where the activists of the campaign must be turned.

The Working Women's Charter:
Where do we go from here?

17 and 18 June

Manchester Polytechnic Students Union, Cavendish House, Cavendish Street, M13 9PL, MANCHESTER.

Socialist Challenge TU Conference Build the fightback

The Socialist Challenge Trade Union conference on 1 July is receiving an enthusiastic response from many sections of the labour movement.

CARL BRECKER and KATE TRUSCOTT, both active in the Hounslow Hospital occupation, discuss the need for a rank and file organisation based on their experience in the health service.

Recently the London division of NUPE calculated that by 1986, 40 per cent of London's hospitals and other health care institutions will be closed. This means a loss of 20,000 beds and 24,000 jobs in the capital alone.

Despite two years of closures, with higher waiting lists and increasing pressure on staff, health workers remained passive. The violent raid on Hounslow Hospital began to jolt this complacency.

The occupiers of the Hounslow began to co-ordinate and extend the nascent resistance, by drawing together experiences to aid struggles elsewhere. It was out of these needs and experiences that fightback was born.

NETWORK

Fightback is a network of workers and militants actively engaged in fighting the cuts. Neither the trade unions themselves nor the limited experience of the revolutionary left is sufficient to fill the need.

Fightback is growing rapidly because it does attempt to fill

this need.

Any trade unionist knows how hard it is to organise anything in co-operation with other unions. Health workers in a single hospital can belong to any of at least eight different unions.

COMMUNITY

Moreover many trade unionists often do not see the need for links with non-trade union bodies. But for the health struggles to be effective they must draw in support from women's groups, community organisations, and all health service users.

The biggest hindrance to organising within the unions is the links with the Labour Government. In the health service, as elsewhere, such as Leyland and the steel industry, the trade union leaders prefer to shore up the Labour Government — even at the cost of lowering living standards and the loss of jobs — rather than throw their weight behind a collective working class fight back.

There has been tremendous

talk in the health service unions against cuts, but talk alone is not enough. The overall effect of the unions' strategy has been to entrench sectional interests.

FRONTAL

At present, with Labour's austerity programme representing a full frontal attack on the working class, such sectional responses around pay and conditions are limited. What is needed is a working class response.

We need to start turning the descriptions and experience of strikes and struggles that abound in the left and feminist press into strategy and tactics to start winning some of them.

Rank and file organisations have come to mean 'fronts' for one political tendency or another. The needs of the class are too urgent for such sectarian fronts.

For us a class struggle rank and file movement must be broad based, democratic and non-sectarian. This means that it must be open to all those prepared to organise together, directed to the class needs of the mass of people.

RECALL

All committees should be subject to control and recall by those involved. And it should not be dominated by one political organisation.

All militants and revolutionaries should fight for their politics inside each struggle. People are won to political ideas when they prove to be effective, not when they are foisted on the struggle from outside.

The revolutionary left has a reputation for dabbling and then dashing off to the next strike down the road. Let's bury that once and for all by showing a commitment to the day-to-day organisational work.

POSITIVE

Fightback is an attempt to build such an effective co-ordinating organisation prepared to fight back and actively resist all cuts. We want to build resistance to all cuts in public spending, and to spread positive ideas to extend the health service.

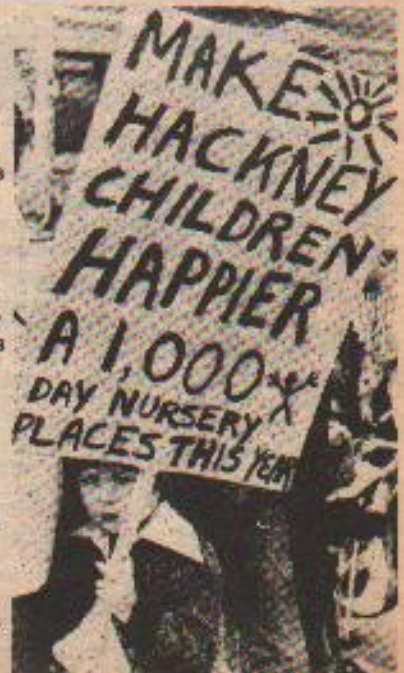
For more information — affiliation; copies of Fightback bulletin — contact: Fightback, c/o Hounslow Hospital Occupation, Staines Road, Hounslow, Middlesex.

For details of the Socialist Challenge Trade Union Conference, to be held in Birmingham on 1 July write to: SCTU Conference, PO Box 50, London N1. Please include details of your union and any labour movement positions held.

NEARLY 300 children, women and men marched through Hackney on Saturday to demand that the local council provide an extra 1,000 nursery places this year.

The demonstration was organised by Hackney Under Fives, a voluntary group that have been campaigning for seven years for better facilities. The march was supported by Hackney Trades Council, community relations council and socialist feminists, as well as local branches of NALGO, NUT, NUPE, UCATT, the sheet metal workers union and others.

Information about Hackney Under Fives can be obtained from 138 Kingsland High Street, London E.8.



Anti Racist Conference Anger is rising



THE WEEKEND of 3/4 June will see a national conference of anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations. Called by the National and London Co-ordinating Committees and CARF paper, it is attracting a lot of interest and support from local antiracist groups as well as trade unions and other organisations. Oliver New, a member of the conference organising committee, reports.

The conference will take place at a very important time for anti-racists. When Powell made his 'rivers of blood' speeches a few years ago, his venom against blacks brought widespread condemnation from the political establishment. Now of course he claims to be the man who was right all along.

RACIST PATH

It's not hard to see why. Trailing along behind him on his racist path is the whole spectrum of reactionaries, from the Conservative Party to some Labour supporters. TV documentaries now openly discuss repatriation. A local Tory Council in Buckinghamshire offered incentives for black people to get out of the country in order to avoid housing them.

Racist murder has become an established phenomenon.

It becomes ever more urgent to organise a massive fight against racism and fascism. Every locality now has its anti-racist or anti-fascist group. A variety of organisations are being set up in workplaces, unions, schools and colleges.

The conference on 3/4 June is an attempt to set up a national structure to co-ordinate and develop some of this activity and to discuss what tasks face the movement as a whole.

Clearly the labour movement has to commit itself to a serious campaign to stem the growth of racism. All too often in the past the issue of racism has been ruled out of order in union meetings as a political matter which was not the concern of

the movement.

Such complacency must now be swept away. Some steps have been made. Two weeks ago the conference of the CPSA, one of the civil service unions, voted to support the Anti-Nazi League. The conference of the ASTMS white-collar union voted to follow the lead of the rail-workers NUR in deciding that racist activity is not compatible with union membership.

WOMEN

Similarly the gay and the women's movement need to take on racism and fascism. Already Women Against Racism and Fascism groups have been started in many areas. Recent attacks against gays have alerted them to the threat of the fascists.

Within the black communities, anger is mounting. The recent murder of Altab Ali led to a demonstration of 5,000 people in the East End of London only a few days later.

All these developments need to be strengthened through the establishment of national organisations. The coming conference is therefore a major

opportunity for anti-racists to develop such a structure.

Clearly there is no aim to duplicate or compete with the ANL, with its startling success in popularising the fight against the modern Nazis, especially among young people. As Peter Hain said in *Socialist Challenge* two weeks ago, the ANL and the anti-racist, anti-fascist groups should complement each other. It is hoped that there will be good representation of ANL groups at the 3/4 June conference.

The aim is to achieve a wide-spread representation of anti-racists. The North-East and South-West regions of the TUC and AUEW are all circulating literature to build the conference, and it is also receiving support from the London Coop Education Committee and various political organisations including the Communist Party.

INDEPENDENT

The main participants in the conference, however, are likely to be independent anti-racist,

anti-fascist organisations, WARF groups, immigrant, Jewish and gay organisations.

Details of the Conference

The conference will be in London on 3/4 June. Speakers include A. Sivandandan, Director of the Institute of Race Relations, and David Edgar, author of the play 'Destiny'. There will be discussions on fascism, immigration and the labour movement plus a series of workshops. Accommodation and creche will be available if needed — book in advance. There will also be a Saturday night social with sounds and Broadside Mobile Worker's Theatre Group. Most labour movement bodies are entitled to a delegate, anti-racist, anti-fascist groups to two delegates. Organisations can also send visitors; cost: visitors £2, delegates £2.50.

Venue: Middlesex Polytechnic, Trent Park, Cockfosters, Barnet, North London (Nearest tube: Oakwood).

Bus crews fight on



Photo: SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

By 810 votes to 190, Leeds bus workers voted last week to continue their five-week-old strike.

IAN MACDONALD, a member of the strike committee, talked to *Socialist Challenge*.

The strike was called over Leeds Metro's plans to introduce new schedules in West Leeds.

'It's a question of a basic negotiating right', Ian MacDonald explains. 'We have an agreement signed by both union and management which states that if either side wants to change the status quo, then they've got to go through the appropriate arbitration machinery. Management won't accept this.'

The procedural agreement covers the whole of the West Yorkshire area. So the Leeds crews have won important support in surrounding towns.

The recently organised Transport & General Workers Union central committee which covers the whole area of the West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive (PTE) called a one-day stoppage a fortnight ago.

'It was absolutely solid', Ian MacDonald says. 'Now we are trying to build on this, working towards an all-out strike covering all four Metro areas. We've already heard from the chairperson of Bradford PTE, Pat Donoghue, that he's got plans to call a mass meeting to get action off the ground there.'

It's not only the procedural agreement which is common to all areas. There is also the Tory county council's reorganisation plan in the pipeline, to follow the revised scheduled in W. Leeds.

'There's no doubt about it, Ian MacDonald points out. 'They're planning to cut 48 bus trips per day in the West Leeds area, involving a cut of 14 drivers. And this is just the tip of the iceberg.'

'But it would be wrong to place all the responsibility at the door of the Tories', he adds. 'It was the previous Labour-controlled council which instigated the reorganisation proposals, and Labour has not voiced any public opposition to the Tories' plans.'

Two days before the local elections, the Labour Party issued a pamphlet which neither supported nor opposed the strike. It just blamed the way the Tories are handling the issue.'

Gays under attack Defend Gay News

THE Gay Activists Alliance has decided to step up the campaign for W H Smith to revoke its ban on Gay news. JAMIE GOUGH reports.

W H Smith agreed to stock Gay News last year in selected branches for a trial period. In February, Smith's abruptly terminated this arrangement.

The immediate reason seemed to be an orchestrated letter-writing campaign by the National Festival of Light. This was combined with the atmosphere of reaction associated with the Gay News prosecution by Mary Whitehouse.

The reason given by Smith's was that it objected to the letters in Gay News supporting free speech for the Paedophile Information Exchange.

REACTIONARY

In fact, Gay News's editorial position on sexual orientation towards children was as reactionary as that of the bourgeois press.

Smith's took up the aspect of

sexual politics that the bourgeoisie attacked with most self-confidence: children's sexuality. The attack has taken various forms, from that on lesbian parents to the speedy passage of Whitehouse's superfluous Child graphy Bill.

THEME

The constant theme is that the 'permissive society' has gone too far — liberal attitudes inevitably lead to excesses; even the last bastion of 'innocence', childhood, is under attack.

In this way, any liberal sexual morality is smeared, and at the same time the sexual and general repression of young people is reinforced.

However, although the banning of Gay News was presented as a defence of childhood, in reality it was a direct attack on gays. The

Guardian carried similar letters on paedophilia, and wasn't banned. Gay News, despite its weaknesses, is a life-line for many gays. For them the ban is a severe blow.

Smith's owns many of the most important retail outlets, and influences what the independent newsagents are willing to stock. Thus the ban on Gay News raises the right of a handful of managers to control what we read.

The Gay Activists Alliance has called for a boycott of Smith's by distribution workers. The NUS has called on student unions to order their papers elsewhere. Other institutional users, such as local libraries, are also being asked to order elsewhere.

These collective methods are more effective than pickets to prevent individual buyers using Smith's. The struggle is to get Smith's to extend its distribution, not to apply moral pressure to stop people going into the shops.

Information pickets of Smith's — which should be the character of those called for 27 May, can publicise and encourage action from the labour movement.

GAA MEETING

The GAA is calling a meeting of left and pro-gay newspapers, to discuss how they can help the campaign. *Socialist Challenge* will attend this meeting.

Although papers distributed by Smith's could withdraw in



FINES totalling £1200 have been imposed on three magazines for contempt of court following the naming of the well known Colonel B. 'If you're not a mind reader — beware,' commented one defendant — because the guilty verdicts came despite the fact that Tottenham magistrates had merely 'implied' the Colonel's name should not be reported.

The Aubrey Berry Campbell Defence Committee remains on the offensive. A 'picket-nic' is being held in Cheltenham this Sunday, starting at noon, to focus attention on the officially secret SIGINT (signals intelligence) operation in the town. Ring 01-838 4411 for details. An appeal for funds for the Leveller, Peace News and the Journalist has been launched. All contributions to: Box B/HAJ, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1.

solidarity, the damage done to these papers compared to that done to Smith's make it an ineffective tactic. After all, it is

because of the damage done to Gay News by the Smith's ban that we are campaigning in the first place.

WHAT'S LEFT

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

FERTILITY CONTROL and Sexuality: What are the implications of a woman's right to choose? Discussion on Tues 30 May at 8pm, Room 310A, St Clements Building, LSE, Houghton St, London WC2. Further details from NAC Tel: 01-485 4303.

TRADE UNION conference on Abortion, planning meeting. All welcome Tues 6 June, 7.30pm, Room 8106, St Clements Building, LSE, London WC2. Further details from NAC 01-485 4303.

OXFORD CITY Nursery Campaign. Action against the Cuts Rally, Sat 27 May, 11am to 5pm. East Oxford Community Centre, Pincocks St, Oxford. Speakers from: Houslow Hospital Occupational etc. Discussion, film, theatre, singing social. Register

on 50p, from Ted Eames, 7 East St, Omsy, Oxford. Tel: Oxford 43513.

MUSICIANS/VOCALISTS. Lead guitar/writer seeking others to form socialist rock group in S. London area. Tel: 01-693 6795.

NORTH WEST Socialist Feminist workshop on Ireland, Sat 3 June, 10am to 6pm. Bolton Institute of Technology, Deane Road, Bolton. Details from Rosa, 69 Venice St, Bolton.

BRITTON SOCIALIST Club. Benefit concert for builders on strike at the Fairweather site, Wandsworth. Starting Kevin Coyne and Ned Rineo. Last event in the current programme. Fri 26 May at 8pm. The Canterbury, Canterbury Crescent, Britton, Adm. 50p.

AUDIO SECRETARY required by lively socialist firm of solicitors in Kilburn. Hours 9.30 to 5.30. Four weeks' holiday. Starting salary £3000 pa. Tel: 01-328 6665.

SUPPORT PRISONERS in H-Block, Long Kesh! Hands off! Republican News! Picket at Birmingham Evening Mail Building on Sat 27 May, 11am to 1pm outside Post and Mail Building, Colmore Circus, City Centre. Bring a banner! Infor Solidarity Co-ordinating Committee.

BROADSIDE MOBILE Workers' Theatre requires: 1. Versatile musician (acting ability an advantage). 2. Versatile actor. Both full time. Both must be socialists. Long term commitment. Wages: 58, Holborn House, Holborn Place, London SW1. Tel: 01-450 8992/01-730 5396.

BENEFIT for the international Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland. With the Women's Theatre Group and Clapperlaw. Bar and Raffle. Sun 25 May, 7.30pm. Hemmingsford Arms, 158 Hemmingsford Rd, St (Highbury and Islington tube). 65p (60p wage-ess). Organised

by the Women's Sub-Committee of the Tribune planning committee.

GARNERS STRIKERS — support them! Main pickets everyday, noon to 3pm and 5.30 pm to 11pm at 399 Oxford St, London W1 (opp Selfridges); 243 Oxford St (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 58 Whitcombe St (Leicester Square). Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donation are urgently needed as strike pay is only 66 per week. All donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm B4, 12-13 Henrietta St, London WC2. 01-240-1058.

'FIGHT RACISM' badges and T-shirts (badges black on white, shirts black on red) available for all anti-racists. Show where you stand during the long hot summer. Order yours now. Badges, 15p each plus 7p p&g, or 11p each for orders of ten or more. T-shirts, £2 each plus 15p p&g.

J. Wilson, SC Badges, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

PUBLIC Conference on the Prague Spring, Charter 77 and the British Labour Movement at Central London Poly. Sat 27 May, 10am to 5pm. Speakers include Jiri Peňak, Jan Kavan, Eduard Goldstucker, Stan Newens MP and speakers from the CP and IMG. Further details from: 498 Talbot Rd, London N7.

TEMPORARY CARNIVAL — Rock Against Racism's special souvenir of the Carnival. Full size poster of the Clash, TRB, Steel Pulse and Poly. A few copies left. Send 10p plus stamp and your address to: RAR, 27 Clarendon Close, London EC1.

FOUR SOCIALIST looking for 4 roomed flat/house in North or East London. Phone M. Tel: 358 830.

OXFORD and surrounding areas: ex IS/SMP — comms interested in meeting to discuss work and

experiences since leaving IS/ISW? phone Oxford 4354.

WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER Campaign national conference. Manchester Poly. 17 and 18 June. Further info from: Pat Cross, Flat 2, 49 Spring Bank, Hull. Tel: Hull 443 243.

ISLINGTON CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACISM AND FASCISM BENEFIT BOP

WITH: Paul Jones, Carol Grimes, Ray Warleigh, Mike Evans, Dick Heckstall Smith, Bob Dewarport, Henry McCullough, Andy Roberts, Mitch Mitchell, Roy Babbington, Gary Windo, Clive Griffiths, John Hallett, Tim Hinkley, Adam Maitland, James Rutherford, Tony O'Malley, Duffy Power, Art Theeman, Mel Collins, and Big Chief. AT: City University, St John's Street, EC1.

ON: Friday 26 May at 8pm. Admission: £1 (50p wageless).

1968



THE YEAR OF THE GREAT DRESS REHEARSAL

WEST BERLIN, FEBRUARY 1968: This is the first major international gathering of revolutionaries from Western Europe since the war. The venue has been carefully chosen: the showcase of Western capitalism.

The occasion is a conference against United States imperialism and in solidarity with Vietnam. The hosts are the internationalist students from the German SDS (German Socialist Students). Rudi Dutschke, Christian Semmler, the Wolf brothers greet their comrades from abroad: Alain Krivine and the 300 JCR delegates from France, Ernest Mandel from Belgium, Tariq Ali from the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in Britain, black Americans from the United States.

Speeches are interrupted by constant applause and chants of 'Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh'. The black Americans teach a new chant: 'I ain't gonna go to Vietnam, 'cos Vietnam is where I am. Hell no, I ain't gonna go.' More applause. More speeches.

The mood is euphoric because of the news which is seeping through from the battlefields of Southern Vietnam. The National Liberation Front is celebrating the Vietnamese New Year (Tet) by launching a simultaneous

attack on 26 provincial capitals. The imperial capital of Hue has been liberated. Fighting is going on in Saigon itself. The grasshoppers are humbling the elephants.

The internationalists in Berlin weep with joy. After their speeches they march on the streets. 10,000 voices in unison hail the victories of the Vietnamese. Portraits of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, the revolutionists murdered in Berlin in 1919 by the armed squads of social-democracy, head the procession.

It is a highly symbolic affair. They are aghast in West Berlin and puzzled in the East. For history is being turned upside down.

For us it is the first glimpse of a new future. The message of Vietnam is loud and clear. We need whisper no longer. Imperialism is not invincible. If the Vietnamese can do it, then so can the workers and students in the West.

Naturally there is not unanimity on this proposition. Marcuse is dubious, many students incredulous, but both Mandel and Krivine insist that without the workers there can be no revolution in the West.

In Britain in March 1968 there is a

demonstration of 25,000 in Grosvenor Square. The main speakers are Alain Krivine, Tariq Ali, John Palmer and Christian Semmler from the German SDS. There are battles outside the US Embassy.

The South Vietnamese puppet Foreign Minister calls a press conference in Saigon to denounce the Grosvenor Square demo as being 'inspired by communists'. True, but not by British Communists, who are that stage extremely hostile to VSC.

The inspiration comes from the Vietnamese communists, whose British representatives attend VSC conferences and give messages of solidarity! The Morning Star reports the 17 March demo without mentioning the organisation which organised it.

In Rome, Milan, Turin, Brussels. Paris there are also demonstrations. The victories of the Vietnamese have brought a new layer of militants onto the stage of history who are profoundly internationalist.

They reject the compromised politics of social-democracy and the traditional Communist Parties. They favour revolutions in the West, even though they have no clear idea as to how these will be brought about. The

Tet offensive has become truly international.

In Paris a movement of solidarity with Vietnam by the students provokes a series of clashes with the Gaullist state. Students unleash a strike to demand the release of their leaders. The state refuses.

On the night of 10 May 1968, the barricades go up in Paris once again. Behind them are young students, determined not to allow the hated CRS riot police to break their strike. Bricks and cars are used to construct the barricades.

No-one is spared. Ernest Mandel observes his car going up in flames on a barricade and mutters: 'This is beautiful. It is the revolution.' Not quite, but almost.

The students win. Yes, they win. 'Mamma's boys', the CRS had shouted, even though a quarter of the students were women. Now the CRS retreat. The 'orthodox' groups that had marched off rather than fight can't believe their eyes.

Within the next weeks a wave of solidarity demonstrations and strikes by workers escalates into a massive general strike. 10 million workers occupy their factories. It is the largest

strike in the entire history of the capitalist system, and it surprises and shocks the Communist Party and its trade union leaders.

'This time we will go all the way', shout the workers. 'When workers shout this', explains the CP union leader Seguy, 'they mean in reality that this time they will not be satisfied with anything less than a 30 per cent wage rise.' Only the atrophied mind of a bureaucrat could draw that particular conclusion.

But the strike lacks a political focus. Although it reaches far beyond economic demands, the weakness of the revolutionary left in the factories means that there is no political perspective available to workers. Spontaneously they go no further than factory occupations.

The events in France that year were a dress rehearsal. There were others as well, but none so intense as in Paris in May/June 1968.

The eruptions in Czechoslovakia in August that year had a different character. But they were a different chapter from the same book, and Socialist Challenge will be commemorating the Prague Events in its August issues.

CHRONOLOGY CHRONOLOGY CHRONOLOGY CHRONOLOGY CHRONOLOGY

JANUARY: National Liberation Front launches its New Year offensive in Southern Vietnam. The puppet army crumbles. American public opinion is traumatised.

FEBRUARY: First mass gathering of European revolutionaries in West Berlin, at conference in solidarity with Vietnamese revolution.

MARCH: Mass demonstrations in Britain (25,000 march outside American Embassy in Grosvenor Square) in solidarity with the NLF. Demos also in every major European city. March 22 Movement formed in Nanterre in France. Rudi Dutschke is shot by a fascist and seriously wounded in West Berlin. Riots throughout West Germany.

APRIL: Mass pressure for democratic reforms builds up in Prague. The 'Prague Spring' begins to take shape after the replacement of Novotny, the hated Stalinist bureaucrat, by Alexander Dubcek in January.

MAY: Students in Paris fight against the state. On the night of 10 May they win all their demands. A chain reaction develops. Within weeks the country is in the throes of a massive general strike. 10 million workers occupy their factories.

JUNE: The general strike in France continues. The European bourgeoisie is horrified. The ghosts of 1789, 1848 and 1871 are alive and well.

'When the finger points at the moon, the idiot looks at the finger. Chinese Proverb'. This slogan on a Paris wall is a reference to the French Communist Party. Its leaders pledge their loyalty to the Fifth Republic ('We are a party of order').

The strike, lacking a political focus, fizzles out. Gaullism wins the general election which follows. Reaction heaves a sigh of relief. But it will not be able to settle down again.

JULY: In Czechoslovakia the reformers are beginning to feel the pressure of the Soviet leadership. Behind the scenes they are told to end the experiment and return to normal.

But the dynamic is beyond their control. They make a few concessions, but debates and discussions continue. Czech young Communists rehabilitate Trotsky. Isaac Deutscher's works are serialised. Czechoslovakia has never been as free as this before!



ALAIN KRIVINE 1978

The year 1968 shattered many illusions. It ended the myth that the United States imperialists were all-powerful. It destroyed the idea that the road forward was through the blind alleys of peaceful co-existence.

It re-affirmed the growing crisis of Stalinist rule in Eastern Europe. It showed that even popular social revolutions such as the Chinese couldn't avoid the problems indicated by Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed*. And most importantly it shattered ruling class complacency in the West. The French working class saw to that.

In the Fifties and Sixties the post-war containment of communism and revolution had become a worldwide crusade. Its standard bearers were the United States. The foot soldiers were supplied by the Western European ruling classes.

Stalin's crimes and blunders had provided them with many a propaganda theme in the holy war of the so-called 'Free World' against the totalitarian menace of communism. As with all hypocrisy, this invocation of liberty and freedom by the exploiting classes in the West must be understood as the homage which vice pays to virtue.

The Cold War had cast its spell throughout the West, infecting a number of semi-Marxist currents as well. The Fifth Republic in France appeared as a solid rock. De Gaulle was much admired by other leaders in the West. His 'benevolent authoritarianism' was the envy of politicians in Germany and in Britain.

May 1968 did not come as a bolt from a cloudless sky. Gaullism had created the conditions for the specific forms which it took. A ten year wage freeze coupled with an antiquated educational system proved to be a powerful combination.

For Trotskyists like ourselves, the entire year appeared as an incredible vindication of central tenets of our programme. Describing the last tortured decade of Trotsky's life, his biographer Isaac Deutscher wrote (paraphrasing Marx):

'This was a time when... "the idea pressed towards reality", but as reality did not tend towards the idea, a gulf was set between them, a gulf narrower yet deeper than ever.' (*The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky 1929-40*, p. 510)

1968 was a year when at last reality began to 'tend towards the idea again'. Thousands and thousands of youth bypassed the traditional reformist organisations of the working class.

What is more, they were joined by millions of workers. Of course they could not politically bypass the French Communist Party (PCF), but their actions went far beyond the wildest dreams of the PCF leaders.

And their demands were not simply for higher wages. They began to question the overall oppression of capitalism. There was a global contestation and we can still see its effects.

The movement for women's liberation, the fight for gay rights, the large number of votes gained by the ecologists, the anti-nuclear movements: what are these if not a reflection of what was started in 1968. Therefore we refuse to allow May 1968 to be strait-jacketed into a very narrow definition of politics.

There were three basic stages of the struggle in France in May 1968. The first and the best-known was the explosion of the student movement. This led to solidarity actions from the working class.

The next phase was the quantitative growth of the movement. Almost every layer of society except the ruling class became involved. What emerged from united actions against repression was the most massive general strike in history. The question was posed of overthrowing the government and offering another political alternative.

Here the working class could not depend on the students. They had great confidence in our ability to mount street demonstrations (many building

workers even complimented us on the quality of the barricades!), but they did not see us as the political alternative. They did not believe that we could form an alternative government.

They were, of course, correct. It is important to understand this fact: what was posed at that time was the overthrow of the Fifth Republic. That could have been the starting point for an assault on the bastions of French capital.

When the latter question was posed, the French workers turned towards their traditional organisations, especially the PCF. On discovering that the latter was not going to take the struggle any further, they did not prolong the strike.

Of course, to the blind worshippers of spontaneity, this explanation appears scandalous. 'Typically Leninist!', they scream. We plead guilty. More to the point, we ask for an alternative explanation and nothing coherent emerges. We do not regard the Red Brigades or a pastoral existence as a satisfactory alternative.

What is important is not to accept the traditional commentary of bourgeois journalists. 1968 was not a flash in the pan. For us 1968 still exists. All the conditions which created 1968 have multiplied. It was the beginning.

The struggle today is more complex, more varied, but its goals remain the same. A large bulk of the far left imagined that after 1968 reformism was finished, but this is clearly not the case.

The illusions in bourgeois democracy are very strong, and this is hardly surprising. Those who refuse to understand the objective basis for these illusions only end up by strengthening them, and appear irrelevant.

In 1968 we saw the rebirth of revolutionary ideas, but this rebirth was made possible because there existed those who fought for them through difficult moments. The JCR of 1968 survived because it was attached to the Fourth International.

Ten years ago we had 700 members. Today the French section has 3,300 members and 2,500 organised sympathisers. The latter are organised in Red Mole factory groups. Our working class implantation (in manual and white collar workers) has increased phenomenally. Only 13 per cent of the organisation are students.

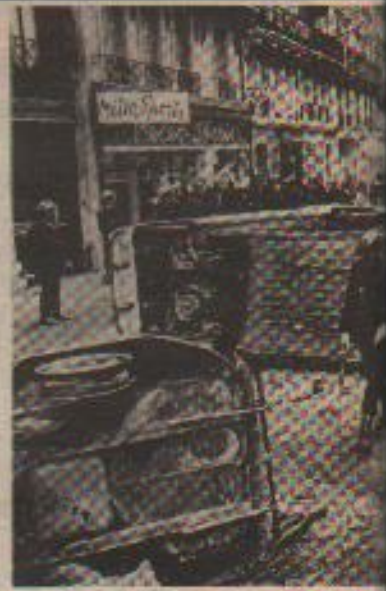
It is a pleasant irony that almost ten years to the day later we have felt the need to launch a youth organisation, again called the JCR.

History never repeats itself. Ten years ago the PCF called us agents provocateurs in the service of the bourgeoisie. Today they are prepared to discuss with us. The CP-dominated union federation, the CGT, has even called on the Government to lift the ban on Daniel Cohn-Bendit!

The last ten years have changed many things. The growing split in the PCF is of the utmost significance. The alternative poles of Ellstein and Allhuser are not the result of petty-bourgeois discussion clubs. They reflect the growing political unease felt by the working class base of the Communist Party.

Naturally we are extremely interested in the evolution of such a debate. More to the point, we think we have an important role to play in clarifying many of the issues which are at stake. May 1968 was a gigantic dress-rehearsal. The final act is still being prepared.

Paris, May 1978



CRS thugs review one barricade, which



In the occupied Boulogne-Billancourt



In Place Saint-Michel students contro



They captured after a day's fighting.



At the factory the workers organised a table-tennis championship.



At the CRS. Pierre Rousset (JCR) is in foreground.

ERIC HOBSBAWM 1968

'Nobody expected that the workers would imitate the students. But they did, once again in spite of the feet-dragging of their unions and party...'

ERIC HOBSBAWM, Marxist historian and a member of the Communist Party, writing in the first issue of *Black Dwarf*, 1 June 1968:

WHAT HAS happened in France is marvellous and enchanting, except of course to *The Times* which naturally regards a strike at the Bank of France as conclusive evidence of the breakdown of civilisation. For us old members of the fan-club, it proves that Paris still has star quality.

It is more than a place with three-star Michelin restaurants, traffic jams, cleaned buildings and the kind of dress shops the Duchess of Windsor goes to. It can still put up the barricades, often on the very same spots where they went up in 1848, in 1871 and in 1944.

It is a great moment for sentimental Francophiles. But even the most sentimental among them must wonder whether the whole business is merely a gallic freak. Does it show the way to the rest of the world? It would not be the first time that Paris has done so. I think it may do so now.

The events in France are totally unexpected and totally unprecedented. That is the first thing to grasp about them.

Practically all serious observers of politics have long taken it for granted that classical revolutions will no longer happen in the advanced western countries, either because there is unlikely to be massive revolutionary discontent, or because such discontent is likely to be confined to marginal minorities such as students and blacks, isolated from the rest of the people.

Exceptions were conceivable, but none of them seemed to have much bearing on the present situation. Least of all on France, which until three weeks ago seemed at peace, rather successful in its international affairs, with a stable government, solid finances, and prosperity, which means that the poor were at any rate not notably worse off than they usually expect to be.

A revolution has never broken out under such circumstances. Yet in Paris it did. Or anyway something happened which might quite well have turned into a revolution.

More precisely, two things which are remarkable enough, though the second is more amazing than the first: the students rebelled and forced the government to retreat, and the workers followed their example.

Student rebellion is fairly common these days. The novelty of the Paris situation lies in a), the extent of the mass mobilisation of the students (not to mention their teachers and parents) and b), the extent of public support for them, which eventually forced the unions and the Communist Party, reluctantly, to line up behind them.

In this situation there was not much the government could have done,

short of starting to shoot; and it is an increasingly well-recognised fact of politics that massacring students is much trickier than massacring blacks or even white workers. Nevertheless, nobody expected that the workers would imitate the students.

But they did, once again in spite of the feet-dragging of their unions and party. It was the young workers who began the occupation of factories which has since snow-balled into a general strike. And though the unions have taken it over, it was and still is essentially a spontaneous, grass-roots movement.

Could it have happened anywhere else except in France? In its specific details, no. No other country has revolution as part of its national tradition, so that in certain circumstances it comes as natural to put up a barricade as to raise the red flag. The French workers may be no more revolutionary in their practical demands than the British, but their ancestors for five generations back have made revolutions, and they have a bad conscience about not making one themselves.

Hence it is possible for the students, by example, to 'put the working class traditions back into the working class' as someone has said.

On the other hand, leaving details aside, the students rebelling against a society which offers them all its prizes, the workers forgetting about their HP debts to establish, by their spontaneous mass action, that life is more than overtime earnings and holidays in Palma: these are not French but potentially international phenomena.

We knew — though the politicians didn't — that people are not contented. They feel that their lives are meaningless in the consumer society. They know that, even when they are comfortable (which many of them are not), they are also more powerless than before, more pushed around by giant organisations for whom they are items and not men (and women — eds).

They know that the official mechanisms for representing them — elections, parties, etc — have tended to become a set of ceremonial institutions going through empty rituals. They do not like it — but until recently they did not know what to do about it, and may have wondered whether there was anything that they could do about it.

What France proves is that when someone demonstrates that people are not powerless, they may begin to act again. Perhaps even more than this: that only the sense of impotence is holding many of us back from acting like men (and women — eds) and not zombies.

TOM NAIRN 1968

'The old grey mares of Stalinism are currently apologising for their existence by saying that "no revolution was possible" in May, that a successful insurrectionary coup was out of the question. As if this was the problem!

'Whether or not success, a seizure of power, was possible (a problem one could debate), there is absolutely no doubt that the Party of Revolution could have at least recognised its own, in May, could have generously welcomed the beauty of May, and advanced the real process of revolution in a thousand ways. It could have reached out to the new workers instead of shutting them off from the old workers. It could have tried to rise to the level of the Italian Communists of fifty years ago, by leading the factory occupation movement and urging the formation of workers councils.

'All that could have been asked of these apostles of reasonableness was to exploit the situation in a reasonable, realistic fashion. Instead, they spat phlegm at the revolution until the barricades, and spent the rest of the month building their own barricades against the revolution itself.'

— Tom Nairn: *The Beginning of the End*, France, May 1968

THE STRUGGLE IN THE PCF CONTINUES

An attempt by the leadership of the French CP to divide and isolate its critics has blown up in its face.

Alarmed at the persistence of dissent inside the party after the central committee meeting last month, the CP leaders decided to concentrate their fire on 'left' critic Louis Althusser and his supporters.

Two political bureau members, Jacques Chambaz and Paul Laurent, openly attacked Althusser in the party daily, *L'Humanité*. Chambaz went so far as to state that the attack on 'busybodies composing monologues at their desks' made by party secretary Georges Marchais at the central committee meeting was aimed at Althusser and no-one else.

This was accompanied by an opening to the 'liberal' critics. For the first time one of their representatives, Raymond Jean, was given an 'open forum' in *L'Humanité* on 12 May. At the same time the historian Jean Elleinstein, another leader of this wing, was given a personal interview by Marchais in an attempt to arrive at an understanding which would isolate the 'left' critics.

But this manoeuvre had the opposite effect. Elleinstein left Marchais' office convinced that there was nothing for it but to seek to ally all the critics around the demand for democratic discussion in the party.

Last weekend the bombshell arrived. More than 300 CP members — including both Althusser and Elleinstein — signed a statement published in the bourgeois daily *Le Monde* which accuses the leadership of 'contempt for the working class' and demands greater freedom of criticism and discussion inside the party.

This is not the only sign that the opposition inside the party is beginning to organise. Also published in *Le Monde* last week was another text by 100 rank-and-file CP members specifically denouncing the leadership's twists and turns during the election campaign and demanding a really democratic preparation of the next party congress.

Below we reprint the text of the statement signed by Althusser, Elleinstein, and more than 300 other CP members. In future issues of *Socialist Challenge* we will be publishing further texts from this debate along with analysis of what they imply.

The undersigned Communists, belonging to all socio-professional categories, cannot hide their astonishment at a certain number of formulas and assertions contained in the report by Georges Marchais.

We will proceed, like all other Communists, to a thorough analysis of the whole of this text; but a number of serious statements call forth these remarks immediately.

Under cover of a reference to the theses of the 22nd Congress, which appears to be very formal, a number of summary formulations caricature the positions of Communist intellectuals who have expressed themselves in the recent period in other journals than the organs of the CP — either because of their rejection by our press, or because of a choice tied to our conception of pluralism.

Of course we have varying points of view in relation to these contributions, but that is precisely the richness of our party. To treat any analysis which doesn't come from the party leadership as 'thought which has gone adrift', to talk in this regard of a desire for a panacea in the 'liquidation of the party', the 'renunciation of being Communist', or a 'return

to the dictatorship of the proletariat', represents an extreme simplification.

The fact that comrades, local or factory cells, sections or even federal committees are demanding a discussion forum in an exceptional period, and that they equally want to debate ways of urgently perfecting democratic centralism, is likened to an 'attempt to dismantle the party in the name of a vague petty-bourgeois anarchism'...

The fact that they make so bold as to criticise the role of the full-time party officials — which isn't to question their necessity — and the danger that these full-timers could be cut off from production, from real life, from the masses, is reduced to an anti-working class attack by well-paid intellectuals. This workerist reaction shows a great contempt for the working class, it's ridiculous — particularly as a large number of workers share these concerns.

Beyond references to the essential alliance of intellectuals and the working class, which now seem ritualistic, these assertions are evidence of a real regression in relation to the gains made by our party in this sphere, under the influence of Maurice Thorez in the Thirties and then at the Argentine central committee meeting twelve years ago. They show a regression first as to the role and activity of Communist intellectuals and now as to their very place in the party; and, beyond that, in terms of the alliance between intellectuals and the working class. How can one not underline the contradiction between such language and the policy of alliances that we envisage?

Contrary to this fantastic caricature, what is involved is in no way a challenge to the achievements of the 22nd Congress, to which we are deeply committed. Nor do we underestimate the political responsibility of the Socialist Party in the defeat of March 1978. We are concerned to examine, without complacency, why the revolutionary current was unable to maintain this unity on the objectives for change, why it was unable to stimulate a powerful popular current. The schematic rejection of such an examination testifies to a defensive attitude, to a lack of confidence in the masses and in the members of our party, whom they persist in not treating as adults.

We continue to think, and will continue to say, that only such political courage — not refusing to examine any question — is capable of reanimating political life, of establishing the conditions for the political creativity of our party, and of finally allowing the renewal of the Union of the Left through patient and fraternal work at the base.

Faced with a bourgeoisie which is mercilessly applying a 'liberalism' which will weigh very heavily on the wages and conditions of manual and intellectual workers, the requisite struggles need a Communist Party which is powerful because it is wide open to the needs and aspirations of the workers, capable of listening to them and also to its supporters, whether they be workers or intellectuals. To attempt to set the one against the other does not render any service to our cause.

The delay of our party in opening itself up — rightly pointed out by Georges Marchais on several occasions — cannot continue without grave injury to the future of our people. It is very urgent that the 23rd Congress takes this backwardness in spheres, and the way in which it is prepared will, from this point of view, be decisive.

IT COULD HAVE TURNED INTO A REVOLUTION

Black Dwarf
WE SHALL FIGHT
WE WILL WIN
PARIS
LONDON
ROME
BERLIN

THE POST-1968 years saw the flowering of a whole range of groups to the left of the Communist and social-democratic parties. They have been loosely characterised as the 'far left'. The dominant currents on a European scale were inspired in differing degrees by Trotskyism and Maoism.

The last ten years confronted the far left with a number of critical tests. It failed many of them.

TARIQ ALI discusses the reasons for this, and suggests that the three trump cards in our political arsenal remain the united front, transitional politics and socialist democracy.

Looking around Western Europe, Japan and North America, one is confronted by a somewhat bleak political landscape. These countries have witnessed important political and economic upheavals. Bourgeois leaders have fallen prey to a diverse set of convulsions. At least two countries have confronted a pre-revolutionary crisis. But ten years of struggles have yet to produce a revolutionary party.

Elsewhere on these pages, Alain Krivine correctly stresses the novelty of 1968. It is true that we broke out of our isolation.

We grew. We gained a modest toehold inside the organised working class. We saw the emergence of a layer of militants inside the factories and on the campuses who were and remain responsive to the initiatives of the far left: the layer described accurately enough as the 'new mass vanguard' in the jargon of the Fourth International (FI).

All this marked important steps forward for the revolutionary movement. But the sour fact is inescapable: no revolutionary party exists. What is more it cannot be conjured into existence by the invocation of magical political formulae or by voluntarism or, for that matter, by 'Stakhanovian' recruiting campaigns.

Revolutionary parties are born when traditional workers parties are confronted with crises from which they cannot escape: wars and revolutions have till now been the most efficient midwives in this painful process. Others will emerge in the present period. The point is to be prepared for them.

The question arises: Are the reasons for the failure of even one revolutionary party to emerge rooted in the recalcitrance of objective political conditions, or is there an additional factor? Is it not also the case that there were occasions when a revolutionary organisation could

have made a qualitative leap forward? We would answer in the affirmative.

The extremely favourable situation which opened up in Portugal after the fall of Spínola and lasted till the ill-fated putschism of the November days in 1975 was one such opportunity. The prolonged agony of Italian capitalism and the continuous political crisis of its institutions and parties was another. And yet it was in both Portugal and in Italy that the far left failed the decisive tests.

In Portugal, the PRP-BR, a quaint mixture of syndicalist practice and ultra-left politics, ignored the small problem of winning over the masses. Its insurrectionist rhetoric was very appealing, but wide off the mark. Its notion of 'non-party soviets' (also popularised by Otelo de Carvalho) was grist to the mill of Soares and Portuguese social democracy — and a political nonsense in any event.

A correct strategic line applied by an organisation with several thousand members and supporters would have made some inroads into the base of the Socialist Party and the Communist Party. That opportunity was missed.

In Italy, the dominant currents were a combination of Maoism, spontaneism and syndicalism. Two of them — Avanguardia Operaia (now Democrazia Proletaria) and Lotta Continua — were the products of 1968. The leaders of both organisations had left the Italian section of the FI prior to '68.

In the event both AO and LC acquired thousands of members. Both had daily papers and AO two radio stations. The FI virtually collapsed and remains a rump in that country. The third organisation — Il Manifesto — grew out of a split within Italian Communism and its central leaders, Lucio Magri and Rossana Rossanda, were well-known to communist workers.

Today LC no longer exists. It dissolved itself into a 'broader

movement'. AO has abandoned its position of attacking trade unions and trying to circumvent them towards an opportunist stance to the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the union bureaucracy. Whereas the process of recomposition has seen a merger of a minority of AO with the majority of Il Manifesto. This organisation sees itself as a pressure group on the PCI. Its likely evolution is towards an ultimate merger with the latter.

At the same time, a few hundred militants despairing of both the PCI and the far left have taken to terrorism. Unlike the Baader-Meinhof grouping in Germany, the Red Brigades do have a limited amount of support from the former members of many of the far-left organisations. A grim testimony to the political collapse of the Italian far left.

It is not a pure accident that the large groups which have gone into a political decline either emerged from or flirted with Maoist political positions or else refused to understand the primacy of politics in the struggle against the State.

The organisations which have held their own or developed since 1968 have been linked programmatically to the Fourth International. The exception is the British Socialist Workers Party (formerly IS) which survived by avoiding the worst excesses of its co-practitioners on the Continent. There are specific reasons for this fact, but they are best discussed elsewhere. For the moment it is necessary to register this fact.

However, the ambiguities of the SWP on the question of the united front; its lack of sensitivity to questions of socialist democracy; its failure to understand that a revolutionary organisation will not be built by a process of arithmetical growth, continue to place a question mark on the future of this organisation.

All these problems are reflected in Chris Harman's text in *Socialist Review* No 2. The contrast with Alain Krivine's prescriptions (contained in the same issue) is fairly clear.

The central weakness of the far left over the past ten years was to underestimate the resilience of the traditional workers' organisations. Many (including currents within the FI) felt that a leap over the head of the mass organisations was a distinct and immediate possibility aided by general strikes, semi-insurrectional situations, and so on. The lessons that we have learnt indicate that there will be no leaping over process without a political combat. This was revealed in Portugal in the most vivid fashion. Thus the tactics of the united front, developed by the Communist Inter-

national and further developed by Trotsky in 1930-33, remain the only viable approach in the bourgeois-democratic countries of the West.

For without them, it will not be possible to grapple with the twin problem of winning the masses and combining economic and political struggles. The united front was concerned essentially with achieving united actions of revolutionary and reformist workers for common objectives. At the same time, all forces within it would retain complete ideological and political independence.

The modern significance of the united front lies in the fact that the central problem of the Twenties and Thirties is still with us. How do we achieve a union between political and economic struggles? To refuse to see the problem in this way is either to lapse into syndicalism or imply that the parliamentary struggle is the political struggle par excellence — a position rejected by revolutionary Marxists.

Our aim remains a rupture with the institutions of the bourgeois State.

It was to deal with this thorny problem that the question of 'transitional demands' was first raised by the Communist International. It was to facilitate the transition from economic to political struggle against the bourgeois State and its institutions.

Such demands were not necessarily socialist. They were designed to be acceptable to workers not yet convinced of the need for socialist solutions. On the other hand, their permanent integration into capitalism was also impossible. Their function was to create a disequilibrium in the political system.

The ultimate aim of transitional demands was to lead the creation of transitional institutions of mass struggle against capitalism. These would develop towards becoming organs of a dual power and prepare the masses through their own experiences for a struggle against the State. This strategy was absent in France. It was absent in Portugal in 1974-75. And it is absent in Italy today.

As far as socialist democracy is concerned, we need not belabour the point too much. Readers of this newspaper are familiar with the arguments. It is not an abstract question. On every level it is posed with greater urgency than ever before.

The development of the Euro-communist phenomena is an attempt to answer the problem. The CP leaders do so by abjectly accommodating to the bourgeois State; though the emergence of oppositions in the French and Spanish

Communist Parties should convince the doubters of the centrality of this question.

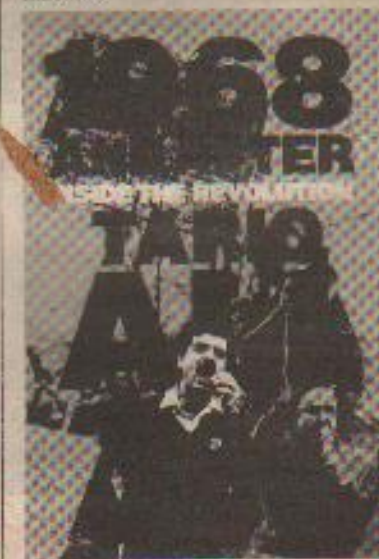
In their own way, these currents have raised the question of how a party itself should function. Althusser's devastating indictment of the structures of the French Communist Party (PCF) should make leaders of a number of far-left groups take notice. Ironically enough, Althusser's description of the PCF's internal regime could easily be applied to the functioning of many far-left currents in Europe.

We have stressed that no real revolutionary party exists today. However, the conditions in which such a party could be built are very much with us. In order to take advantage of them we have to put politics in command. A sectarian approach could prove to be fatal.

The divisions in the French and Spanish Communist Parties offer real opportunities to the far left in Spain and France. In Britain, the possibility exists to build a large revolutionary organisation on the left of the Labour Party.

But this will only see the light of day if the traditional responses of the British far left: a sectarian insularity and the elevation of tactical differences into questions of principle are decisively rejected. We have reached a stage of development at which we will not be able to pin failures exclusively on the traditional misleaders of the working class. For a lot will depend on us. That is the advance of 1968, and we have to build on it now.

*Stakhanov was the 'model' Stalinist worker. He worked 'extra hard'. His productivity was 'above average'. As a result he was transformed into a cult figure by the Stalinist propaganda machine.



OUT SOON! Available from the Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, London N1 at £5.25.

CHRONOLOGY CHRONOLOGY CHRONOLOGY

AUGUST:
Like a Greek tragedy the Czech drama unfolds. On 21 August, the Warsaw Pact invasion of the country commences. The spring is over. In Paris, London, Rome, Berlin it is the revolutionaries who demonstrate outside the Russian embassies.

In Chicago the Democratic Party's convention turns into a riot. The American President, Lyndon Baines Johnson, has been forced to stay away because of the threat of anti-war demonstrators. Mayor Daley's police brutalise antiwar activists. 'You can only be pissed on for so long before you realise it's not rain', comments and anti-war Democratic Party delegate at the convention.

SEPTEMBER:

It is Olympic Year in Mexico. The students decide to campaign for democratic rights. Foreigners and students are indiscriminately attacked. Four hundred people are killed in a battle provoked by the police on 23 September.

The army occupies the universities. A trade union militant comments: 'We have the most cultured army of all Latin America. It is continually in the universities.'

OCTOBER:

Northern Ireland sees its first civil rights demonstration. The die has been cast and the Six Counties will never be the same again. The RUC attacks on Catholics will from now on be answered in kind.

In London there is a massive demonstration on 27 October: 100,000 demonstrators march in solidarity with Vietnam. It is the largest revolutionary demonstration since the Thirties. Despite the witch-hunt unleashed against the VSC and its leaders by the press, the demonstration is peaceful.

NOVEMBER:

On 7 November, Pakistani students demonstrate against the Ayub military dictatorship which has ruled the country since 1956. The 'Asian de Gaulle' is confident that he will survive. But the demonstration escalates and is joined by the workers. After four months of continuous street battles, Ayub falls.

A politician named Bhutto has played a central role in the anti-Ayub campaign. He will reap half the harvest. The students have started a movement which will ultimately lead to the break-up of Pakistan.

DECEMBER:

Richard Milhous Nixon has been elected President of the United States. The Yippies organise a public shaming protest. The year has ended.

SEXUAL POLITICS

WOMEN. The Struggle for Freedom...

by SHEILA ROWBOTHAM

OK so you've heard it all before
OK so you're bored

But meanwhile
We still get less pay for the same work as you.
We are less likely to get jobs which are at all meaningful
In which we have any responsibility.
We are less likely to be educated less likely to be unionised.

The present set up of the family puts great strains on us
either we are struggling to combine badly paid work with
bringing up a family or we are unable to do work for which
we've been trained.

The area of taboo on our sexuality is much more extensive
and the double standard still pervasive.
Some women still never experience orgasm.

So what are we complaining about?

All this and something else besides.
A much less tangible something — a smouldering, bewildered
consciousness with no shape — a muttered dissatisfaction — which
suddenly shoots to the surface and EXPLODES.

We want to drive buses, play football, use beer mugs not glasses.
We want men to take the pot, we don't want to be brought with
bottles or invited as wives. We don't want to be wrapped up in
cellophane or sent off to make tea, or shuffled into the social
committee.

But these are only little things.
Revolutions are made about the things.
Little things which happen to us all the time, every day,
wherever you go, all your life.

Here the subordinated relationship is dominant.
Here discontent focuses and here the experience is felt.

MEN you have nothing to lose but
your chains.

You will no longer have anyone to
creep away and peep at with their
knickers down, no one to flout as the
emblem of your virility, status, self-
importance, no one who will trap you,
overwhelm you, no eternalised
cloudy being floating unattainably in
a plastic blue sky, no great moaning
up handkerchief comforters to crawl
into from your competitive, ego-
driving alienation, who will wrap you up
and SMOTHER you.

There will only be thousands of
millions of women people to discover
touch and become with, who will see
with a Vietnamese girl, 'Let us now
emulate each other', who will under-
stand you when you say we must make
a new world in which we do not meet
each other as exploiters and used
objects.

Where we love one another and into
which a new kind of human being can
be born.

WE BECOME the educated house-
wife desperately struggling for dignity
and fulfilment through ever more
elaborate cooking recipes or constant
re-decoration schemes, suspicious and
defensive about women who are un-
married or women who work.

Or the occupational variant of this
Proppism doing a womanly woman-
ness to a very male style.

These two responses are described
as mature integration. They are of
course simply avoiding the issue in a
peculiarly complicit and false way.

Otherwise we become the popular
(distorted) image of the suffragette. A
twoed sensibly shod battle axe with a
severe hair style and a deep voice,
advancing aggressively on the male
world and board room. The sexual
corollary of this is the retreat into
lesbianism.

Both share a profound distrust for
the male. Emancipation is doing
without men.

Our other retreat is into sexuality.
Because women have traditionally
been deprived of the power to make
'free' choice, our bodies have been
part of somebody else's belongings.

we prove that we have control, that we
are liberated simply by fucking.

But if the definition of our con-
straint is not extended beyond sex-
uality we are only entrained in a
greater bondage. We may not be
choosing but reacting, ironically
under the compulsion of our real sub-
ordination.

We could be expressing in our
sexual life the very essence of our
incomprehension and the destructive
contradiction in our consciousness,
through the inability to meet and
communicate and love with a man on
every level.

The same 'free' woman could still
expect men to pay for her, buy her
expensive presents. She must of
necessity be excessively preoccupied
with her appearance and regard other
women's men as fair game.

After all, she needs constantly the
reassurance that she is wanted and
beautiful because only through these
is she capable of defining her free-
dom.

We shelter as well as retreat. We
take refuge behind the privilege of
class and education, using the manner
and accent of the rulers to secure
respect and serious consideration, a
protected dignity at the expense of the
working class, and a protected liber-
ation based on the underpaid labour
of an artisan.

Most of us live a particular com-
bination of these or run the whole
gamut knowing them for subterfuge
— at certain moments struggling
through and beyond them all. But it
seems that capitalism condemns all
people to live deceitfully. How can we
be expected to live otherwise?

They have nothing to say to you if
you're earning £8 a week, or if you're
poor and working class and in a VD
clinic. If you're economically ex-
ploited and socially despised you exist
outside the bounds of these eman-
cipation. They forget that we are
oppressed within a class system.

Moreover they never go beyond
confirming their denial of what men
say we are. We never tell them what
we are. We never take hold of our
definitions. We constantly admit
our failure to be whole.

expressed, articulated, resisted — through the particular.
The particular pummels you gently into passivity.

So we don't know how to find one another or ourselves.

We are perhaps the most divided of all oppressed groups.
Divided in our real situations and in our understanding and
consciousness of our condition.

We are in different classes.

Thus we devour and use one another.
Our 'emancipation' has been often merely the struggle of the
privileged to improve and consolidate its superiority — The women
of the working class remain the exploited of the exploited,
oppressed as workers and oppressed as women.

We are with families and without them.

Hence we distrust one another.
The woman with a home and children is suspicious of the woman
with no ties, seeing her as a potential threat to her territorial
security.

The single woman feels the married woman is subtly critical
because she is not fulfilling her 'role' as homemaker, her
'function' as child bearer.
She feels she is accused of being unable to be a woman.

THEY tell us what we should be.

As we grow up, especially from puberty, we are under intensive
pressure to be 'acceptable' — not to put ourselves outside
the safety net of marriage.

From small girls we are taught that failure means not being
selected by men — the shame of being a wallflower. The sign
of intelligence and subtlety is a contractual bargain as we hand
over our virginity for a marriage document, a ring, and the
obligation of financial support. Orgasm is a matter of
merchandise. And remember, THEY don't like us to be too
clever. Well she might go to University but men want someone

who can cook.

The emphasis in our education tends to be much more on
integration, the encouragement of active criticism, of intellectual
aggression is rare. The cautious virtues predominate. We are
in an intellectual double-bind. We are assumed to have something
to say, find it difficult to assert that we want to say something,
are observed to say nothing, are assumed to have nothing
to say.

To stray from the definition of what 'they' want is to risk
being rejected in a double sense. There is a 'moral' force behind
the urge to conform. The girl who is critical of the
stereotype presented to her can be condemned not simply like a
boy as a rebel but as a slut as well. The latter is much more difficult
to cope with. There is still the whole dirty, frightened,
patronising world behind slut, tart, old slag, nymphomaniac,
daddy bird, chick, bit of stuff, bit of orange, bubble, silly cow,
big stocking.
These words have no male equivalents.

The girl who for some reason breaks away intellectually is
in a peculiarly isolated position. She finds herself straddled across
a great gulf, which grows wider, while she jumps both ways.
A most perilous and lonely condition, comparable to that of a
black or working class militant. In the process of becoming
interested in ideas she finds herself to some extent cut off from
other girls and inclines naturally towards boys as friends. They do
more interesting things, discuss wider topics, she really defines
herself as a boy. Other girls appear curious and rather
boring, passive and accepting. She is able to say to most
of them. The social contempt in which women are held
confirms this. She is constantly being told she is 'quite good
for a girl'. Femininity becomes synonymous with frivolity,
stupidity and narrowness. It seems obviously better to be a man.
Doesn't she feel like a man, do their things, talk their talk. It is
natural for her to define her situation in terms of a kind of
sub-manness.

Marxists have quite rightly always
stressed that the subordination of
women is part of the total mutual
devouring process called capitalism.
No one group can be liberated except
through a transformation of the
whole structure of social relation-
ships.

But this has been twisted into a
rather glib justification for inactivity
and quietism.

1. Wait until the revolution we'll dole
out your equality then.
[Oh no you won't, power never
concedes — remember.]

2. Of course we know the bourgeois
family exercises a conservative
constraining force and through its struc-
ture subordinates the women espe-
cially. But people won't give up their
families. They like them, therefore
the liberation of women is a dead
issue.
[What about a bit of praxis, comrade,
to break down the sexual division of
labour — washing up floors, scrub-
bing.]

OK so the revolution will sort it all
out. But what about releasing a whole
lot of people to work for it. What
about showing thousands of women
the revolution is something to do with
them.

True we won't get far without really
radical change. True there is the
whole rigidity of job structure,
unequal pay, deep cultural pre-
suppositions — in fact capitalism.

Meanwhile, what's wrong with
finding out really what people resent,
what's wrong with presenting them
with alternatives which spring from
an understanding of their discontent.

Don't ask women if they regard
themselves as victims of an exploita-
tive capitalist society, don't ask them
if they think their relations within the
family are unauthentic.

Ask them how they feel about their
pay and being pushed around at
work, about being patronised as
fluffy little things, about always baby
sitting.

Why is marriage a matter for dirty
jokes or the very mention of the wife

enough to get a laugh... Why those
strange stag rituals, the psychos-
omatic illnesses, the menstrual
fatigue, the desolateness of so many
women.

There are infinite practical possi-
bilities, which could be made to
happen under capitalism but would be
more feasible under socialism and
would help illustrate what it's about.
For example, the campaign for equal
pay and economic independence is
crucial.

As for the family, why simply
nursery schools, why not creches at
the workplace of both the mother and
father with time off from work to play
with the children, who would get to
know both parents too. Or numerous
street and flat co-operatives for
looking after children, for baby
sitting and visiting the old.

If adolescents, either young workers
or people at school, didn't want to live
at home why couldn't they go to stay
in flats which they ran themselves.
These would provide another means
of looking after old people.

Certainly these would mean a real
liberation for many women. But
subordination is not an affair of
economics or institutions only. Nor is
it only to do with contraception,
abortion, orgasm and sexual equality,
important as these are.

It is an assumed secondariness
which dwells in a whole complex of
inarticulate attitudes, in smirks, in
offences, in insecurities, in desperate
status differentiation.

Secondariness happens in people's
heads and is expressed every time they
do not speak, every time they assume
no-one would listen.

It is located in a structure in which
both sexes are tragically trapped. The
man is as much as the woman, for
each time he tries to break through, he
meets the hostility of other men or the
conflicting demands of those women
who prefer the traditional sex game.

It is only women who can dissolve
the assumptions. It is only women
who can say what they feel because
the experiences are unique to them.
Only women can define themselves.

To define yourself you have to
explore yourself, you have to find
yourself as a group before you can say
how you regard yourself as a group.

It is only by understanding your
situation as a group that you can
relate it to the system through which
you are dominated.

This means a certain withdrawal
into the group and a realisation on the
part of the elite of a common identity.

This means that just as the white
middle class Cuban found he was a
nigger and the black PhD that he was a
nigger, the privileged woman has to
extend beyond her elite consciousness
to learn the extent of her common
condition with the unprivileged
woman.

Only then can women really
challenge the external definitions
imposed on them, become sufficiently
conscious to act and thus be
recognised as being there.

The enemy is not identified as man.
This is as futile as a black-white,
student-worker conflict.

The ally is not the woman who
supports and benefits from capi-
talism.

It is all people who are being crushed
and twisted who want space and air
and time to sit in the sun.

But the oppressed have to discover
their own dignity, their own freedom,
they have to make themselves equal.

They have to decolonise themselves.

Then they can liberate the
colonisers.

SHEILA ROWBOTHAM was
a member of the Black Dwarf
editorial collective in 1968. She
wrote this article in December
1968. It was published in the
New Year '69 issue of Black
Dwarf, which that paper
characterised as the 'Year of
the Militant Woman'.

IRELAND

INSIDE THE BRITISH ARMY

On 10 June the United Troops Out is holding a conference on the role of the British Army in past colonial wars and in Ireland today.

Included in the agenda is a new film on the Army and a discussion by a number of ex-soldiers who have served in Ireland.

One such former soldier is IAN PHILLIPS. In this article — the full version of which is available in Troops Out — Phillips tells of his experience in Ireland in British uniform.

I was sent to the North the day after my 18th birthday. We were stationed in North Belfast. At this time the Protestant paramilitaries were at the peak of their sectarian assassination and bombing campaign.

Nevertheless all our activity was directed against the Republicans.

I was stationed in Tactical HQ as an orderly for a period. Anyone arrested and all suspects were brought in there for screening.

SCREAMING

My room where I slept was right next door to the interrogation room and every night you'd hear people coming and getting roughed up, their heads banged against the walls, screaming and everything. I was more annoyed at losing my sleep than anything else at the

time.

On one occasion I was told to guard three prisoners. They were told to lean up against the wall, fingers on the wall, feet apart. I was told to keep watch on them. One had a gunshot wound in his leg from a few days earlier and couldn't stand up properly.

BAD PAIN

I let him sit. The corporal came in, screamed at and threatened me and made the bloke get up. Then he took me off the job. Two hours later I saw that they were still stood there in really bad pain.

I saw lots of blokes who had been given a real hammering. One of the first things I saw when I arrived there was a little room called 'The Box'. It was about 10ft. by 10ft. with a table and a chair in it — and it was covered in blood.

Other blokes said: 'It's just from blokes who get a working over'. There were pictures in the Intelligence Room of blokes propped up between two marines, really smashed to pulp.

SMASHED

There wasn't a day went by when you didn't witness some incident of brutality, whether it was someone getting dragged through the corridor by his hair or some woman who was smashed in the gob by the biggest guy in our unit once, just for screaming.

The worst incidents of brutality that I witnessed were in the Crumlin Rd. Prison during searches we did there. When we searched the Republican wing, the blokes from my unit went round to certain cells looking for certain individuals who had been convicted of shooting marines.

There was one guy in particular: everyone made a bee-line for his cell. He was stripped and given a hiding. You could hear the bloody

screams all over the prison.

Under the Blue and Yellow card system strict regulations are laid down about giving warnings before firing on someone you suspect has a weapon. But while I worked in the office I was able to read the sniper file. In 1972, 17 people had been shot by snipers in our unit.

Snipers are in hidden positions and using telescopic sight. So they can't give warnings and they can just shoot someone walking down the road on suspicion; you have to take his word for it.

INTELLIGENCE

They have a list of intelligence photographs which they use to identify individuals. In 1972, they were bumping off people left right and centre.

Most soldiers today think the British should get out of Northern Ireland. They don't see any solution at all. Only the real idiots think that something can be achieved. They see it as going on and on and on.

For details of the conference on the Army contact UTOM at 182 Upper Street, London N1. UTOM's paper Troops Out costs 10p and is available from the Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1, plus 10p for postage.



Photo: MARK RUSHER (JFL)

At a picket held in Downing Street on Saturday members of the United Troops Out Movement protested against the attempted closure in Belfast of Sinn Féin's Republican News. The entire editorial staff of the paper as well as its printer are currently awaiting trial. The picket also protested against the death in Castlereagh police station of Brian Maguire.

INTERNATIONAL

Imperialism's copper

What makes Kolwezi so attractive to France, Belgium, the US, Britain and West Germany? The one-word answer is copper. Supplementary answers include cobalt, zinc, tin, diamonds, gold, silver, uranium, tungsten and manganese.

RICHARD CARVER puts the latest imperialist incursion into some much-needed perspective.

The Cold War rhetoric about Soviet imperialism in Africa conveniently masks the real source of Western concern over Zaire. Imperialism is terrified of the potential mass opposition to dictator Mobutu.

Little mention has been made of the widespread support for the rebels of the Congo

National Liberation Front (FNLC), precisely because any anti-Mobutu movement is automatically guaranteed popular sympathy.

Mobutu is important to imperialism for two reasons. Strategically he represents a solid reactionary buffer in the middle of Africa.

Zaire

His army is startlingly incompetent and badly organised. An incident from last year's war is indicative.

SANDWICHES

Troops at Ludumbashi in southern Zaire threatened to desert because they had received no provisions for weeks. Mobutu responded by ordering 1,560 sandwiches from a local hotel.

But political motivation counts for more than competence. Zaire is the largest recipient of US military aid and has proved its worth a number of times.

Imperialism backed Mobutu in the 1960s. It was he who handed over radical nationalist Patrice Lumumba to be murdered by Katangan rebels. When the imperialists withdrew their favours from the Katangans it was to Mobutu that they turned.

INVASION

He has proved a consistent ally against Angola. Zaire regulars fought alongside the Western backed FNLA against the radical post-colonial regime. Mobutu still provides sanctuary to the FNLA and the right-wing FLEC, which aims to 'liberate' the oil-rich Cabinda enclave from Angola.

Just before the 1977 rebellion it was revealed that the West had plans for a full-scale invasion of Angola from Zaire, codenamed 'Operation Cobra 77'. It was to have been led by a former US Green Beret called Colonel Johnson (no relation).

Mobutu's strategic value is reinforced by his brutal internal regime. 220,000 refugees have fled over the border to Angola just since the April



Giscard and Mobutu: test of friends

1977 war.

And a Belgian refugee from Kolwezi related the barbarous revenge taken by Mobutu's troops: 'Even the Moroccans were disgusted.'

Zaire's other attractive feature is its vast mineral resources. It is the world's fourth largest copper producer and provides 60 per cent of the world's cobalt.

MANAGEMENT

Management of the economy is not Mobutu's forte: the country is generally described as the poorest rich country in the world.

But his policy of 'Zaireanisation' of the mineral resources — the creation of state holding companies — has had the desired effect of playing off one imperialist power against another.

Belgium is still the largest investor, with 40 per cent of the state copper corporation.

Britain and the United States have considerable interests and the concession of a large portion of Shaba province to a West German rocket company has boosted Bonn's interest, as well as having a considerable military importance. (See News from Nowhere, page 3).

But now France makes the running. The Zairean economy has all but collapsed with the fall in the world price of copper and the Angolan closure of the Benguela railway. This has given French investors the chance to increase their hold.

DIFFICULT

This process was speeded up by French military intervention on Mobutu's behalf in 1977. The French Government denies that any such base consideration entered its mind when it sent in the paras this time.

Information about the FNLC rebels is scanty and a political evaluation difficult.

The press portrays them as the same Katangan gendarmes, Belgian-trained, who fought for the right-wing Moïse Tshombe in the 1960s.

Their political aim can thus be reduced to the secession of Katanga, now Shaba province, Zaire's richest area.

This explanation has the virtue of being superficial journalistic shorthand, as well as showing up the perfidy of the Cubans, who are prepared to use such politically unsavoury forces to further their own ends.

The truth, as always, is more complex. FNLC leader Nathaniel M'Bumba was one of Tshombe's gendarmes, though a very young one.

COLONIALISTS

After their defeat in 1965 the Katangan troops fled to Angola where they worked for the Portuguese colonialists against the liberation movements. The FNLC, founded in 1968, continued this tradition, for all its fine phrases about 'militant solidarity with the oppressed of the world'.

The end of Portuguese colonialism posed the FNLC with a dilemma. Probably for opportunist reasons it lined up with the MPLA Government.

The relation of the present Shaba rebels to the gendarmes is tenuous and seems to centre wholly on the person of M'Bumba. If the press stopped to think about it, they would realise that this is at least partly because Tshombe's troops are now old men.

SUPPORT

Angolan backing for the FNLC can be explained by the consistent Zairean incursions into Angola. Quite apart from any internationalist considerations Angola has a clear and defensible interest in destabilising Mobutu.

For all the doubts that can be raised about the FNLC, their popular support cannot be questioned. The FNLC is probably only a petty bourgeois nationalist organisation at best. But against Mobutu and his imperialist backers they deserve our unconditional support.



2000 arrested in Peru

HUGO BLANCO (above) is one of 2,000 people arrested under the state of emergency in Peru.

Strikes and demonstrations broke out after the government had announced a 60 per cent rise in the price of petrol, transport and basic foodstuffs. The trade union call for a general strike has been declared illegal and already 13 people have been killed.

Blanco, a well-known peasant leader and Trotskyist, had only just returned to Peru under a pre-election amnesty from the country's military

rulers. Blanco was a candidate in the elections scheduled for 4 June.

Also arrested were Eduardo Castillo, trade union leader, and Cesar Levano of the Communist Party.

Already a number of labour movement and intellectual figures in Britain have signed an appeal against the state of emergency and arrests. They include John Savile, Colin Henfrey and Ken Coates.

If you want to add your name contact David Booth, 7 Parkside Close, Hull.

INTERNATIONAL

Interview with Celia Guevara

'You become political in prison'

EVERY Thursday women gather in the Plaza de Mayo, in Buenos Aires, in front of the government buildings. They are relatives of prisoners who have 'disappeared', kidnapped by the junta's terror squads.

Argentinian militant CELIA GUEVARA talks about these women and about her visit to Britain to win support for Argentinian political prisoners.

We are not the only people to have interviewed Guevara. BBC Today programme decided at the last minute not to broadcast their interview with her. Why not? Read on.

Why have you come to England?

To publicise the situation of the Argentinian political prisoners and the general situation in the country, above all the situation of the 'disappeared'. To ask the British Government for visas for political prisoners and for political help to release them.

So your visit is aimed at the British Government as well as the Argentinian committees here?

I'm aiming at the British Government through these committees, because that's the programme of the British Argentina Campaign, demanding visas and aid.

What does repression in its most crude form represent?

One of the most terrible things is the people disappearing, kidnapped. You don't know if they're alive or dead. Their mothers go to look for their corpses. They look all over the place. They spend years in search of a brother.

Is this your personal experience?

No. My position is different. This hasn't happened to any of my family. My brother is a prisoner — a recognised prisoner.

On the World Cup. What sort of image is the regime going to

be able to put across to the public?

They've spent a million dollars in propaganda. For example in Madrid you can see publicity for free trips you can win in a raffle, I've seen that in Italy too.

There's massive propaganda on the World Cup as an amazingly important historical event. And I don't think they will get much out of it.

They're already fed up with it, but there's nothing they can do about it. They're not going to be able to give the impression they want to give, since this is a good opportunity to talk about Argentina's problems.

If a journalist goes unprepared to Argentina it's out of choice. The journalists are sufficiently informed that if they want to look, they'll look.

But don't you think that the fact that the world has accepted that the World Cup should be in Argentina is a way of accepting the dictatorship?

Yes, I think that it's not just an index of its acceptance, but also that two years after the coup the Argentinian situation is still not well known.

What do you think are the most effective ways for people in Europe to help the Argentinian prisoners?

Britain has its own methods of work, developed in the Chile campaign. Or maybe there is a



traditional British way of working which is the adoption of prisoners, academic grants, visas, and sometimes a ban on arms sales or a boycott of certain products.

That isn't posed in this case, but Britain has its own form of work and I think it is good that it follows the line which was so successful over Chile, when it got out some 2500 Chileans, not all of them prisoners.

What is the situation of women in Argentina? Do you think that women like you or the Plaza de Mayo women have

become politicised through this experience?

I don't think they are politicising only through this experience. They are politicising because they are going to concentration camps where you have to politicise or die.

You become political in prison. Contact with the prisoners, with repression.

The case of the Plaza de Mayo women happened after I left, but I think they must have been very politicised because they were able to organise a spontaneous action, which is difficult without any political

direction, without organisations or political parties to lead them.

It wasn't just that each one of them developed the beginnings of political consciousness, but that they organised themselves in a form of union. This is very important.

I don't think that in Argentina there is a division between the movement of women and men. I think that the most important struggle for us is against reaction and women take part in the struggle along with men.



How to say it in Spanish

FOR THOSE of you who know no Spanish we offer the following phrases, which are indispensable for journalists covering the Argentinian scene.

Por favor entreguen mi cuerpo a mi familia.
(Please deliver my body to my family.)

Dejen de torturarme, por favor.
(Please stop torturing me.)

Por favor informen a la Embajada Britanica de mi paradero.
(Please inform the British Embassy of my whereabouts.)

Cuantos periodistas han masacrado este ano?
(How many journalists have you massacred this year?)

Mi periodico les pagara bien si me dejan ir.
(My newspaper will pay you well if you let me go.)

Cuantos sindicalistas estan planeando torturar hoy?
(How many trade unionists are you planning to torture today?)

Cuando van a dejar de aterrorizar niños?
(When do you plan to stop terrorising children?)

*Reprinted from 'Argentina: a Journalists' Guide', issued to all journalists going to Argentina by the National Union of Journalists.

Photo: ANDREW WILKINSON (Report)

Orlov gets 12 years

The price for telling the truth

Amid a blaze of publicity, the Soviet Party leadership last week passed a 12 year sentence on the civil rights campaigner Yuri Orlov. Orlov was charged with 'slandering the Soviet State' — saying things about it which, allegedly, were not true: he got twelve years for this. OLIVER MACDONALD reports.

Orlov is only one of a number of members of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups in the USSR who have been given 12 year sentences for their civil rights activity. Six members of the Ukrainian Monitoring Group have already been jailed and one got 15 years.

The legal clause used against Orlov is also now a standard one in the USSR, banning free speech and freedom of the press in the name of combatting 'anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation'.

The Soviet leadership evidently decided to postpone Orlov's trial until after the Helsinki review conference in Belgrade had finished. Orlov has played a key role in setting up the whole Helsinki Monitoring movement in the USSR, so the Kremlin did not want the

trial to disrupt the final stages of the Belgrade manoeuvres.

In a similar way, the East German bureaucracy has postponed the trial of Rudolf Bahro, the Marxist writer, but it is rumoured that this trial will be announced in the next few weeks or even days.

PROGRESSIVE

The Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Group, set up in May 1976, incorporated a very wide spectrum of currents from the dissident movement in the USSR, ranging from humanistic socialists to pro-imperialist activists and including religious dissidents, members of the Jewish movement for the right to emigrate to Israel and other strands of oppositional activity.

The rights in the Helsinki agreement were pathetically

limited. They concerned such matters as the right of information, the right of families to be united and so on.

But, however inadequate, these rights should be fought for by Marxists both in Eastern Europe and in the West.

The Moscow Helsinki group and others in the Ukraine,



Orlov's wife outside Moscow court

Georgia, Lithuania and Armenia assembled information on the violation of these rights. The Moscow group took up the repression of religious groups like the various Protestant sects in the Soviet Union.

The group also took up the use of psychiatric torture against political opponents, the gangster methods of the KGB, and the infringement of rights at work. It also raised the oppression of ethnic minorities like the Crimean Tatars and the Meshketians.

Because the group brought such facts to light, and because it was in close contact with Western newspaper reporters in Moscow, it threatened to destroy the propaganda value of the Helsinki agreements for the Soviet leadership. But equally important, the Moscow group and the other monitoring groups began to acquire a real authority among various oppressed groups within Soviet society.

The monitoring groups did not confine themselves to the concerns of the Russian literary intelligentsia, but reached out among the working masses of the USSR in however limited a way.

Such activity had to be crushed by the Kremlin. The bureaucracy's power rests on denying the Soviet workers all basic

political rights and the party leadership could not tolerate for very long a movement for basic civil rights, even on the limited scale of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups.

Through vigorous labour movement defence of those repressed for trying to exercise democratic rights in the USSR, the western labour movements will be able to assist the struggle for a real alternative to the bureaucratic dictatorship in the USSR.

TRAVELLERS

The recently formed Eastern Europe Solidarity Campaign, a broadly based socialist defence organisation, is campaigning for the immediate release of Yuri Orlov and the other jailed members of the Helsinki Monitoring Groups.

It is also campaigning throughout the labour movement for the right of Vladimir Klebanov and his comrades in the Soviet Trade Union Association to function openly in the USSR.

These campaigns should

receive the widest possible support from socialists throughout the labour movement. *See Editorial

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE
A Socialist Defence Bulletin on Eastern Europe and the USSR



Latest issue of this independent defence bulletin covers trade unions in the USSR, opposition currents in East Germany, new developments in Charter 77, and much more. Price 30p plus 10p p&p from: LFEE, Bottom Flat, 115 Cazenove Road, London N16. Annual sub £3.50.

COMMENT

Aggressive socialist journalism

I RECENTLY RETURNED from Cyprus where a population of 650,000 supports eleven daily newspapers plus assorted weeklies and magazines. Every political party has its own daily newspaper and no political faction goes without its substantial journalistic voice.

In Britain we chatter blithely about the diversity of the press when in fact most of Fleet Street offers much the same outlook on the world. Not surprising if you look at the ownership, career structure, and inter-linking with Whitehall, the CBI and full-time trade union bureaucracy that is so pervasive in our national and provincial press.

To get the truth about rank and file struggle, about Ulster, about many international issues — or at least an alternative set of facts from which truer deductions can be made — one has to turn to the socialist press.

The problem has been the formal party connections of the left-wing press. Reading *Labour Weekly* or *Socialist Worker* is an enjoyable treat each week as one disentangles the party line from the reporting. Though even my gorge rose last week when I read in one of the Labour Party orientated weeklies that there was some socialist virtue in Terry Duffy! The treat has been extra-special in *Socialist Challenge* as one looks on the efforts of the comrades who produce it to keep IMGism to a minimum. To a large extent they have succeeded, and that is why *Socialist Challenge* is such a marked bonus on the left journalistic scene.

They have scooped the world more than once. For my money the best journalist in Britain is Paul Foot, but I think that even Foot's *Socialist Worker* would allow that *Socialist Challenge* has had a triumphant first year.

The Dobson tapes will go down in journalistic history. I can't think of a Fleet Street paper that has topped an equivalent pillar of British capitalism. If there was any honour in that old pals act responsible for dishing out the annual journalistic awards, *Socialist Challenge* should be top of the list for the Dobson story alone!

It is excellent that *Socialist Challenge* has kept sectarianism down to a minimum, especially in its new-found support for the Anti Nazi League. Militants everywhere take their cue from socialist journalism, and newspapers that emphasise sectarianism journalisticly breed sectarian division on the ground.

I hope your advance into WH Smiths, ground where *Private Eye*, *Gay News* and other left papers are not allowed to tread, proves successful — though not at the expense of combative journalism. The moment a WH Smith lawyer tells you to spike a story you want to print, you should be out of its shops and back onto the streets exclusively.

The past twelve months has been crucial for the rank and file of the labour movement from Grunwick to the Anti Nazi march at the end of April. Workers are recovering their confidence and strength after the depression of TUC policed wage

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE CONFERENCE

27 May, Conway Hall WC2

ARE YOU coming to the Socialist Challenge Supporters Conference on Saturday? We hope so, because it will be the first national meeting of the paper's supporters, who will be discussing where the paper is going and where it should be going!

There will be reports on the progress of the paper, and lots of opportunity to discuss every aspect of Socialist Challenge in workshops and in general sessions of the conference.

Don't miss the conference if you support the paper. We need your ideas about how it can be improved.

And if you're serious about your commitment to the paper, why not consider standing for the National Policy Committee — a body which will meet quarterly and decide the overall direction and policies of the paper?

Come and meet the comrades who exposed Leyland boss Dobson's racist speech, forced magistrate Dorothy Oakley to resign over the Grunwick pickets, revealed the dissension among the Euro-communists, and set a new standard for the socialist press in non-sectarian reporting and debate.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE SUPPORTERS CONFERENCE

Saturday 27 May
9.45-5.30 Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC2
Nearest tube: Holborn

£1 registration fee

control.

Aggressive socialist journalism is a vital component in the fight. So too is serious and comprehensive debate about socialist ideas and theory.

Any journalist who cares for a free and varied expression of ideas should welcome and be pleased at *Socialist Challenge's* successful arrival. I look forward to an equally vigorous future.

DENIS MacSHANE, President, National Union of Journalists (in personal capacity)

Style and content

RICHARD KIRKWOOD argues that *Socialist Challenge* is marked by 'major faults' of 'style' and 'content', which in turn reflect misplaced emphases in its political orientation.

Too many long articles, too few photographs, an 'intellectual bias' and hints of 'academic jargon' — these, he says, are signs that the paper addresses itself to a narrow political vanguard at the expense of 'advanced working class militants' and over stresses 'ideas and programme' at the expense of 'the issues and problems being generated within the class'.

These criticisms are in my view seriously misconceived. If the problem of language were simply a technical one of 'levels', there could be no disagreement: needless 'difficulty' is never a virtue, in academic journals any more than in the revolutionary press. However, the real problem — which no amount of piety can pray away — is that 'style' and 'content' cannot simply be separated.

The language of socialist journalism should always be as simple as possible; but the limits of the 'possible' are ultimately set by the objective demands of the problems discussed. The very idea of revolutionary leadership implies both a relationship with the class and a distance from it. Appeals to an abstract 'popularity' cannot abolish this distance; they merely obscure it and make it more difficult to

negotiate.

Besides, what is the touchstone of genuine popularity? There is limited point in citing the reactions of this or that 'advanced worker': particular instances can prove anything. On the other hand, general impressions prove nothing — and the *Socialist Worker* experience suggests that those who unilaterally decide what 'the average worker' is, wants, needs or is capable of, are liable to produce a militant variation on prevailing journalistic stereotypes.

The most reliable test at present is the historic experience of independent working class organisation — an experience that includes not only unions and parties but libraries, reading circles and newspapers of formidable range and 'difficulty'.

The overthrow of capitalism depends fundamentally on the working class becoming more than capital 'requires' it to be. The political transformation of the class is, among other things, a process of learning. Revolutionary intellectuals are sometimes reluctant to accept this; 'advanced workers' have never doubted it.

A parallel misconception occurs in comrade Kirkwood's remarks on the relation between 'the programme' and the 'living experience' of the class.

Of course, a revolutionary programme must be grounded in the experience of the working class; anything else would be an arrogant contrivance. But it does not follow that an adequate programme is one created out of the particular conditions of Britain in 1978 or that these constitute a decisive test of existing programmes.

The reservoir on which a programme draws contains generations of 'living experience'; and its final version would concentrate what is most valuable in the entire history of working class struggle. 'The programme' is not an immutable creed, but it does have a relatively autonomous existence, reflected in a revolutionary paper in an indispensable process of political and theoretical debate. Such debate is not an 'intellectual luxury'; it is a binding duty.

FRANCIS MULHERN

No timeless formula

COMRADE Kirkwood faults *Socialist Challenge* for its conception of the working class readership which a far-left paper could begin to attract, and advances general criticisms of the way in which the paper poses the link between theory and practice.

I would argue that to attempt to produce a 'workers' paper' (a paper for workers) under conditions of isolation and fragmentation for the revolutionary left is a self-defeating and incorrect tactic. Lenin's attitude to the founding of a workers' paper in South Wales in 1921 may have been excessively demanding, but reveals a deep scepticism about all forms of substitutionism.

If the CP of this district cannot collect a few pounds in order to publish small leaflets daily as a beginning of the really proletarian communist newspaper — if it is so, if every miner will not pay a penny for it, then there is not serious, not genuine affiliation to the 3rd International.

The danger is in the attempt to galvanize a working class readership, to forge a direct link between the vanguard and the working class, while real political influence over workers remains to be won.

This is not to say that the paper should not be aimed at worker readers, but that immediacy of contact with the day-to-day struggles

of the class cannot be made adequately by a national weekly in the present context of British left politics.

While deepening and improving its industrial intervention, such a paper should set itself the task of reaching workers and sections of the already politically-defined 'vanguard' who are seeking an overall political alternative — it should concern itself with strategic questions, with an alternative 'vision' of politics.

Comrade Kirkwood accuses the IMG of equating 'politics with ideas and programme rather than with activity'. Providing a consistent, articulate response to the hold of chauvinist and parliamentary-democratic themes on the British working class; really evoking 'the concrete forms in which workers' power can emerge and be realized. It is obvious that the IMG as presently constituted cannot achieve these programmatic goals, but it certainly will require a grasp of 'ideas and programme' fused with active work in all areas of the class struggle.

Ordine Nuovo under Gramsci's editorship during the occupation of the factories in N. Italy (1919-1920) was an attempt to elaborate the nature and theory of a system of proletarian discipline and control rivaling the bourgeois state. As we so often tell each other, there is no timeless formula for correct political journalism, but *Ordine Nuovo*, a workers' paper, remains a profoundly important counter-argument to comrade Kirkwood's notion of what a revolutionary paper can achieve.

It could be argued that these ambitions should not find space in the weekly paper, but in other organs of the revolutionary press. This would aggravate the unresolved gap in Richard's argument between the rather casually abstract programme (on the essentials of which, he is sure, we all agree) and practical action (which is to be the test of each others' politics).

This failure to fuse action and programme raises serious questions about the organizational forms of the movement which might emerge from such a politics. The 'IS tradition' invoked by the International Socialist Alliance tends to reproduce this dichotomy between programme and action in the division between 'activists' and 'intellectuals'.

It is hardly alone in this, but in this tradition the split is particularly acute. The one-sided emphasis on action leads to a deadly impatience with ideas, rapidly freezing into boredom and purges at the first serious hint of systematic political differences. Unfortunately, an organisation already exists whose militants are a study in pragmatism of this kind.

NEIL BELTON (Camden)

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Further details from The Organiser, CUL 10, 16 King St, London WC2E 8HY.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

NORTH WEST

WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-236 2362

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 (daytime), or Steve 226 4267 (evening), or write to Manchester SC Centre, c/o 14 Piccadilly.

PRESTON Socialist Challenge supporters can be contacted by ringing Preston 54616.

LIVERPOOL Spoke Socialist Challenge group meets every Wednesday evening at Noah's Ark pub, Spkks, Liverpool, 8pm.

SOUTH MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge group meets every other Thursday at the Albert Inn off Winstow Rd. Help sell Socialist Challenge between 11.30am and 1pm at Moss Side shopping centre or Longsight Market, Dickenson Rd. Further information from 061-236 2357

YORKSHIRE

Huddersfield Socialist Challenge meeting, 25 May, and fortnightly thereafter, 7.30pm, Friendly and Trade Club, Northumberland Street (opp. station), Topley, 'Inland', Spkks. Paul Stuart, Leeds UTM.

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

NORTH EAST

DURHAM Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly at Big Jug Pub, Claypath, Durham City. Details from J. Fox, 41 The Avenue.

DARLINGTON Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Northern Rock on High Row 11am-1pm.

MIDDLESBOROUGH Socialist Challenge sales on Saturdays outside Boots at Cleveland Centre, 11am-1pm. Socialist Challenge is also available from Harrison's (newsagent) in Linchhope Street.

NEWCASTLE Socialist Challenge local supporters are active! If you want to join them, phone Pete on (0632) 29067

WALES

SWANSEA Socialist Challenge group meets every other Wednesday at 7.30pm in St. Helena Inc. Vincent Street. All supporters welcome. Next meeting, 10 May and fortnightly thereafter.

SOUTH WEST

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

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

SOUTH EAST

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper every Saturday outside Caters from 10.45am-1pm. Further information of local activities from Mike, 11 Angelsea Rd, Wivenhoe.

BRIGHTON Socialist Challenge sales regularly on Saturdays at the Open Market, London Road, from 11am-1pm

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. Details from Steve, 1 Abigail Street

SCOTLAND

For information about the paper or its supporters' activities throughout Scotland contact Socialist Challenge Books 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Open Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoons. Phone for alternative arrangements (22-7421). Wide range of Fourth International publications.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly. Phone George at 031-346 0465 for details

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

LONDON

HAMBURGH Socialist Challenge group fortnightly — details from PO Box 69, London N12PX.

HARINGEY Socialist Challenge group public meeting on the struggle in Southern Africa with a speaker from the African Students' Union, Monday, 22 May, West Green Community Centre, Stanley Road, N.15, 7.30pm. Nearest tube: Turnpike Lane.

CAMDEN Socialist Challenge Open Forum on 'Socialist Opposition in Eastern Europe' Speaker: Oliver MacDonald of Labour Focus on Eastern Europe (in personal capacity). Wed. 24 May, 18 Camden Rd, NW1 (SCH Offices).

HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly, details from PO Box 59, London N1 2PX.

GREENWICH/LEWISHAM Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly. Details from Ray on 01-659 1187

NEWHAM Socialist Challenge Forums occur regularly. Details from PO Box 59, London N11.

WALTHAM FOREST paper sales every Saturday, 11am-noon outside the post office, 100 St. Waltham St, Waltham Forest.

LONDON CPSA Socialist Challenge readers. We are establishing a CPSA supporters group to work in the union and trade left. If you are sympathetic to Socialist Challenge's ideas, write to London SC organiser, c/o PO Box 59, London N1

MIDLANDS

For details of activities of local supporters throughout the Midlands contact the Socialist Challenge Centre, 76b Digbeth High Street, Birmingham (021) 643 8209.

NOTTINGHAM Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Next meeting 1 June, report back from the SC supporters conference. Highfields Community Centre, 7.30pm prompt.

WOLVERHAMPTON Socialist Challenge Forum, Tuesday 8 June, 'The Politics of the IMG and the Fourth International'. Speaker: Phil Hearse, National Committee member of the IMG.

LEICESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet fortnightly at the Highfields Community Centre. For details ring 0532 25554.

UNDER REVIEW

Phil Derbyshire's interview with Tom Robinson concluded

'I'm glad we put on that song... for the sake of the comrades committed to building a socialist alternative'

Do you think that Rock Against Racism and your own music reach a lot of people who are otherwise untouched by left propaganda?

Apparently almost half the mail RAR gets comes from Tom Robinson Band leaflets, concerts and bulletins. RAR acts as an eye-opener to them: that the police are racist, that more than just the NF is racist, and it makes them think twice about Irish jokes.

It's a good starting point; a means by which people who don't feel committed to the left can militate against the right, and in an entirely natural way through music.

There's been talk recently of a new wave of youth radicalisation. Do you get any sense of that as you move around the country?

No, frankly. Most of it is fashion. You have to be brutally honest about how much a band can achieve. If you think of yourself as a martyr or a bigtime campaigner then you've blown it already just by setting yourself up. You have to be cynical about what you can do, but not of the audience.

It's easy to fall into the business cliché of patronising the audience, calling them teenyboppers, looking down on anyone who's fourteen and female.

I received one letter from a girl who put me straight. She said: 'I read your interview where you talked about all the teenybopper girls on Top of the Pops beating their hearts out for you. Well, a lot of my schoolfriends were there and they thought you were pathetic! Don't be so patronising... even 14-year-olds can think'. I wrote her an apology.

You have to be optimistic about the audience. You couldn't even begin to talk about socialism unless you

thought that people had the integrity and intelligence to determine their own destiny. But being a socialist rock star is about as feasible as being a socialist perfume manufacturer. You're making a consumer product.

You have to be pessimistic about what you can achieve though, and then if you do get somewhere all well and good. A few bands like Henry Cow and Jam Today do avoid the system and their integrity is fantastic. But they miss a lot of people because they steer clear of the mass media. In the gay field Hot Peaches has the same integrity; I bow to what they do for gay people. I'm closeted by comparison. They don't compromise at all. Strictly gay and if people don't like it they can fuck off.

I'm doing the opposite — saying, Yes, I'm gay, but there's a whole lot more. And I feel shabby by comparison, especially when I'm called a gay crusader when actually the Peaches are doing it a whole lot better.

'Glad to be Gay' is the gay song you're famous for; but do you find it easy to write songs about being gay in other ways, like being in love with a man, for instance?

TRB has an identity of its own and we work a middle ground that we can all agree on. I do write songs, like love songs, that are not for the band and haven't seen the light of day, but they will.

I think you have to concentrate down and simplify for a band like TRB to work. We can do a lot together so long as we are flexible to each other's needs. The other members of the band certainly are to mine, and if they don't want to do a benefit then I say OK. If there was something that I wanted to do which they didn't then I'd do it on my own...like Belfast.

We get a lot of letters from N. Ireland and I want to go and play. But if the



band didn't want to go then I would and would hire musicians...I'd have to be honest to my own convictions. I doubt it would come to that, though.

Is the band moving in the same political direction as you?

They came into the band as musicians. But I took Danny to the St George's Day March against the NF and he couldn't believe it. It's one thing to sing songs about the NF, but another to see them right up close. You should have heard him play 'Winter of '79' after that. The difference was astounding.

He'd seen a possible future and it scared him shitless — as it does me.

Dolphin came on the Lewisham demo, and he realised that we were in it together and that we can always be together; that there doesn't have to be fear and alienation from each other, and that we can change things. I guess they've become politicised since joining the band.

Do you think there's much support for the right among youth?

In the same way as with the left, it's fashion — as in Germany where youth are turning to the NPD in rebellion against being told that they should feel guilty for a war that was over 15 years before they were born.

But if you allow yourself the luxury of cynicism about youth mobilisation to the left, then you have to grant yourself the same cynicism about a move to the right. The more lasting mobilisation, such as it is, is on our side. People are getting involved with RAR and you just hope that they'll stay that way in a year's time when it isn't in fashion.

Have you had any adverse criticism about your having 'sold out'?

Yes, and it hurts.

One letter totally fucked me up for two weeks including gigs. It's another dilemma. Some criticism is good, like the girl I mentioned before, and you pay attention. Other stuff is just totally negative, like the time we were zapped by the Bradford Gay Liberation Front lesbians over 'Right on Sister', which they thought was patronising.

One of them came up to the front of the stage and shouted: 'Why don't you just give up?', which was the sum of her message to me. Why should I — especially when women from as far away as Japan are writing to say that the same song has positively helped them?

When it happens at a gig and you get people yelling: 'Fuck off shitsickers, fairies, pansies, puffs, queers', you stop the show, put the lights on, and tell the audience to decide. We go off stage for a while and it's up to them.

It's important to turn it over to them and leave them with the decision. If the majority didn't want us to play then we'd pack up. As you saw from the accounts it wouldn't make any difference (TRB is £13,000 in debt).

What do you think of the organised left?

I wish they'd be the same only more so. I mean, who am I to sit in judgement on them? There's enough people doing that to me.

But I guess I do get worried. Like, I had a dilemma whether to add 'Better decide which side you're on' to the album. It's the bluntest song; the

most directly political, and the least effective. 'If left is right then right is wrong/You'd better decide which side you're on'.

But so many people automatically equate left with repressive regimes, such as the Soviet bloc. I went to East Berlin recently and I have to admit I found a lot of my certainties shaken. Those people certainly didn't seem liberated. TRB was invited to play at the World Youth Festival in Cuba, but at that point we drew the line.

The first thing that Castro did on coming to power was to send every queen in sight to prison camps. Homosexuals cop it the world over, and repression is still repression, be it in Cuba, Spain, the USSR or South Africa. A lot of the band's establishment critics are at pains to point out that the directness of my lyrics would never be countenanced in any existing 'Communist' regime.

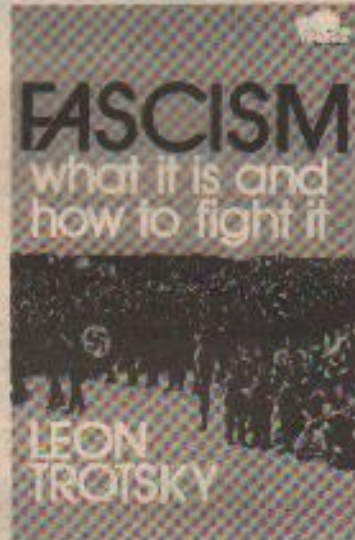
But that's like saying Jesus of Nazareth was full of shit because of the various atrocities that organised Christianity has committed during the past 2000 years in his name: auto-da-fes, the Crusades, the Inquisition, all that stuff.

But even though I have been personally shaken, I'm glad we put that song on for the sake of the comrades who support the band and who are actively committed to building a genuine socialist alternative.

I wish them well.

'For every TRB and Clash there are a hundred bands struggling on next to nothing to bring new music to small audiences'...in Under Review shortly, the life and times of Charge, who don't have a contract with EMI.

The Other Bookshop 328, Upper Street, LONDON N1 01 226 0571



- Three Pamphlets on Fascism and Racism
- David Edgar: *Racism, Fascism and the Politics of the National Front.* 30p.
- A. Sivanandan: *Race, Class and the State.* 30p.
- Leon Trotsky: *Fascism: What it is and How to Fight it.* 35p.

Postage: add 10p on one pamphlet, 15p on two or more.

Also: Just back in print
M. Vajda: *Fascism as a Mass Movement.* £2.95 + 25p postage.

Socialist Challenge

It's a woman's right to choose

THE Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child has said all along that it was going to use every means, including the courts, to try and get the abortion law changed.

The unwanted pregnancy of Joan Paton and her husband's contestation of her right to terminate it has given SPUC the opportunity it was waiting for. JUDE WOODWARD reports:



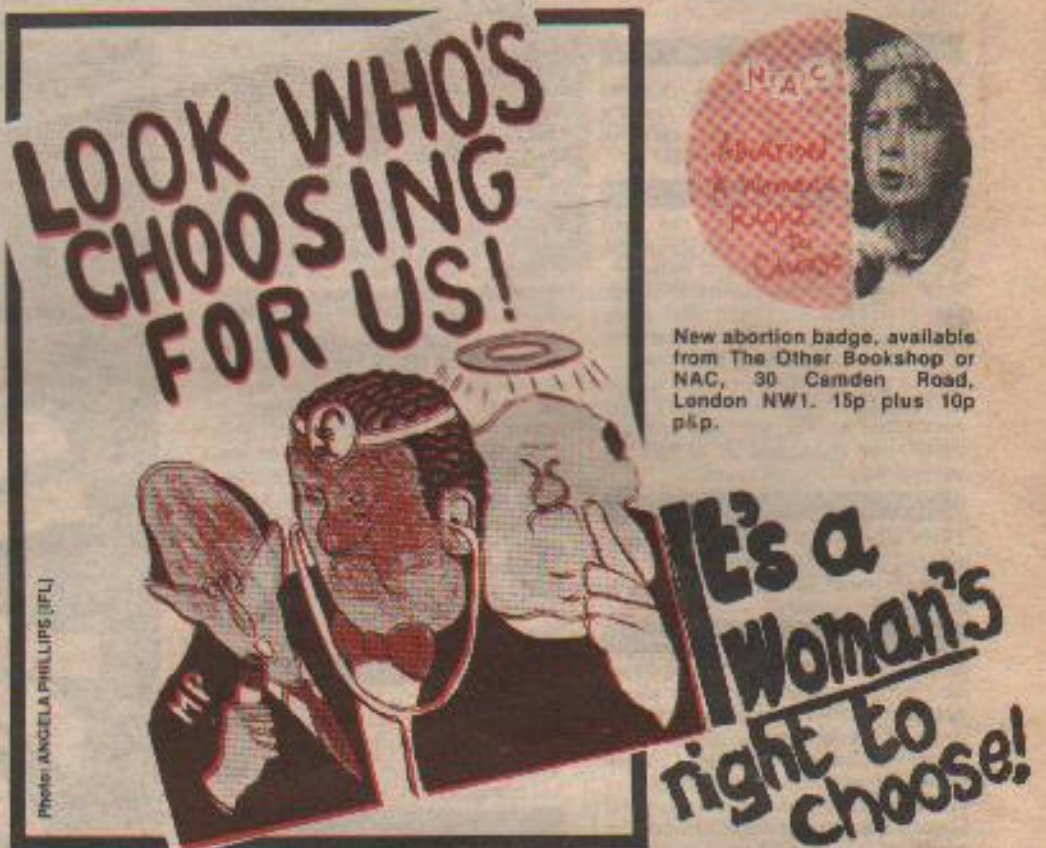
The 1967 Abortion Act gives the total responsibility for deciding that abortion is allowable or advisable to two doctors. The decision under the Act is not given to the woman, but it is certainly not given to the husband, boyfriend or anyone else.

The view of SPUC, and most of the national press, is that the present law is anomalous as it doesn't take into account that 'there are three people involved'. The three people involved being the mother, father, and the foetus.

FORCE

Joan Paton's husband, who had cut his wife off from use of their joint bank account and withdrawn her allowance as she was spending it on clothes and 'frilleries', is determined to force her to continue with a pregnancy that she doesn't want. That is the case being heard at the High Court as we go to press.

Instead of being universally vilified for wanting to turn his wife into a breeding machine and subjecting her to nine months' physical slavery, he has received personal support, the complete backing of SPUC, and sympathy from the mass



New abortion badge, available from The Other Bookshop or NAC, 30 Camden Road, London NW1. 15p plus 10p p&p.

media. Whatever the ins and outs of the initial situation, the support of SPUC and the media's propaganda campaign show this to be part of a concerted attack by the right on a woman's right to choose and in defence of the family.

'Who's baby?' asked the *Daily Express*. 'Father fights for the life of his child', 'Save my baby'. 'Don't let them kill my child' the rest of the press informed us.

The emotionalism of the headlines set the tone for the articles which continually referred to the foetus as the 'baby' and printed SPUC's statement, which claimed that the 'child' was as much a part of

the father as the mother.

A surprising claim, and one which moves women to fury. Let him be pregnant for nine months then. The media has had nothing to say about the woman's rights, feelings, or situation.

The use of the courts as part of an onslaught by the right is not new to us. There was the recent prosecution of a woman in Leamington Spa under the Offences Against the Person Act of 1867, and the present proceedings initiated against a Manchester doctor for performing menstrual extraction.

On other areas, too, the use of private prosecutions — (Mary Whitehouse against *Gay News*) and the common cry 'I'll

take it to the Lords' (George Ward over *Grunwick*) have made a concerted counter-attack by the left more difficult.

We must refuse to fight on their ground. The British Pregnancy Advisory Service should have gone ahead with Joan Paton's abortion and not waited for the results of the case.

The National Abortion Campaign is organising to defend Joan Paton with pickets and a demonstration. It is important to defend the '67 Act, and argue for its extension. This case shows its inadequacy in safeguarding the rights of women, and ensuring that every mother is a willing mother.

Win a Dylan ticket!

THREE tickets have been sent to our offices for Bob Dylan's concert in London next month. The supporter who sent them in said he thought a raffle for the tickets would help fill our depleted coffers!

Would you and a friend like to go to the Bob Dylan concert?

Harvey Goldbach Esq. has donated



Friday, 16th June at 8.00 p.m. Doors open 8.30 p.m.

Two tickets are to be won for the performance on Sunday, 18 June — the first prize. The third ticket is for Friday, 16 June.

If so, send in today for Socialist Challenge lottery tickets! Price: 25p each or five for £1. Just send a postal order or cheque plus a stamped envelope to Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper Street, London N1. Also on sale at The Other Bookshop.

The draw will take place on Monday 12 June in The Other Bookshop. Organised by D Weppler of 328 Upper Street, London N1 on behalf of Socialist Challenge.

OUR FUND DRIVE

Socialist Challenge is now on sale in every main line London railway station. At Charing Cross, Liverpool Street, Kings Cross, St Pancras and Waterloo it is sold in WH Smith's.

But this week it is also on sale at Euston and Paddington. This is because John Menzies, one of the other major national magazine wholesalers, has agreed to give Socialist Challenge a three month trial in the London stations.

London commuters, visitors and tourists now have no

excuse for not buying Socialist Challenge.

Last Sunday's demonstration for democratic rights in Pakistan was an impressive mobilisation against the military dictatorship led by General Zia. One of the speakers was Socialist Challenge editor, Tariq Ali.

Socialist Challenge, which has consistently campaigned for the release of all the political prisoners in Pakistani jails, was very popular, selling over 500 copies.

In the run up to the first,

national, Socialist Challenge conference the fund drive has flourished. No doubt all our readers are saving their money for the trip to London. Only £39.73 trickled into our depleted coffers. If that continued the very existence of Socialist Challenge would be in doubt.

The overall total, after nearly two months of this quarter's fund drive is just over £700. To raise the £2500 we need by the end of the month will be an uphill struggle...but it is vital! Our thanks this week to:

health & Safety course member	1.00
Cigarette coupons	1.75
Cardiff readers	2.00
A Leendertz	0.50
C Wilder	3.53
Manchester TASS member	2.00
SCI	0.25
S Miller	1.00
Anon	2.00
Anon	0.50
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M.H.	1.50
Warrington supporters	7.00
H Hall	10.00
UCL readers	1.00
T Loder	3.00

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Name _____

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I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of _____

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'. Complete and return to:

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.