

Workers' ACTION

No. 109

July 1-8, 1978

10p

A SERIES OF outrages over the weekend showed the fascists of the National Front are turning more and more openly to the racist arson, murder and violence for which all their rallies and electioneering are only a respectable cover. And they showed that the fascists must be fought with force as well as with arguments.

45-year old Ishaque Ali was walking home with a relative Faraque Uddin, along Homerton High Street around 2am on Sunday 25th, when they were stopped by three white youths. After they refused to hand over their money, Ishaque Ali was throttled with a shoelace. He was dead on arrival at Hackney Hospital.

Faraque Uddin only managed to escape when a West Indian, passing by in his car, ran to his defence.

ASSAULT

That same morning the offices of the Anti-Nazi League in Soho were gutted by fire. Over £25,000-worth of leaflets and office equipment was destroyed.

Scrawled on the wall was the slogan "NF Rules OK".

Later that day, white skinheads roared down East London's Brick Lane screaming "Paki bastards go home", in a repeat of the racist rampage on Sunday 11th.

Their assault on a lone Bengali youth was quickly smashed by the resistance of local Bengali kids, who gave better than they got.

The police were on the spot, but did not intervene to protect the assaulted Bengali youth. They moved in only when it was timely to save the hides of the racists. Some of the skinheads were arrested, together with several of the Bengali defenders.

Reaction in the immigrant communities of the East End will be even more bitter after this new round of murder and racist rampage.

POLICE

Time and again the police have denied any racist significance to these killings and attacks, and time and again they have done very little to bring the murderers to account.

Alok Biswas of the Hackney Asian Association is still saying that "if there is to be any peace and harmony we would like to see some action by the police".

But the Bengali youth know from bitter experience that all they can expect from the police is further harassment and intimidation of their communities.

continued back page

RACISM MEANS MURDER

UNITE AND FIGHT BACK



Photo: Mindia

The campaign is beginning to take off

GEOFF BENDER, from the Campaign steering committee, reports on the progress of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory...

THE SOCIALIST Campaign for a Labour Victory is beginning to take off. To date, the Campaign, which was launched just three weeks ago, has now obtained sponsorship from one constituency Labour Party, Hackney North and Stoke Newington, over twenty five Labour councillors, with a promise of many more, three prospective Parliamentary candidates — Ken Livingstone (Hampstead), Ted Knight (Hornsey), and Jane Chapman (Dover and Deal), Trades Council leaders in Hounslow, Twickenham and Lambeth, and well over one hundred and fifty Labour Party activists.

The Campaign appeal statement has been sent to over 500 CLPS and over 50 Trades Councils in the last week. The cover letter appeals for sponsorship from CLPs, trade unions, campaign bodies, and individuals who are in broad agreement with the aims and platform of the SCLV. Most immediately it calls for as many people as possible who support the general aims and platform to attend the working conference on July 15th which will discuss the future activity and organisation of the Campaign.

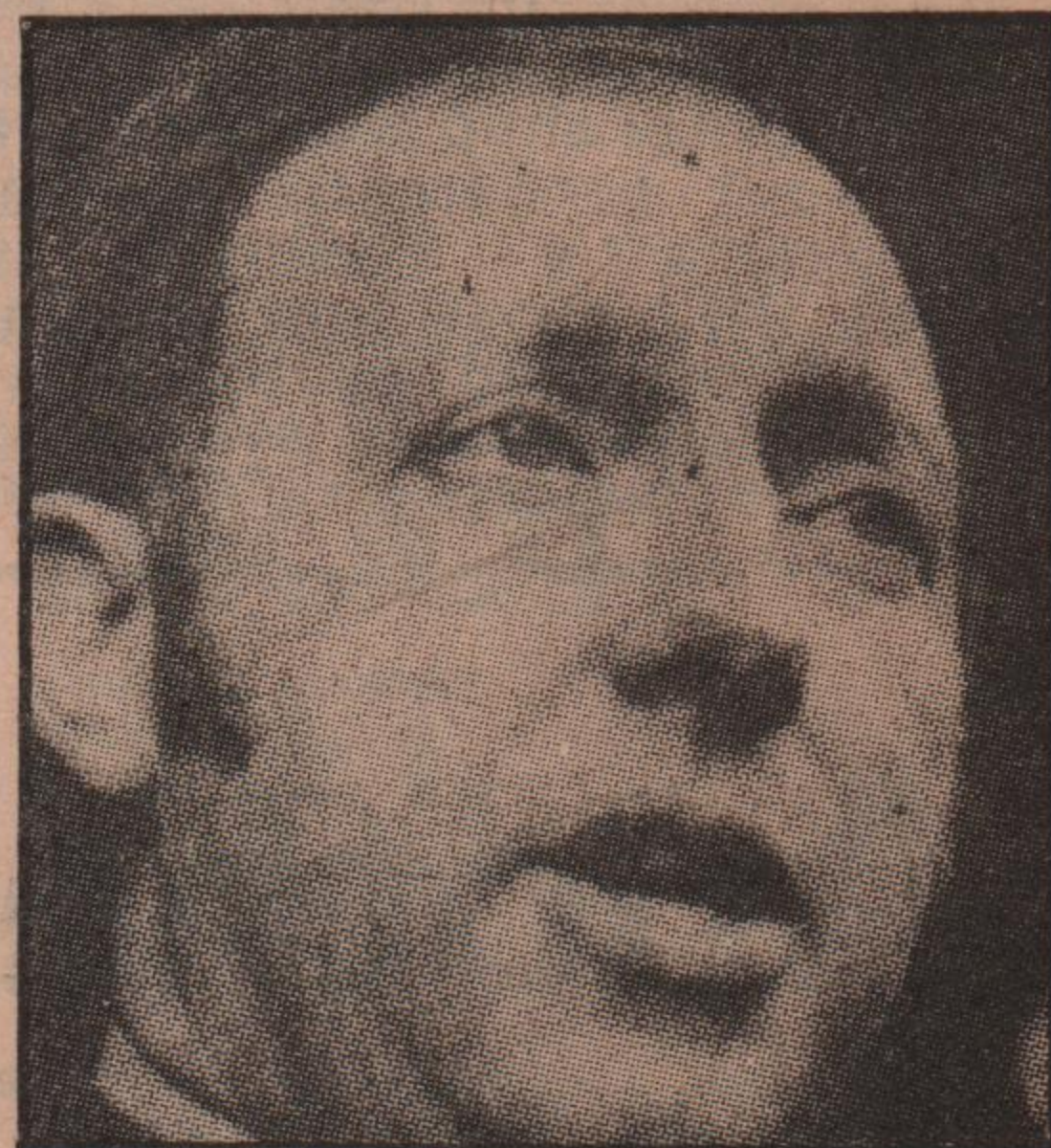
AIMS

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

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

Tickets are now available for the conference (75p) and resolutions are invited up to July 10 with proposals for

the Campaign. Several Labour campaigns — Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, Gay Labour Group, Labour Against the Immigration Acts, for example — have been approached to organise workshops at the conference. It is hoped that these particular-issue cam-



Arthur Scargill: Yorkshire miners' leader sends 'best wishes' to socialist campaign

paings will become an integral part of the work of SCLV and help service the constituencies and individuals with literature and leaflets in the propaganda work up to the General Election.

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

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

If you want to come to the Conference or want more information about the Campaign write to:

SCLV,
Box 127,
182 Upper Street,
London N1.

Rhodesia - Fleet Street repeats the gospel according to Smith

THE KILLING of members of a Christian mission in Zimbabwe last week gave Fleet Street the cue for another outpouring of indignation and horror at a massacre of innocents. As it did over Kolwezi, the press was able to muster all the indignation that it reserves for the killing of British citizens — as long as they're white.

And, though no-one knows who really killed these mission workers and their families — a killing categorically disclaimed by the Patriotic Front forces — the British press has automatically taken the communiqués of the Rhodesian Military Command as gospel.

How sincerely shocked and horrified Fleet Street is can be judged from their coverage of similar events.

Two days before the mission incident, 17 Zimbabwe refugees were killed inside the Mozambique border by a Rhodesian

army raiding party. But they were black — so instead of a story of savage massacre to splash across the front pages, with pictures of the victims and their grieving relatives, the killing merited only a couple of inches of copy on an inside page, and went unmentioned by most of the press.

Nor were the press barons shocked and horrified last month when more than 50 civilians were shot by Rhodesian soldiers at a political meeting of the Patriotic Front. Of the space it got in the papers, most went to giving Ian Smith's version of the event.

The racism that the National Front trades on brazenly is an ideology that pervades every ruling class institution in this country, whatever their pretensions and protestations of disgust about the National Front. It is revealed at times like these, when horror at white deaths is only matched by silence and indifference when blacks are killed.

Renault strikers still not beaten

THE PRESS SHOP WORKERS AT Renault Flins, near Paris, have been isolated. Last week Renault bosses served notices to 66 of the most active and militant of them.

It has further attempted to divide the sacked workers by offering them the chance to be interviewed individually with a chance of being re-hired if they 'repent'. This move has been firmly denounced by the workers involved.

And the struggle is not over. 9,000 Flins workers are still laid off, and the company scabs and lackeys who were sent in to man the press shop after the occupying workers had been thrown out by the police last Wednesday morning, 21st, have themselves gone on strike (according to the Paris daily *Le Monde*).

The press shop workers have held out persistently against management's attempts to break their strike and occupation. Threatened by the company and physically evacuated from the factory by CRS riot

police, the workers re-occupied the press shop once and refused to work in the presence of the police.

They were in the lead of a struggle for a 35 hour week, for the upgrading of unskilled workers to 'P1' grade, and for 300 francs wage increase for all.

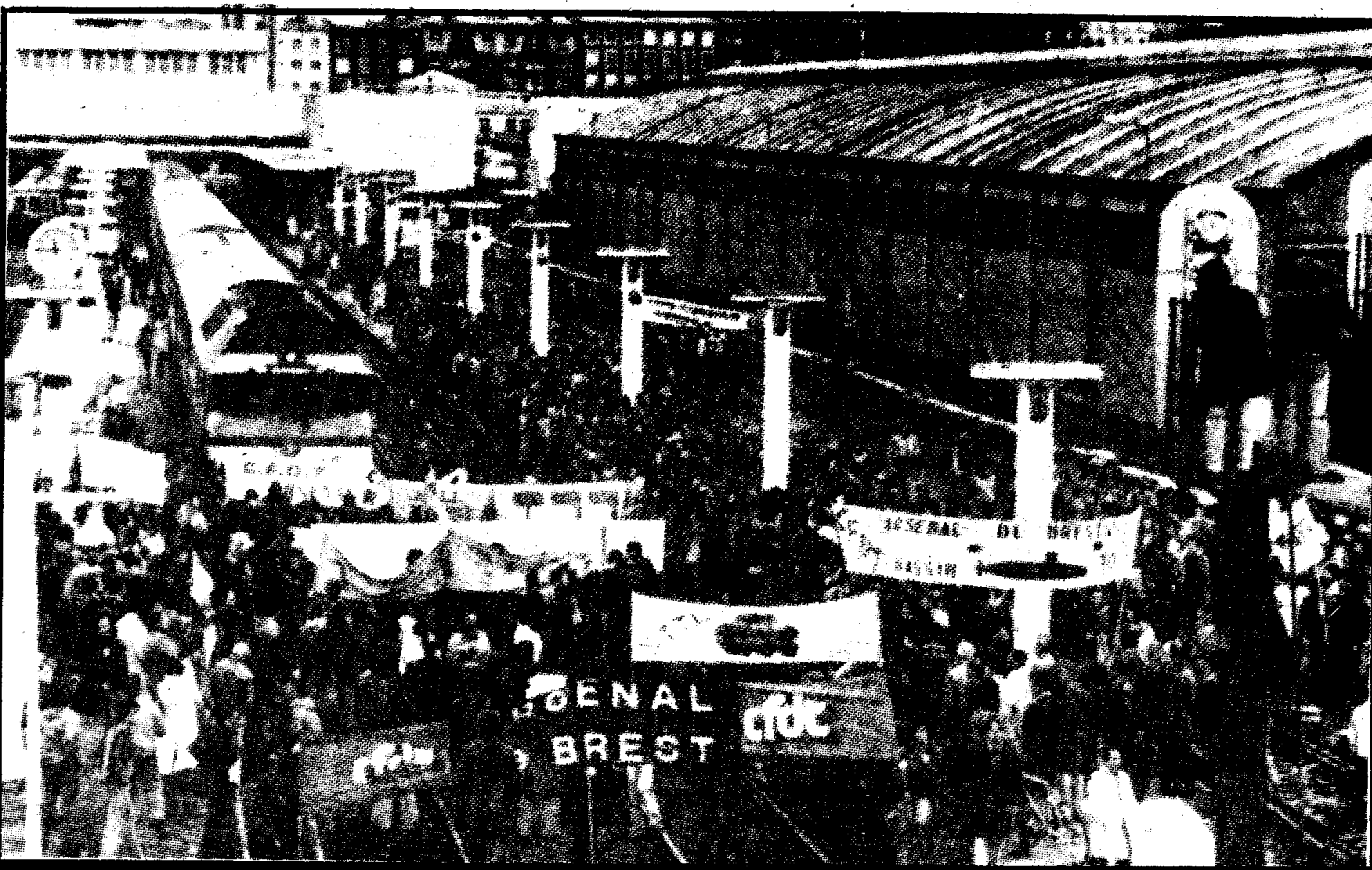
But the unions refused to call a general strike throughout Renault, and eventually the workers' solidarity was worn out in a series of short strikes and demonstrations.

Meanwhile, however, in the munitions factories and naval shipyards, the strike wave is continuing, with the Brest naval repair workers in the lead. They are on strike to overcome the government's blocking of an agreement which they won during a long strike in 1951, giving them parity with Paris metalworkers.

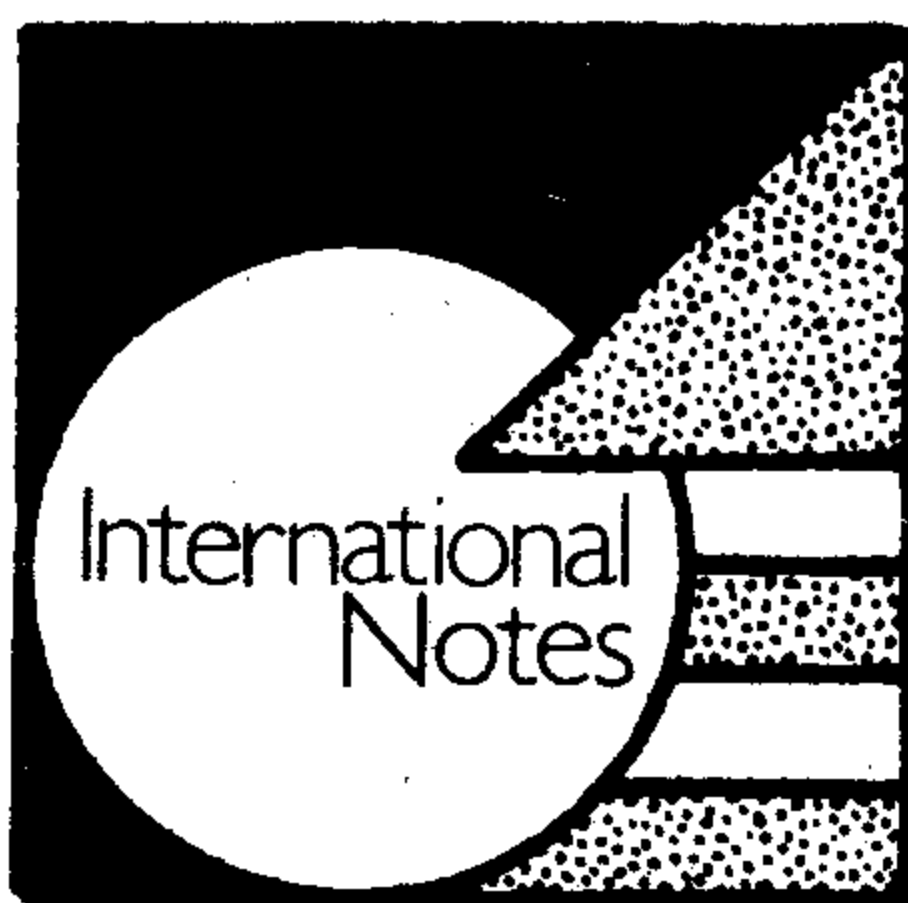
Demonstrations of thousands of workers have taken place in Brest, and the Brest-Paris train was halted for over half an hour by a mass meeting of workers on the station railway track!

ANTONIO GERMARO

The train stops for the strikers' meeting on the tracks at Brest



Another threat for the Shah



GORDON BREWER looks at the possible repercussions of the recent coup in Afghanistan.

THE COMPOSITION of the new regime in Afghanistan, which took power on April 27, is becoming clearer. The country is now being ruled by a Revolutionary Council, all of whose members belong to the Popular Democratic Party of Noor Mohammed Taraki, the new Prime Minister.

The PDP, which originated in 1965, unites both factions of the radical opposition in Afghanistan, the *Khala* (People) of Taraki and the *Parcham* (Flag) of the Deputy Prime Minister, Kamal Babruk. The party is made up of pro-Moscow 'Communists', radical intellectuals, and a layer of young officers who were trained in the USSR under the old regime of ex-President Daud.

The new regime is pledged to carry out the land reform which Daud, himself raised to power in a coup against the monarchy in 1973, was unable to accomplish. Whether the new regime will be any more successful remains to be seen.

Its advantage is that it bases itself on the lower middle class officer corps, and, via the PDP, sections of the workers and peasants. Daud's government was based on the very aristocracy his land reform would have dispossessed.

Whatever the effects in Afghanistan itself, the major capitalist powers in the area are upset by what has happened. The effect in Iran of a regime in a neighbouring country pledged to carry out far-reaching reforms can only terrify Shah Reza Pahlavi, already facing a massive opposition movement.

Protests against the Iranian dictatorship have been gaining in strength since January this year. The Shah's problem are compounded by the presence of one million Afghan workers in Iran.

In fact, the Shah is reported to have gone as far as planning a military intervention against Kabul, being dissuaded only by the US State Department. The United States and the Shah will be hoping that the cash ran has poured into the new highway between Iran and Kabul, cash which exceeds in amount even the aid given to Afghanistan by the USSR, will put the brakes on the Afghan Revolutionary Council.

In Pakistan, the brutal Zia dictatorship is worried, too. In particular, there is the old

problem of Baluchistan, an area of North West Pakistan which the Afghans (who call it Pakhtoonistan) claim for themselves.

Any attempt by the Afghan government to support the Baluchis could easily revive the crisis in Afghan-Pakistani relations which last erupted in 1974-5, when Daud accused Bhutto of being involved in a plot to overthrow him, and the latter replied by accusing Afghanistan of being involved in the fighting then going on in Baluchistan.

Finally, the United States is very worried by the developments in Afghanistan. For over a century the country has been used as a 'buffer state', first by the British, between its colonies in South Asia and the Tsarist Empire, then between British and US interests in the area and the USSR.

Although Daud had close links with the USSR, he was still considered fairly 'safe' by the imperialists, as he was bound hand and foot to the old feudal aristocracy and the remnants of the royal family. They will be far less sure of the Taraki regime, which has already signed cooperation agreements with the USSR.

The Afghan coup could be a spark for social upheavals in the area which would go much further than it itself is likely to, given the small weight of the Afghan working class.

French left calls for state bans on fascists

ON 27th June fascist groups and parties from all over Europe plan to hold a rally in Paris. The most important sections of the Black International, such as the Spanish *Fuerza Nueva* and the Italian *Movimento Sociale* will be present.

It is clear that the leaders of these movements, men such as Blas Pinar and Giorgio Almirante, are killers. Their organisations are the self-proclaimed heirs of the fascist regimes of Franco and Mussolini. Those regimes may have fallen or passed away, but the fascist organisations have continued a persistent campaign of killings, bombings and intimidation against the working classes of their countries.

There has been a justified wave of protests and anger amongst Paris workers, and many demands in trade union and party branches for action to stop this meeting. What is not justified is that revolutionaries, along with the Communist and Socialist parties, are calling for a state ban on the meeting.

That groups like the LCR (French sister-group of the IMG) should wish for a broad united front against the fascists is perfectly correct. However, the question is, on what basis, by reliance on state bans or the strength and organisation of the working class?

In Britain, recent bans on fascist marches, using the Public Order Act of 1936, were at first received enthusiastically by many left groups. Quickly, however, militants have realised that this Act can be (and is) used more against the left than the ultra-

right.

In France, likewise, a law banning fascists was passed in 1936; but in 1937 a Popular Front mobilisation against a fascist parade in Clichy ended with five anti-fascist workers being shot dead by the police of the Popular Front government. More recently, the same law was used to ban all the revolutionary groups after the May-June 1968 general strike, and to ban the *Ligue Communiste* after an anti-fascist mobilisation in 1973.

After these experiences the left should realise the counter-productive nature of such calls for state bans.

Yet it is possible to have demonstrations which aim to beat the fascists off the streets without these mobilisations being limited simply to revolutionaries. On the contrary, it is a call which would find a strong echo amongst many workers and militants of the reformist parties.

C.G.



Blas Pinar, leader of the Spanish *Fuerza Nueva*, gives the fascist salute. Next to him Carlos Garcia Julia, leader of a right wing commando group that last year killed five members of the Spanish Workers' Commissions.

PERU ELECTIONS

Revolutionaries win 12pc

LAST WEEK Peru had its first elections since the military seized power in 1968. The 'left' military junta of Velasco and then that of General Francisco Morales Bermudez were becoming increasingly incapable of containing the massive economic problems and working class and peasant unrest in the country.

The election, on 19th June, for a 100-deputy Constituent Assembly, was the first step in the transfer of power back to civilian hands which is promised for 1980.

The Popular American Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) together with the Popular

Christian Party gained the expected clear majority (63%) for the centre-right.

But the voting also showed a very significant vote for the left wing parties, who gained over one third of the votes and seats in the assembly. The greater part of this vote went to FOCEP, the Workers, Peasants, Students, and Poor Peoples Front. FOCEP, which got 12% of the vote, was an electoral front comprising the Socialist Workers' Party (PST) and the FIR-POC, both sympathising groups of the Fourth International, as well as the POMR (Revolutionary Marxist Workers' Party), a group

aligned with the French OCI.

Although these organisations were the backbone of the electoral front, trade union, student, peasant and shantytown dwellers' bodies were also involved. FOCEP's platform has not been published in English; the PST put forward a socialist programme in the somewhat questionable form of a draft Constitution.

In many of the working class and slum areas of Lima, FOCEP obtained between 70 and 90% of the votes cast, making it the largest single force on the left and the third biggest bloc in the assembly.

The pro-Moscow CP trailed well behind with about 5%.

The question now is whether the government will allow Hugo Blanco, an elected FOCEP candidate, and other deputies who were deported in May, to return to the country. Blanco and others were deported to Argentina, but have since gained political asylum in various countries.

FOCEP's success undoubtedly reflects the spirit of the general strike which shook Peru this May, and is a promise of other such struggles to come.

ANTONIO GERMARO

N. LONDON LABOUR ACTIVISTS DISCUSS SOCIALIST ELECTION CAMPAIGN

NB: Why do you think we must vote Labour?

VV: The election of a Tory government would be a major defeat.

After 13 years of the Tories, in 1964 everyone campaigned to return Labour thinking that when it got in socialism was here. In 1974 people didn't see it as important what policies a Labour government had, but just that it got back.

As long as you allow Labour to go out of office you can't make the step forward to saying on what basis to support Labour

KV: The question of political clarity is important. It's extremely difficult to carry out any sort of fight against a Labour government. That's because capitalism has been kept in existence not through its own strength but through the compliance of Labour or Communist Party leaders in Western Europe.

The real danger is that if the Tories, led by Thatcher and Joseph, get back, within a few months all the MPs who support cutbacks and wages policies would be transformed into champions of the working class. We'd have things like mass marches led by Wedgwood Benn and Len Murray, and the political water becoming muddled again.

PREPARED

VV: An example. During the miners' strike in 1972 I was in the lobby of the House of Commons when the miners went in. When Harold Wilson came in to speak he got a standing ovation from the same people who under the Labour government had faced its sell-outs.

Secondly, the Tories this time are much better prepared to take on the working class through the state machine.

NB: Could the Campaign help in the fight against anti-working class measures by a new Labour government?

KV: Yes, by explaining that defeating reformism and overthrowing capitalism are part of the same process.

The effect of capitalism and its ideas on the labour move-

Resolutions are no use unless you organise

VALERIE VENESS [right] is a labour councillor in Islington, North London. Her husband **KEITH VENESS** was a prominent activist in Islington North Labour party until he was expelled in January 1976 for attacking the local MP, Michael O'Halloran, in a newspaper interview.

NIK BARSTOW talked to them about the **SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN FOR A LABOUR VICTORY**.



ment is social democracy. The only time revolutionaries will become a majority in the labour movement and that movement will support the seizure of power is going to be at the height of a revolutionary crisis.

Having a Labour government is essential to the working class being able to seize power and bring about socialism — because the ruling class has a defence if the Labour leaders can be wheeled in and dampen things down.

NB: What do you think is the explanation for the Labour government's record?

KV: ... It is the refusal to take on the armed power of the capi-

talist state which is the constant dilemma of every Labour government.

There is no way you can implement any policy against the interest of the capitalist class without being confronted with violence to decisively crush it. No Labour government has ever tackled that, nor by its very nature can they ever do that.

That is the decisive question, not whether the Tribunitaries are more or less left wing now than they used to be...

Objectively there is a mass labour movement in Britain that has the strength to destroy capitalism and it's had that strength for 100 years or longer. The capitalists will accept a Labour government if they think it can defuse issues, but they never feel at home with it and they can't directly control it, but can bend its will.

STATE

None of the left policies of Tribune or tendencies like them can make the slightest difference, because they leave out the acid question of the state and state power.

There was hardly a person who held a major office in the Wilson government who wasn't an ex-Tribunite or CP member ... But it's not policies on this or that issue that count, but whether or not they'll take on the state, if necessary using all the force available.

after children. None of the governors has volunteered to have a detective checking up on whom he or she is sleeping with in order to verify their 'suitability' for their responsible posts.

Their 'unsuitability' for their position of authority — or, rather, the 'unsuitability' of the whole system of authority of which they are part — is shown by the way they put pressure on Miss Jones, who by now is probably a very badly frightened woman. At first, no doubt being nervous, she pretended to be married; then she found herself pilloried on the front pages of the national press.

She gets hounded into resigning. Mr Rees faces no such problem. "We are not proposing to initiate any action as far as Mr Rees is concerned", said a spokesman for Essex education authority, "nor have we had any request to do so". Mrs Rees, the one person who might have a real grievance in the affair — though not one with any bearing on Miss Jones' job — is not consulted in all the hullabaloo.

At least the pupils of Hedley Walter school have had one useful lesson. They have seen how present-day society treats women

COLIN FOSTER

On that the Tribune left is indistinguishable from the most reactionary right winger. They all believe it's possible, peacefully, through Parliament, to legislate socialism.

NB: What can the left do to fight back?

KV: One of the key questions that separates me from groups even like 'Militant' is that of organising.

People in the Labour Party often say 'we should fight ideas, not individuals', but as Trotsky once commented, this sort of notion is rubbish because ideas have to reside somewhere.

ORGANISE

If you don't like what the right wing in the Party is doing, it's absolutely useless to pass a whole series of left wing resolutions if you're expecting the most right wing reactionary people to implement them. The purpose of organisation isn't organising for abstract ideas but against those people who are stopping you carrying your ideas out. That's why the action of Party members in Newham North East was far more serious than the passing of a million resolutions calling for socialism.

It's when you start doing that that you get the most furious onslaught against you. That's why I was expelled from the Labour Party.

NB: How do you see the Campaign in that context?

KV: The campaign does give a focus for people in the Labour party who are socialists and want to fight to carry out some sort of struggle there. It's better than the dead end of standing candidates against Labour in a way that breeds illusions in the electoral system and appears dangerous and divisive to many people in the Labour Party...

VV: It's necessary to have something to organise, particularly with a general election coming up. We have to organise and fight at a local level to allow people in the local Parties to feel that something is happening and they can fight for something.

THE NEXT STEP

In North Islington the issue that we're always fighting over is the question of the MP, involving winning meetings on that one issue. It's important to go one step further and say the reason that we're doing it is that we're fighting for these political aims, and to force other left wingers to take the fight in the Labour Party seriously.

The fight we've got on now is a life and death one for the working class movement, where the Labour government's policies have allowed the NF to gather strength. We've got to see the question as either a victory for the working class or it going down to a major defeat under the fascists.

It's time we recognised that the fight now is the real fight.



THE STUDENT Campaign against the Nazis brings together [left to right] the Student Christian Movement, Federation of Conservative Students, Broad Left, Socialist Students Alliance, and also the National Organisation of International Socialist Students [SWP] and the Union of Liberal Students. The fly in the ointment? — the Communist Party-dominated Broad Left, Tories, and Liberal students ganged up to oppose the 'No Platform for Fascists' policy at the last National Union of Students conference... and they still oppose it.

Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

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

SHOOT FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS LATER

SHOOT FIRST, ask questions afterwards, is now the rule for the British army in Northern Ireland. Any loss of Irish lives is secondary compared to achieving the army's political ends.

In the early morning of Tuesday 10th soldiers ambushed three IRA men who were going to attack a Post Office depot in Belfast. The three IRA men were shot dead — and so was a passer-by. Another man passing by in a car was injured by a shot in the shoulder.

The army claimed that the IRA men were armed, and also that there was a fourth who escaped; but they admit no weapons were found, and have given no details on how the fourth man did get away. The IRA says the men were unarmed.

The father of the dead passer-by, William Hanna, has called for an enquiry. Roy Mason has so far refused. And indeed the issues are clear without an inquiry.

If the conflict in Ireland is just a police operation against a few 'terrorists', as the British government continually tells us, if the British army in Ireland is just acting as a second-string police force, then the Belfast operation shows a state of affairs in Northern Ireland not far removed from Argentina or Chile. If the IRA are just 'criminals', as the British government constantly insist by their refusal to grant Republican prisoners political status, then we have a regime in Northern Ireland where people can be summarily shot dead on the suspicion that they may be about to commit a crime (and a crime against property rather than persons, at that).

If there is a war in Ireland, as the Republicans rightly insist, then... it was an act of war. An act in a brutal, bloody war designed to maintain the sectarian Partition of Ireland and to retain Britain's grip on part of Ireland.

That is the fact of it: the British government is at war with the most oppressed and most militant section of the working people of Ireland. It's time we stopped them waging that war!
British Troops Out Now!

POLITICAL STATUS FOR IRISH PRISONERS

AMNESTY FOR ALL IRISH PRISONERS OF WAR

BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND

Demonstration,
Sunday July 9th.

Organised by the Prisoners' Aid Committee. Assemble 2.30pm at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park

THE VICTORIAN DOUBLE STANDARD STILL REIGNS

THE SCHOOL governors of Hedley Walter comprehensive, Brentwood, last week struck a major blow for sordid intolerance and hypocrisy.

As widely reported in the press, the school's headmistress, Miss Margaret Jones, had let it be known that she is pregnant by Mr David Rees, deputy headmaster of another Brentwood school, although Miss Jones is unmarried and Mr Rees is married to another woman. Previously Miss Jones had pretended that she was married.

The school governors decided to get rid of Miss Jones. They did not have the courage to sack her, but instead pressurised her into resigning, hiding behind the excuse that the parents' feeling was against Miss Jones. They admitted that Miss Jones did her job well.

There is a good case for parents having some say in the appointment of school head teachers. But here parent democracy was invoked strictly for the occasion — and without any proper meeting or means of finding out the parents' wishes.

The governors' tactic was the traditional tactic of shamefaced bigots: they don't justify bigotry openly, but on the grounds that "the majority want it".

The key argument was that Miss Jones' conduct made her unsuitable for a responsible job looking

No one neutral in Harlan County

'If you go to Harlan County, There is no neutral there, You'll either be a union man, Or a thug for D.H. Blair'

THE LINES COME FROM Florence Reese's song "Which side are you on" — a song she composed in the 30s, when Harlan County was known as Bloody Harlan.

Then the mine-owner was D.H. Blair, whose thugs killed several miners. In 1973 Florence Reese sang the song again at a meeting-cum-social of Harlan miners striking against the Eastover Mining Company and its giant parent company, Duke Power.

The song sums up the message of Barbara Kopple's film "Harlan County, USA". "There are no neutrals". The film, which is now showing at the Scala Cinema in London, can be hired.

Kopple and her colleagues started work in 1972 on a film about the organisation of Miners for Democracy, the rank and file movement backing Jake Yablonski for the presidency of the United Mineworkers of America against the sitting President, Tony Boyle.

That year Yablonski with his wife and daughter was gunned down by hit-men hired by Boyle, and Arnold Miller took over at the head of the Miners for Democracy slate. He was elected and is still UMWA President.

When the Brookside miners of Harlan County in Eastern Kentucky walked out on strike on June 30th 1973, Barbara Kopple and her crew moved to Harlan to cover the strike. The strike lasted 13 months. And the footage the crew shot, interspersed with scenes from the Yablonski-Miller versus Boyle campaign and scenes from Bloody Harlan of 1931, makes one of the most inspiring films I have ever seen.

'You'll never win a strike with only six people on the picket line. So we've got to break these injunctions'

It didn't take the Harlan County miners long to understand the role of the police, the state troopers and the courts. Things began with good humour: "Just doing my job. Just keeping the roads open" says the trooper; a picket helps a trooper onto his feet after he is knocked down in a scuffle. Soon the clubs come out. The uneasy smiles turn to scowls, the once friendly eyes stare out a fixed hatred.

Arrests follow the picket line scuffles, and 36 pickets have injunctions slapped on them. The organiser of the women pickets sums up her feelings: "They're treating us like dogs, like animals. But we're not. We're American citizens." American citizens or not, Judge Hogg down at the courthouse is a coal owner himself and there's no justice there.

'I would not like to think of my wife playing that kind of role'

So says Norman Yarborough, President of the Eastover Mining Company at a press conference. He is comment-



The leader of the Brookside women gets ready for picketing. Below: Brookside pickets decide they've had enough of strikebreakers.

ing on the fact that the Brookside women have emerged as the most militant fighters on the miners' side. They form a club for miners' wives and widows to organise the women, to publicise the strike, to collect for it and to organise the women for picketing.

Most of the women are miners' wives. Many of the older ones are miners' mothers and the widows of miners killed by rock-falls, explosions and disease. One recounts: "I can remember sitting round the table when I was a girl, listening to my father. The talk was always about picketing and organising and scabs. Then I watched my father die of black lung and I knew we had to go against the coal operators. So when this strike started I saw my chance to fight the coal operators."

At one point the club's meeting breaks up in mutual recrimination "I hear you're a troublemaker. You're only after our menfolk." — "They tell me you're an alcoholic." The meeting is brought back to order by a woman who declares: "I don't care if she's after my husband. I'm not after a man. I'm after a union contract."

As the strike progresses it

is the women who more and more take the lead. Their spirit is best exemplified by Florence Reese, the veteran of Bloody Harlan, who encourages the women to face the gun-thugs hired by Eastover: "They may shoot me, but they can't shoot the union out of me."

'United we stand, divided we fall. For every dime, a battle must be fought'

The living and working conditions of the Harlan County miners and their families are written into the haggard faces of both men and women. There is no hot running water for the homes of the Brookside miners — "We're hoping to upgrade our people into trailers soon" reports Norman Yarborough at a press conference. Those that do not die down the mine die wheezing with black lung. There are no bathrooms or toilets for the miners' homes. The women's faces are battered with overwork.

On sixteen occasions in 1968 the Bureau of Mine Safety Commission pointed to

dangerous conditions in Duke Power's mines. Sixteen times Duke successfully appealed for more time. In November 1968 one mine exploded and 78 miners were burned alive. Only four survived that shift.

As the strike goes on, the scabs' violence increases. Some pickets are fired on with machine guns. The mines foreman — a leader of the scabs, most of whom are drawn from the local Ku Klux Klan — openly carries a pistol to shoot at the pickets.

'You'd be crazy not to carry a gun now'

As the strike goes into its thirteenth month a group of scabs fire a shot gun into the face of young Lawrence Jones. Within hours he is dead. "A man died right in front of me" says an older striker, "just for a contract." Quickly the government steps in to press Duke to concede before things get out of hand. Needless to say, no charges are brought against the killers although they are well known to the strikers.

In one of the most moving parts of the film, Lawrence Jones' sixteen year old wife is asked what her husband was fighting for. Holding her five month old baby she replies timidly, "For the union, I guess". Her mother-in-law breaks in immediately: "Because he's a union man. That's why. I raised all my sons to be union men, not yellow-backed scabs."

But the new contract — although it is a victory — doesn't suit everyone. The older workers will get very little out of it. Three months later the Harlan County miners are on strike again — now as part of the national strike action to get a new national UMWA contract. Miller sells the strike out and recommends the owners' offer of a contract with a no-strike clause — the very thing the Harlan strikers had stuck out thirteen months to avoid. In 1976 they strike again.

And this year, again, the Kentucky miners take the lead in the UMWA strike, this time with few illusions in Miller, their hero of 1973-4, who once again sells out.

Go and see "Harlan County USA" and strengthen your fight. Workers of the world unite!



IN 1967 the tensions in the bureaucratic system in Czechoslovakia had reached screaming point. This led to deep conflict in the bureaucracy, which in turn opened cracks for the brief flowering of a mass movement for workers' democracy before the Russian tanks re-imposed strict bureaucratic control.

A decisive stage in the spilling over of the conflict inside the bureaucracy to the whole population was the publication, on June 27th 1968 — just ten years ago — of the TWO THOUSAND WORDS, an appeal by reformers to "workers, farmers, scientists, artists, and everyone".

In this first of a series on the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia JAMES DAVIES looks at how the crisis was incubated within the bureaucracy.

BY 1967 Antonin Novotny had been in power in Czechoslovakia for 14 years.

In Czechoslovakia, alone of the East European states (Albania), there had been "de-Stalinisation"; no political loosening-up, no real economic reform, no removal of ultra-Stalinist leaders. The bureaucratic rigidity was taking its toll economically. Between 1949 and 1960 National Income had risen 8.2% a year from 1961 to 1964, only 1.6% a year.

In 1965 and 1966 economic reforms were agreed — but little effect. As a later Communist Party document put it, "The old guard continued in power inside the party and any criticism of them was limited to the mildest of hints. In 1967... this struggle... came so acute as to produce a decisive showdown".

Novotny came under fire at the June 1967 Congress of the Union of Czechoslovak Workers. He responded by pelling his leading critics from the party and tightening control over Literarni Noviny, the Union's journal.

In the autumn student demonstrations at the Strahov halls of residence in Prague were triggered off by repeated lighting and heating failures. A spontaneous demonstration of about 1,500 students being lighted candles and chanting "We want light!" was broken up by riot police throwing tear gas. Many students were injured and some were arrested. "Disproportionate severe methods" — as a later official account described them — were the only ones Novotny knew.

Oust

The struggle inside the bureaucracy to oust Novotny opened up at the September meeting of the Communist Party Central Committee. Alexander Dubcek hinted criticisms when speaking of economic failures and the Czech question. The choice of issues was significant. Novotny was to be toppled by an alliance between the economic reformers and some Slovaque bureaucrats who were not specially reform-minded and resented Czech arrogance towards their nation.

The attack on Novotny sharpened at the October plenum. The President's counter-attack against Dubcek that he was following "national interests" — helped shift the Slovaks to the Novotny camp.

By December the range of the conflict had widened. J. Sik, head of the Institute of Economics since 1962 and

PRAGUE SPRING OF 1968



ardent reformer, declared: "Separation of the functions of President and [Party] First Secretary [both held by Novotny] must be carried through without delay". Novotny managed to beat off this challenge for the moment, deferring the decision till the next month.

In the meantime Novotnyites in the army organised to thwart plans to oust their leader. Some generals claimed that there was a danger of counter-revolution engineered by the East. Chief among those making this absurd accusation was General Sejna, who soon defected to the West himself!

Novotny tried to mobilise workers on his side by playing on fears of the consequences of economic reforms. But the January plenum appointed Dubcek to replace Novotny as First Party Secretary.

There was no response from the USSR. No wonder: everything in Dubcek's background attested to the fact that he was a competent bureaucrat, as closely wedded to the system of bureaucratic privilege as any other.

The system in Czechoslovakia dated back to the period after the end of World War 2. In 1945, the German army evacuated Czechoslovakia, retreating before the Russian forces. The property which had been confiscated by the Germans — amounting to

three quarters of all industry — was immediately nationalised.

In 1948, as part of the general Stalinist response to the Marshall Plan and the developing Cold War, the expropriation of capitalism in Czechoslovakia was completed. A deformed workers' state was created, structurally modelled on the degenerated workers' state of the USSR.

The nationalisation and planning of the economy created the conditions for substantial growth up to the early 1960s. But from the start the system was clogged by police-state bureaucratic control of social and economic life, modelled on the Stalinist USSR.

Control

Bureaucratic planning of every detail from on high was inevitably wasteful — distorted by the bureaucrats' greed for their own privileges, their arrogant remoteness from the actual process of production, their contemptuous disregard for the well-being of the producers, and the fumbling blindness inseparable from a system where there is no possibility of checking, questioning, and rational discussion.

The problems were made sharper by the fact that Czechoslovakia was, along

with East Germany, one of the most economically developed of the Stalinist states, with a high level of culture and a substantial experience of bourgeois democracy.

The rational alternative was democratically-organised working-class planning of the economy — through workers' councils and workers' control in the factories. But that would require the total overthrow of the ruling bureaucracy — nothing less than a political revolution. It was not, and could not be, advocated by the 'reformers' within the bureaucracy.

Their alternative was to cut down on strict central bureaucratic control and to give wider scope to regulation by capitalist-type market mechanisms. Factory managers should be free within limits to produce what and how they liked, to adjust wage levels, and to cut their workforce. There should be greater incentives, bigger wage differentials, and a drive to increase the productivity of labour.

At best this was a proposal to replace bureaucratic waste and inhumanity by the waste and inhumanity associated with market economics. (Though, contrary to Moscow's propaganda, there was never any sign of a real danger of the restoration of capitalism in Czechoslovakia. The economic reform proposals

were not radically different from economic reforms in the USSR itself). Economically the reformers' programme was by no means pro-working class.

What made it socially explosive was that it also involved a political liberalisation — although, in the reformers' initial intentions, a very limited one. The reformers had realised that while Novotny and his followers ruled the roost, it hardly mattered what reform proposals were accepted: they would simply not be implemented by the old guard.

In their Action Programme (published in April 1968) the reformers declared: "... Socialist enterprise did not expand. In economic life, independent, diligence, expertise, and the initiative of people were not appreciated, but, rather the contrary, subservience, obedience, and even kow-towing to higher-ups were.

"A more profound reason for keeping up the outlived methods of economic management was the deformations in the political system".

Thus the January Central Committee plenum opened up discussion and criticism among intellectuals and students. In his major speeches Dubcek stressed the need for "discipline" and praised the contribution of Novotny and his predecessor Gottwald. But the clearing-out of Novotny's team was inevitably opening the lid on dissent and discussion.

Frenzy

Gradually censorship relaxed. Within the party the proposed Action Programme was discussed. Some functionaries close to Novotny were removed from their posts. In early March the party's Presidium abolished the 1966 censorship laws. The old guard talked of a 'frenzy of negation' as the system they had built up came under increasing attack.

At hundreds of public meetings eager and critical audiences confronted spokesmen for the new course. In mid-March, several leading reformers shared the platform at a big meeting with victims of past purges. Later that month 15,000 people crammed the Congress Palace to hear the representatives of reform.

The process accelerated after the Presidium, on March 21, encouraged the formation of pressure groups (not new political parties). Leaders of the trade union movement, the youth union, the journalists' union, the co-operatives, and the women's congress, faced calls to resign or dismissal. The Union of Youth virtually disintegrated, as separate groups of young people like the university students demanded or began to form organisations of their own.

New organisations also came into existence *de facto*, without legal approval. There was the Academic Council of Students in Prague, and the Club of Critical Thought within the Writers' Union, which planned to organise public debates.

The most controversial of the new organisations was K231. It sought to organise all those who had been imprisoned under the 1948 law 'for the defence of the Republic'. In early April a Slovak Organisation for the Defence of Human Rights was set up in Bratislava.

Demands for the removal of Novotny mounted. Towards the end of March he resigned from his post as President, to be succeeded by General Svoboda. The Russian bureaucrats started to get anxious.

Parties

In April the Action Programme was published. By this time the old guard had been mainly supplanted by followers of Dubcek. Yet the Action Programme was vague and not far-reaching. It hardly altered the political monopoly of the Communist Party. Its principal proposals aimed to develop "an economic system of management able to force a turn towards intensive growth". That is; decentralisation, increased introduction of incentives, and differentiation of wage levels, and a drive for higher productivity.

Ferment intensified. A committee of social-democrats denounced the fusion of their former party with the Communist Party in 1948 and announced their intention of reforming it as an independent party. Despite its declarations about democracy, the CPCz refused to allow the formation of any new political parties.

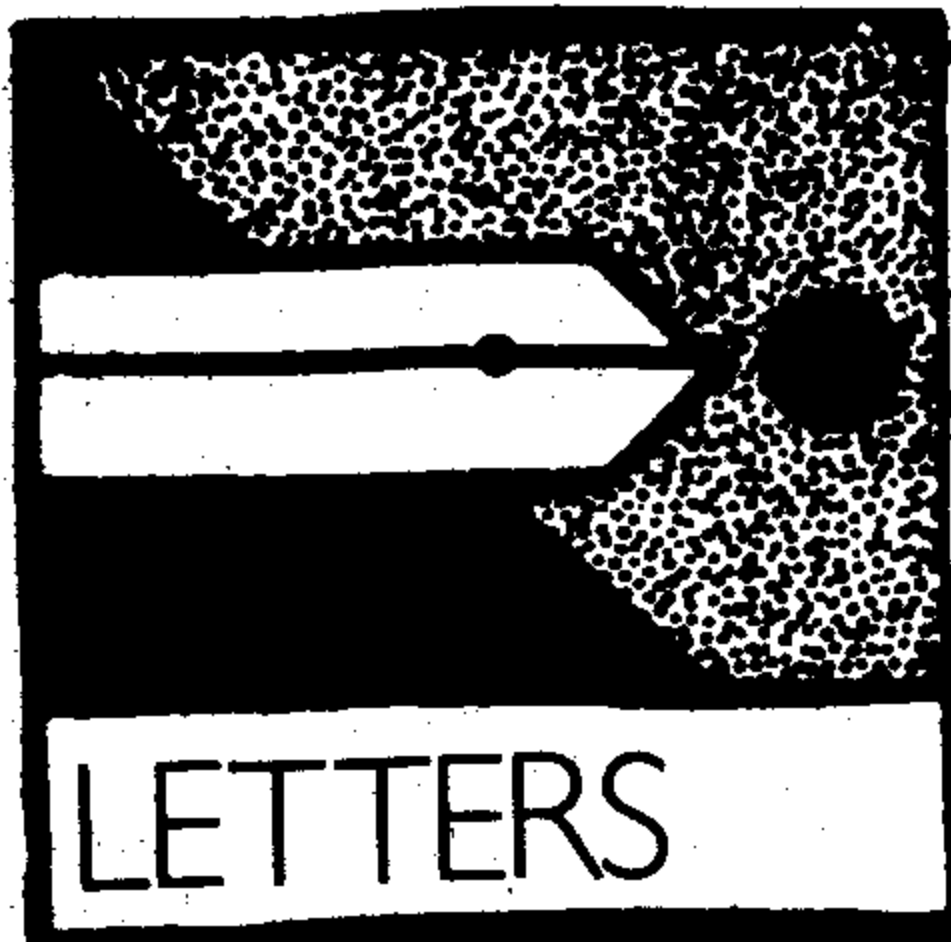
In the USSR press opinion actually favoured the Action Programme, though it expressed concern about what it called "anti-socialist forces". The Polish and East German press voiced sharper hostility. Inside Czechoslovakia similar voices were heard particularly in the ranks of the Slovak Party, which was moving rapidly to a more conservative stance.

On June 27th the magazine *Literarni Listy* published the document "2,000 words", drafted by Ludvik Vaculik and signed by many intellectuals and workers, not all of them CP members. For the first time this document was addressed to "everyone" and called on them to set up organisations outside the ruling bloc (the CP-dominated 'National Front') to fight for democratisation.

The trade union paper *Prace* received 70,000 responses to the '2,000 Words' — almost all favourable. A new phase had now opened up, one which was to wrench the reins of the movement out of the hands of the bureaucracy.



NOVOTNY [LEFT] AND DUBCEK



WORKERS' ACTION 24th April.

Dear comrades,

I write in relation to the trade union conference that *Socialist Challenge* is calling for Saturday 1st July at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham.

In a section of the broadsheet calling the conference... you say that you have approached *Socialist Voice* and *Big Flame* newspapers "to jointly sponsor the conference on the basis of broad agreement with the perspective outlined in this broadsheet".

For our part, we would also agree with many of the points put forward in the broadsheet, and in particular (a) criticism of existing 'rank and file' movements as being just backyards of particular organisations, and (b) support for the need to establish a forum where militants can exchange experiences and discuss policy for the way forward.

There are still points of disagreement — for example, the particular programme that is suggested — that we have openly argued before. However, we don't think that these would or should prevent us proposing to join in sponsoring the conference, and directly help to build it as an important and necessary forum for rank and file militants.

Concretely, we would like to put forward this proposal on the basis of points (a) and (b) outlined above.

In addition and in relation to the agenda of the conference, we would also like to propose now that a meeting of carworker militants is arranged sometime during the day. Apart from the obvious importance of the industry at the moment, we think that the conference will attract enough carworkers to make such a meeting useful, and on a broader basis than the one organised by the CDLM [Campaign for Democracy in the Labour

WHY SOCIALIST CHALLENGE DIDN'T WANT UNITY

ON 30th MARCH 'Socialist Challenge' announced a conference for socialist trade unionists on July 1st. They were seeking broad sponsorship:

"We have approached 'Socialist Voice' and 'Big Flame' newspapers to jointly sponsor the conference on the basis of broad agreement with the perspective outlined in this broadsheet".

'Socialist Voice' and 'Big Flame' have not sponsored the conference. But 'Workers Action' did write, proposing that we co-sponsor it.

'Socialist Challenge' re-

plied to our letter only after six weeks' delay [and numerous 'phone conversations].

We reprint the correspondence below. 'Socialist Challenge' have promised a reply to our last letter, but [as we say in the letter] it can now only be academic as far as making the conference a joint effort is concerned.

In that last letter, we comment on some of the shortcomings of the policies put forward by 'Socialist Challenge' in its broadsheet for the conference. Since then we have been able to get a copy of their resolution for the confer-

ence, which does cover some of the points missed by the broadsheet, especially racism, unemployment, and trade union democracy.

In our view, this shows all the more that the unwillingness of 'Socialist Challenge' to have 'Workers Action' co-sponsor the conference was nothing to do with a sudden pressing concern for "a principled basis", but rather stemmed from a narrow organisational exclusiveness which mixes very badly with 'Socialist Challenge's' preaching of 'non-sectarianism' and revolutionary unity.

Movement, a group mainly led by the Workers Socialist League]...

JOHN BLOXAM

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE
1st June

Dear comrade Bloxam,

Thank you for your letter of 24th April. We must apologise for the delay in replying.

We are in favour of holding the biggest possible working conference, and we are therefore in principle in favour of any paper sponsoring the conference on the basis of broad agreement with the perspective outlined in the initial conference appeal.

However, a principled basis of the conference cannot be mere opposition to other currents in the workers' movement. It must have a serious programme base and strategy. *Socialist Challenge* called the conference as part of our fight for a broad-based and democratically organised left wing committed to class struggle politics.

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE
TRADE UNION CONFERENCE
Saturday July 1st, 10.30am.
Digbeth Halls Birmingham

Your letter states that there are differences on the question of programme. Perhaps you could explain what these differences are and whether you consider them to be within or outside the general framework mapped out in the conference broadsheet. We would then be in a much better position to consider the whole question of *Workers' Action* sponsoring the conference...

JONATHAN SILBERMAN

WORKERS' ACTION
23rd June

Dear comrade Silberman,

Thank you for your letter of 1st June. We were sorry that your reply to our letter proposing *Workers' Action* sponsorship of the *Socialist Challenge* Trade Union Conference took six weeks, and was itself largely asking for more information, and this

made the whole question of our sponsorship and helping to build the Conference largely academic, on the time factor alone.

We were also sorry that your reply didn't mention your reaction to our other proposal to help sponsor it. One of the main problems that it's not clear what your attitude is.

In the original Conference broadsheet... and also in various contributions that have appeared in *Socialist Challenge* since then, you did appear to be arguing for a Conference that was both as wide a forum as possible "for militants to discuss their political response", and one that was not just the backyard of a particular organisation.

This seemed to be confirmed by the fact that the policies mentioned in the broadsheet were not stated as being the particular basis of the Conference, and that sponsorship was being sought from *Socialist Voice* and *Big Flame* on the basis of "broad agreement with the perspective outlined".

Indeed, it couldn't have been otherwise than broad, because *Big Flame*, for example, only relate critically and certainly not exclusively to the *Socialist Teachers' Alliance*. Also, *Socialist Voice* and *Big Flame* are, if anything, at opposite ends of the spectrum of how far left groups relate to trade union work. *Big Flame*, to our knowledge, does not even support the call for a "new Minority Movement".

Recently, your approach appears much narrower. In your letter to us you say that the Conference "must have a serious programmatic basis and strategy". Your own, presumably, because you now talk of the Conference being composed of "*Socialist Challenge* supporters" (SC, 16th June). Of course, you have every right to call a meeting of your own trade union supporters, but you are committing the same mistake as the SWP — which you have rightly criticised — if you do that under the banner of it being a much broader and more open body ("a forum where militants can exchange experiences").

You ask about our attitude to the "general framework mapped out in the conference broadsheet"... Apart from your assessment of particular groupings (e.g. the *Socialist Teachers Alliance*) and the fact that your criticism of 'front' organisations often appears as an objection to the political domination of rank and file groupings by the ideas of a revolutionary organisation, we agree with the other points you put forward...

However, what is not in the broadsheet is of as much significance to us as what is. There is no mention of the policies to fight unemployment, or policies in relation to nationalisation and workers' control. Also, simply "the repeal of all immigration laws and an end to all controls" is not an adequate basis to fight racism. Although it's mentioned in a subsequent *Socialist Challenge*, does the lack of mention in the broadsheet of a programme of trade union democracy mean that that is outside the "general framework mapped out in the conference broadsheet"?

We would argue that "a serious programmatic base and strategy" would deal with these points, and others as well. For our part, we will come to the Conference and argue this...

JOHN BLOXAM

The IMG: centrists or revolutionaries?

Dear Comrades,

I was gratified by the comradely tone of your reply to my letter in the 20th May issue of *Workers Action* concerning the attitude of your paper to the International Marxist Group. However your comments did not deal with the really important questions which were raised and which determines the IMG's relations with your paper.

Firstly you state clearly that the IMG has 'revolutionary intentions'. This however is irrelevant as to the objective political character of our organisation. There is no doubt that in 1933 99.9% of the German Communist Party subjectively wanted to overthrow German capitalism. Earlier in the 1920s even Stalin himself had subjectively been a revolutionary — Trotsky states that if at that time Stalin could have foreseen the role he would later play he would have committed suicide. But these subjective intentions did not in the slightest alter the fact that the objective role of Stalin from 1923 onwards, and of the German Communist Party, was counter-revo-

lutionary. What is decisive is not the subjective intentions of its members but the objective class character of an organisation.

The second question which you are not clear on is your statement that "According to his (Comrade Ross's) scheme of things, if we don't consider the IMG leadership to have definitively deserted the revolutionary cause... then we are obliged to say that there is only this or that difference 'within the framework of revolutionary Marxism'. The reality which he tries to define out of existence is that the IMG makes repeated and systematic errors..." Unfortunately however you avoid here the real question. The IMG does not at all hold that any errors made by anyone are merely 'this or that difference'. The question is whether a series of 'systematic errors' exist within or outside the framework of a fundamentally revolutionary position or not. For example Rosa Luxemburg made systematic errors on the question of the party, nationalism, and imperialism. These were related by the particular pressures

created on her by her experiences of the German and Polish Social Democratic Parties. But Rosa Luxemburg, despite her systematic errors, remained not merely a current within revolutionary Marxism but was one of the very greatest working class leaders.

Similarly, to take an example of the stage of development that exists today, we consider the errors of *Workers Action* to be quite systematic. But we consider that these errors exist within a fundamental framework of the defence of the interests of the working class — whereas for example with the *Militant* current their 'systematic errors' are in a framework of general positions which have abandoned the defence of the fundamental interests of the working class. We therefore consider *Workers Action* to be a revolutionary paper but do not at all have that view of *Militant*.

Finally we have to not the real significance of these questions. Perhaps I can draw your attention to an article by Martin Thomas in the May issue of *International Communist*. Although this is a publication of the ICL, and not your paper, nevertheless I think it shows the same type of errors as appear in *Workers Action*. Cde Thomas says that in relation to his own views and those of the IMG "the word 'centrist' is being used in two senses." He urges "We could argue about which of us is using words more correctly. It will be more useful if we put the word to one side and discuss the substance of the matter."

But unfortunately the substance of the matter of whether an organisation is centrist or revolutionary is not words but classes. The two words are different because they express different class interests. Is the IMG an organisation which in its fundamental character defends the interests

of the working class even though, in *Workers Action's* opinion, it takes, as with other trends which have existed within revolutionary Marxism, positions on some questions which are not those of the working class? In that case, even if its errors are systematic, the IMG is a revolutionary organisation.

Or is the IMG an organisation which, on the most fundamental questions, vacillates between the classes even though on some issues it defends the interests of the working class? In that case the IMG is fundamentally a petty-bourgeois centrist organisation.

No amount of statements that 'it is not that simple', 'it is a matter of words' etc can avoid this basic class question. *Workers Action* does not, any more than the IMG, believe that there can be 'non-class', 'above class', 'multi-class' political characters of organisations.

REPLY

We have never, as Comrade Ross knows, gone in for screaming about 'Pabloite betrayers'. "Our view has always been", as we said in WA 102, "that the membership and the leadership of the IMG are comrades with whom we have differences, and not some sort of cynical petty bourgeois fakers using revolutionary phrases merely for show".

Yes: In general the IMG is clearly on the side of the working class. But the record of the IMG (and its predecessors, and its international co-thinkers) both recently and over the last 30 years shows political instability, confusion, susceptibility to non-proletarian and anti-revolutionary influences — to a degree which in crucial crises can completely negate their revolutionary intentions.

That's not a "non-class" assessment of the IMG — but it's a bit more complex than comrade Ross's schematic alternatives.

Our arguments against that schematism clearly do not impress comrade Ross: perhaps some references to Trotsky's writings on the histor-

No matter how much it may not appear a simple question at first sight nevertheless no Marxist can avoid the question of what is the fundamental class character of an organisation. Not words but an explanation of what class interests *Workers Action* holds that the IMG fundamentally defends is what is at stake in the discussion of your view of whether our organisation is revolutionary or centrist. Evidently your answer to this basic question must determine the fundamental attitude of *Workers Action* to the IMG. Without such a clear position all that can exist is collections of tactics which have no fundamental grounding in principle.

I hope therefore that *Workers Action* will take the occasion of this exchange of letters to further clarify its views on the IMG.

JOHN ROSS

ical example he cites will make a greater impression.

Trotsky's view in the early 1930s was that "The Communist Party is a proletarian, anti-bourgeois party, even if erroneously led. The Social Democracy, though composed of workers, is entirely a bourgeois party..." And at that time he assessed the Communist Party as centrist, writing some passages which comrade Ross would do well to study on the complex and varied character of centrism.

Far from considering the party leadership's intentions irrelevant, Trotsky made them key to his assessment: "... the Social Democratic leaders represent the agencies of the class enemy within the proletariat. The Communist leaders, though confused, poor, and incapable, are revolutionaries or semi-revolutionaries that have been led from the right track..."

But it seems to us that we have grappled with the IMG's schemas long enough. Can we not now get down to discussing the actual political issues at dispute between us and the IMG?

'WOMEN & IRELAND' statement

... WE URGE all women to attend the march on July 9th [organised by the Prisoners' Aid Committee, to support the Irish Republican prisoners' fight for political status] as the issue of Irish prisoners is one which all British women should be concerned.

... There are over 24 women (in Armagh) and 300 men (in Long Kesh and Crumlin Road) on protest for political status...

Women prisoners on protest are kept in their cells over 23 hours a day. At present women in British prisons are allowed to wear their own clothes, but there have been moves to institute a uniform, which will mean that women too will be forced to go "on the blanket".

The only reading material women have is the bible. They have no fresh

air or exercise. Mail in and out is often tampered with and often 'lost'. Many women are ill, but receive inadequate and inappropriate medical treatment. Pregnant women receive no special diet or health care. In fact one 18 year old woman who was five months pregnant at the time was forced to take hot baths regularly...

The liberation of Irish women cannot be separated from the struggle of the Irish people as a whole for national liberation. The oppression of Irish women takes on specific and particularly acute forms because of the imperialist domination in Ireland...

Solidarity with the liberation of Irish women requires solidarity with them in the struggle against British imperialism. British women have a special responsibility to make their solidarity an active one.

WOMEN AND IRELAND group,
c/o 42 Earlham St, London WC1.

JULIA

When Vanessa Redgrave went up to receive her Oscar for her part in the film *JULIA*, she didn't just mutter her thanks in the usual way. Relating her own activities to those of the character she had portrayed in the film, she announced her dedication to fight against fascism.

If *Julia* a film against fascism, or merely one that exploits that theme as the subject of its story?

Julia is in fact a political film in the best sense. It manages this without pedantic moralising, and without casting aside all suspense and excitement for the 'higher principle' of its message.

It can do this because the conclusions flow from the story. No mouthpiece is needed to graft ideas onto the plot. And yet the horror of Nazism is economically portrayed, with the film steering clear of excessive violence or sentimentality.

The film follows the reactions of two women in pre-war Europe. Lillian (Jane Fonda) and Julia (Vanessa Redgrave) were childhood friends and through flashbacks we see the developing deep affection they have for each other.

Lily is perturbed by what she sees and senses but does not comprehend. Meanwhile Julia joins the workers in their struggle against the Nazi thugs and the Austrian fascist Dolfuss in Vienna. She goes on to become part of the underground resistance. And then Lily, too becomes involved.

Vanessa Redgrave productions — Inspiring fiction, romanticised reality

The film centres on the relationship of the two women: the one, politically committed and part of a movement, the other, still to the end struggling to understand it all.

But it also shows the underground at work at a time when the 'democracies' were horse-trading with Hitler, indicating the courage and self-sacrifice of the unnamed thousands who carried on the fight.

Julia is an inspiring film, which hopefully will be seen and understood by thousands.

RACHEL WOLSTENHOLME

THE PALESTINIAN

"The Palestinian", a two and a half hour documentary on the Palestinians in Southern Lebanon with Vanessa Redgrave as narrator is being shown around the country by the Workers Revolutionary Party.

It includes film on last year's war in the Lebanon, and on the devastation of Tel-al Zaatar after its siege by Lebanese Christian forces. Amongst the other more interesting sequences are those of a Palestinian hospital, where modern and makeshift equip-

ment exist side-by-side, and of the workshops in a refugee camp.

A lot of the film is concerned with the way in which young Palestinians are brought up to be guerillas. At an early age they combine 'formal' education with teaching about their 'homelands', 'the enemy', etc. and are given training in military methods and use of guns. Interviewed by Vanessa Redgrave, one young girl who could not have been ten years old said the enemy is 'The Zionists, not the Jews. The Zionists drove us out'.

This film is most notable for its totally romanticized view of the conflict in the Middle East. The uncritical treatment given to Yassir Arafat by Vanessa Redgrave, and the lack of any mention of the Syrians, are part of this. This romanticisation is most apparent in the glorification of the necessary but messy business of guerilla war. For instance, the closing shots show our heroine Ms Redgrave taking part in a Palestinian 'war-dance', followed by a very young Palestinian loading a rifle and posing with it on bended knee.

Altogether, this film tells us much about Vanessa Redgrave and the WRP as it does about the Palestinians.

JEFF SLEE

RACISM, MOTTRAM'S OTHER RACKET



ANTI Nazi League supporters are picketing the Wimbledon tennis tournament for as long as National Front member Buster Mottram [left] stays in the competition.

On Thursday 15th June [above], 20 members of the ANL held a lunch time picket of the

Davis Cup tennis match in Bristol, where Mottram was also competing.

The Bristol ANL is now organising a local trade-union anti-fascist conference, in conjunction with the Trades Council, for July 15th.

C.W.

EVENTS

SATURDAY 1 JULY. Planning meeting for November Midlands conference on Ireland. 11am to 1pm, Lecture Room 5, Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Further details: Robin Wilson, 65 Woodville Road, Birmingham 14.

SUNDAY 9 JULY. Prisoners' Aid Committee demonstration: 2.30pm from Speakers' Corner.

SATURDAY 8 JULY. Anti-Nazi League conference, at the Porchester Hall, Queensway, London W2. Delegates' credentials £3 from ANL, 12 Little Newport St, London WC2.

FRIDAY-MONDAY 14-17 JULY. Conference of Socialist Economists 1978 on *The Crisis of Capitalism and working class strategies in the 1970s*. In Bradford. Booking details from Teddy Brett, School of Social Science, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9QN.

SATURDAY 15 JULY. Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory conference. 1pm, Essex Road Library, London. Tickets 75p from SCLV, Box 127, 182 Upper St, London N1.

TUESDAY 18 JULY. A.Sivanandan speaks on 'From Immigration Control to Repatriation', 6.30pm at the Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Road, London N1. The meeting will launch *Race & Class* pamphlet no.5: price 20p plus 10p postage.

PICKET GARNERS: Main pickets every day, noon to 3pm and 5.30 to 11 pm at 399 Oxford St, 243 Oxford St, 40-41 Haymarket, and 56 Whitcombe St. Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, room 84, 12-13 Henrietta St, WC2.

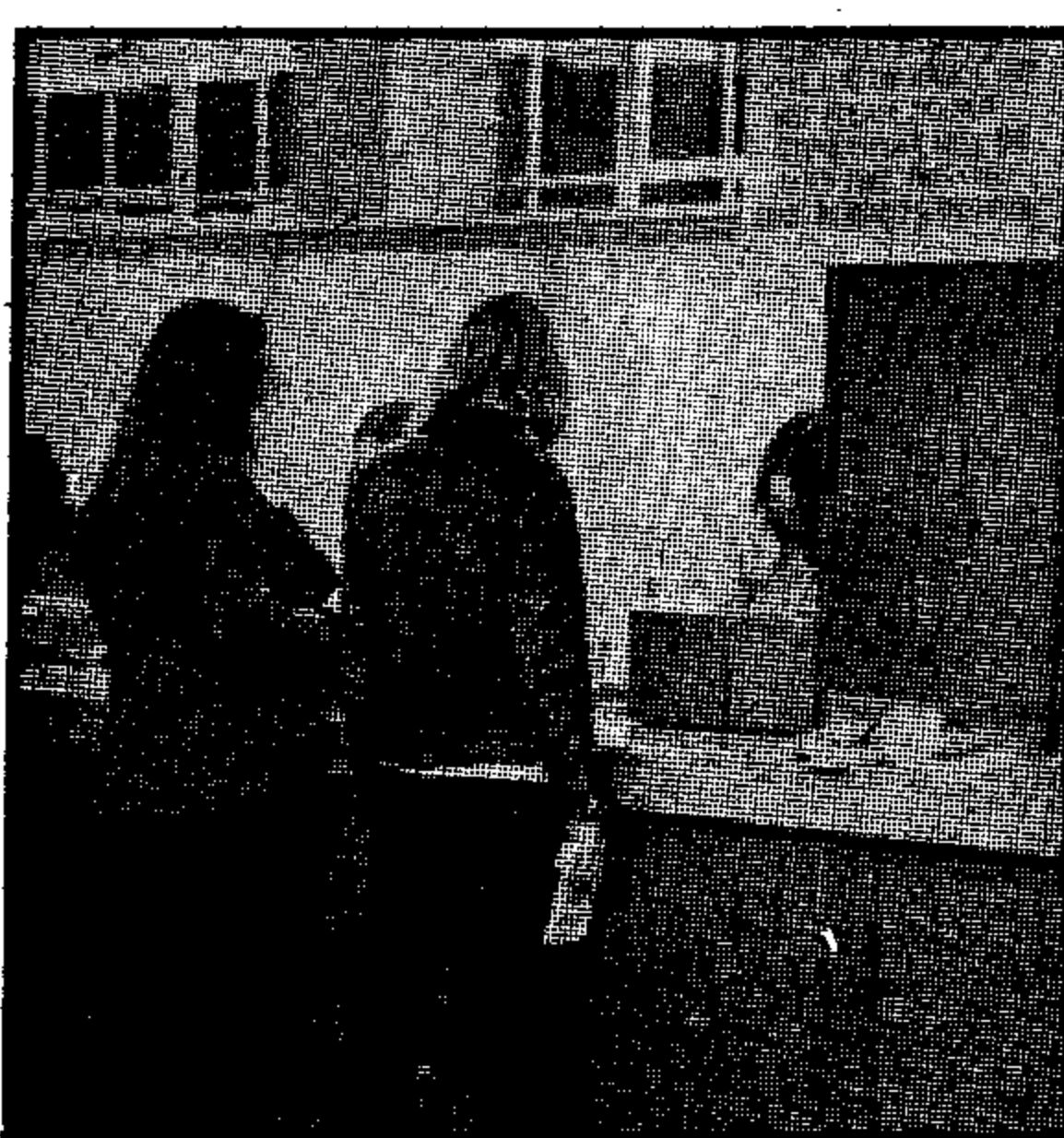
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MY ONLY BENEFIT - BECOMING BLOODY-MINDED

KEVIN MUNDY describes his encounters with the Department of Health and Social Security.

EARLY IN October 1977 I left a B.Ed. degree course at a London Polytechnic and became unemployed. Shortly afterwards I started a part time course at an F.E. college. I applied for supplementary benefit.

I was eligible, since I did less than the 21 hours' study spread over three full days stipulated



in the regulations; I was also available to sign on, and I was ready to leave the course and start work.

The Vice-Principal at our College has this regulation in black and white from the Department of Education and Science. The local Education Department and Careers Department also make no secret of this regulation and encourage students to apply.

But I have been refused four times now. Over the past nine months of argument, involving members of Parliament, the Ombudsman, and an Appeals Tribunal, I have come to the conclusion that my being refused benefit is a clear policy decision on the part of the DHSS.

After being refused benefit in October, I contacted my local MP,

George Park, Labour member for Coventry North East. He questioned the decision and on 28th November received a letter from the DHSS saying "as a part time student he is in substantially the same position as his contemporaries in full time education who are statutorily denied support".

George Park thought he had done enough and left it there. But I went on and requested an appeal.

This was refused on the grounds that 21 days had elapsed since first making the claim. I explained that I had been in contact with my MP, but to no avail.

Rubbish

I contacted the local legal rights service, who advised me to make a fresh claim. I did this and was again refused, so I appealed. I also asked my MP to contact the Ombudsman on my behalf, but the Ombudsman refused to help.

I eventually got my appeal on 11th April, and lost, on the grounds that "although the course is part-time, the Tribunal consider that he is not available to take up full time employment".

On 17th April I made a fresh claim which was again automatically refused. So on 8th May, I appealed against this decision. Seven days later I received a letter stating, "There is no right of appeal against the Tribunal's decision. Their decision is conclusive for all purposes".

I know this is rubbish, so I wrote back and on 25th May received another letter saying, "You are correct in thinking that you have a right of appeal against any decision made by the commission".

The whole procedure seems to be an elaborate one of buck-passing until you give in. I have

now written over 20 letters and made innumerable phone calls.

Every claimant must keep a file and get everything down in writing. The DHSS will deny anything said in phone calls. Don't even take the word of counter clerks: they should never refuse claims, but arrange appointments with managers.

Appeals

Beware the detailed forms you fill in for appeals. You think you are pleading your case but the

information will be twisted and used against you.

The trade union representatives on tribunals should be better briefed and harder in support of claimants. Coventry Trades Council has started giving its representatives some training; I think this is a good idea.

The only 'benefit' I've received is that I'm now bloody-minded and can bang the table with the best. I blush now to think about my first hesitant entrance into the DHSS with my naive belief in the system's justice and fair play.

FUND DRIVE for workers' ACTION

Only £20 more for the fund this week, bringing the total to £1206.80. Two more local groups have notified us about the targets they have set themselves to collect by Christmas: East London, £160, Central London £120.

The best way for supporters to help us is still to take out a regular bankers' standing order. If you can do that, contact your local WA supporters' group or write to 'Fund', Box 1960, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

workers' ACTION supporters' groups

exist in most major towns. For more information, or to subscribe to Workers' Action, complete this form and send to the address below:

NAME

ADDRESS

I want more information

I want to subscribe for 25 issues/50 issues.

Subscription rates: Britain and Ireland, 25 issues £4, 50 issues £7.50. Rest of the world: Surface mail, 25 issues £4.50, 50 issues £8.50; Air mail, 25 issues £6, 50 issues £11. Cheques etc payable to 'Workers Action'.

SEND TO WA, Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1.

WORKERS IN ACTION

ALL OUT OF STEP BUT DEREK



LEYLAND BOSSES and the Works Committee at Longbridge are trying to use a recent dispute there as an excuse to clamp down on wild-cat strikes.

Two weeks ago the engine testers struck in CAB 1. They went out because they were not getting 'mobility payments' due to them under their agreement. They were forced back to work within a few days — and then the bosses withdrew recognition from the two AUEW stewards concerned.

On the day shift on Monday 26th, the Works Committee called two mass meetings for different parts of the plant — not to mobilise against the bosses' attack on shop steward organisation, but to preach against militant strikes. Works Committee speakers called on the meetings to approve a resolution which, they said, had been passed by a Longbridge stewards' meeting on Friday 23rd.

The strange thing was that, according to stewards who were at Friday's meeting, no resolution was passed there! No resolution has been put out in writing at Longbridge, so we had to go by what the Works Committee speakers said. And the two speakers said quite different things!

At one meeting, Jack Adams merely asked workers to inform the Works Committee if we walk out, and to put the issues at least formally into procedure. The proposal, he said, was not to ban 'downers' (strikes where you walk out immediately, without giving notice) but just to improve communications.

Naturally, the 'resolution' passed without opposition.

TUNE

At the other meeting, there was a different tune from Derek Robinson. The message was: make British Leyland profitable, stop 'downers'.

There should be no more strikes without the Works Committee being consulted (and, Robinson implied, approving) and procedure being exhausted. The procedure, under which disputes go to the 'unit committees' (lowest tier of the 'participation' structure), is supposed to last 21 days and is sometimes spun out longer by management.

There were shouts from the floor of the meeting: 'What if someone gets killed on the job? What if someone is victimised?', but Robinson ignored them. About the engine testers' stewards, he said: 'Some of us might think it would be a good thing if they were kicked out as stewards'.

Trade unionism was under attack in Leyland, Robinson said — but he blamed it first on the rank and file, and then on the 'extremists' of right and left. Everyone is out of step except Derek! First he criticised Longbridge workers for not giving enough sup-

port to the Works Committee's sudden, unprepared strike call last August. Then he attacked the Workers' Action Longbridge bulletin, trying to make an amalgam of 'the Trots' and Ron Hill as enemies of 'responsible trade unionism'.

No questions or other speeches were allowed at the meeting. With a lot of workers angry about the lay-offs they suffered during the testers' dispute, Robinson's 'resolution' got through, though with a quarter of the meeting voting against.

There was another twist in the affair: Adams and Robinson each addressed workers, not from his own part of the works, but from the opposite part.

An hour's time, paid by the company, was allowed for the meetings. It's the first time for a year that Longbridge bosses have allowed such a thing. Obviously, the bosses are keen to use the testers' dispute as an excuse for a drive to get shop stewards to act as shop-floor policemen — and the Works Committee are happy to oblige, though they don't want to cause too much trouble for themselves.

The immediate effect probably won't be very much. A similar resolution against 'downers' was passed last year through shop meetings, and ignored within a week. But it's another warning that Leyland bosses are on the offensive.

JIM DENHAM

KEN LIVINGSTONE, the housing development spokesman of the Labour group on the Greater London Council, spoke to WORKERS' ACTION on the eve of the GLC debate on the 'Bengali ghettos' plan. The plan was dropped by the Tories, but the attacks that already force many Bengalis into 'ghetto' areas like Spitalfields still go on.

The plan was sent out in a report on the Friday evening before the Bank Holiday, so that the Tory housing committee chairman was able to sign it and get it through Council channels before we even had a chance to see it.

It's wholly untrue that the Labour Party or I endorsed the policy.

Rather than discuss the plan through the normal sort of procedure that would have dragged out discussion on it until 11th July, we put down a motion against it for the coun-

cil meeting today [20th] to clear it out of the way.

We wanted to go out and discuss it in the labour movement and the Bengali community... It was very much a bureaucratic response to the situation. The [Council] officers claimed it was what the Bengalis had asked for.

What is depressing is that the Bengalis I've spoken to have condemned the plan, but are still looking to be rehoused in the Spitalfields area, rather than demanding an equal share of housing, an equal share of new properties and properties in the suburbs.

This is because they're more subject to attack from the fascists and racials and because they feel some need for security, even though they have to live in areas with high unemployment and foul housing conditions. I think they're wrong and should fight for their share of decent facilities across the whole of London.

In demanding police protection to stop attack there is a real danger of seeming to support calls for more 'law and order'. The real problem young Bengalis find is that getting 'law and order' does not mean some benign old bobby who's going to turn the fascists away, but they're going to get the Special Patrol Group coming in, who have a fairly large number of

fascists among their own members.

Their first role won't be to defend them from the National Front, it will be to intimidate the Bengalis and do the sort of job that they've done on West Indian youth in Brixton and Lewisham.

What I want to see is the type of thing that happened at the NF riot in Spitalfields, where blacks and whites moved in to prevent them. What is wanted is the whole community to defend itself against the National Front.

Once you sort out who's got an interest in fighting the Front, it's everyone who isn't white, the Irish, particularly the Catholics, gays — at one time or another a majority of the community are the targets of racist and fascist thug violence.

I'm not surprised that the Labour Party ignored the part of the 1976 conference resolution from Norwood that called for support for black self defence. It's really up to local trade unions and Labour Parties to try and organise that sort of thing.

It hasn't been well done since the St Pancras rent riots in 1961, where a system was worked out so that when the police turned up to make an eviction, rockets were sent off and workers came off building sites from all London. We need to recapture that sort of spirit.

Photo: Minda



UNITE AGAINST NAZIS!

continued from page 1

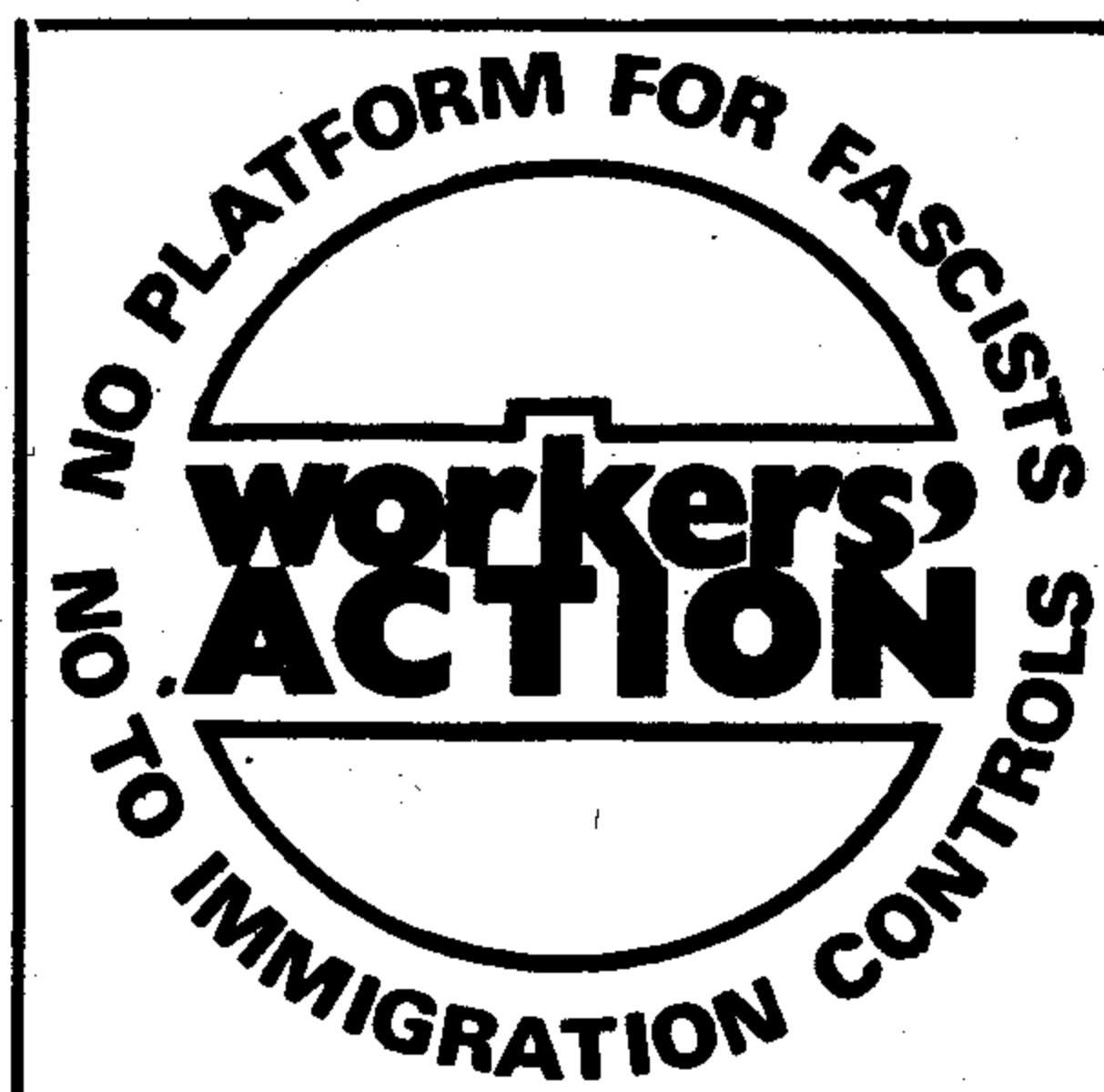
The Bengali Youth Movement Against Racism, unlike the 'wise' community elders, are relying only on their own self-defence. Patrick Kodikara of the Hackney Council for Racial Equality has also raised the slogan of self-defence.

The Anti-Nazi League organised a march and concert in East London on Saturday 24th. Large groups of fascists jeered and harassed the march all the way,

without meeting any response from ANL stewards — who did not even organise to stop fascists who entered the concert after the march.

Labour movement organisation to aid the self-defence of immigrant communities and protect labour and anti-fascist events is becoming more urgent every day. We cannot allow the fascists to murder and pillage with impunity.

We need organisation, discipline and unity in our mobilisations, to smash the Nazis off the streets.



'Workers Action' sticker: 'No Platform for Fascists; No to immigration controls'. Order from Merseyside Workers' Action supporters' group, c/o 11 Buchanan Rd, Wallasey, Merseyside. 10p per sheet; all proceeds to the Workers' Action fund drive.