

the Left in the 1980s

(Published from 1982 to 2004)

four texts on the Left in the 80s:

The Show

Wage Slavery - For No Change

Shed No Tears For Blunkett

One Local Chapter In The Spectacle Of Decomposition

The Show

*The following was distributed (**not** by me) at an event called "The Moving Left Show" in the early 80s and imitated the format of a leaflet advertising the event. It's not an analysis but a slap in the face.*

The

Show

Welcome to the most predictable event in years, organised by the pseudo-oppositional Left community.

See Benn and Napolitano speak with forked tongue!

Every so often you need to brighten up your sophisticated slavery in a crummy career with new ideas, and find sublimations for your desires which ensure a good future for *this* society!

Be merely thought-provoked by a whole bunch of lecturers, journalists, social workers, TV directors, actors, professional charity workers, politicians, even priests, and other errand-boys of power.

And that's all! - But in case you want the illusion of something more you can sleep through alternative cabaret, video, films, and a rock concert, not to mention other means of kidnapping our lives.

Grey saint Tony Benn will be spouting off about some means of perpetuating the buying and selling of forced work, the stabilisation of the commodity economy, saving international capital nationally, being explicitly reformist and anti-revolutionary, and giving the working class the chance to participate in their alienation through prliamentary cretinism. For which great project they will need a new police, now with added « potential for change ». In which regard, Napolitano will explain how his Italian Copmmunist Party directed police, armed with tanks, to crush the proletariat in Bologna in March 1977.

So - join the Communist Party - in chucking lies and bullets at the real social movement everywhere!

We wish you a pleasant evening afterwards. We suggest some drinks to give you that feeling of individuality within safe roles. And to suppress anxiety may we

recommend some old ideology routines and the ritual conflicts of arguing isms against isms. This way you can rest assured that nothing will change - least of all yourself.

On the way home the proletariat will be waiting for you with irony and disgust.

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Wage Slavery - For No Change

Samotnaf note, post 7/7/2005:

After the recent 7/7 bombing Ken Livingstone proved a cleverer politician than Tony Blair, who just came out with obvious hypocritical soundbites. Our Ken cried genuine tears as he denounced the attack on "working class" people, whether Christian, Jew, Muslim, agnostic or whatever. These tears came from his 'ordinary' roots which makes him less of an actor than the more bourgeois Blair. Lets look a little at some of his populist past.

Ken Livingstone achieved his lefty reputation as head of the GLC in the early 80s, becoming the *bête noir* of Thatcherites everywhere, with his cheap fares policy etc. But, like all politicians, he was - and is - an opportunist creep. In 1999 he retrospectively supported the Gulf War just as he was supporting the massacre of Serbs and Kosovans by Nato bombing. Though he'd 'opposed' the Gulf War at the time, he said he'd been wrong to oppose it: lest we forget, the Gulf War killed at least 4000 times as many mainly working class people than the horrific 7/7 terrorist attacks in London. In the year 2000 he loudly condemned the May Day rioters who wrecked

MacDonalds and defaced a statue of Winston Churchill, saying that Churchill, whose death in 1965 was celebrated by Welsh miners, was Britain's greatest Prime Minister (for more on this see "[You Make Plans - We Make History](#)"). This leaflet shows what the GLC was really about. It was produced by me and the Campaign for Real Life and distributed at the Ken Livingstone-run GLC festival in 1984, whose theme was "Work for a change".

WAGE SLAVERY - FOR NO CHANGE

In the swinging 60s everyone could have a job, and everyone hated their job. In the 70s the workers hardly worked and the rulers could hardly rule. That's why in the 80s jobs are rationed - to make us appreciate them more. As well as a way of getting rid of uncompetitive technology, the poverty and isolation of the dole has been the ruler's means of dividing, demoralising and intimidating the masses, who had begun to dangerously discover their power *against* the misery of work, of exploitation.

The 'English Disease' (suffered by capital, enjoyed by workers - the world over) - i.e. resistance to work (absenteeism, sabotage, and all forms of direct solidarity) is conveniently ignored by the ideologists of the Left. That's because the Left represents those wage labourers who still identify with their allotted role in the running of the World Market, who still see the means of survival imposed on them as 'dignified'. Fearful of the refusal of 'The Dignity of Labour', and even more terrified that increasing sections of the jobless are resisting *all* political representation (which many *visibly* did in the riots of '81), they can only patronise their would-be voters with the carrot of future forced labour for all (London Labour Briefing has even called for the defence of the notorious Youth Training Schemes against the government's cuts).

The Good Guys of the Left wish to inherit the world market and further rationalise alienation minus (some of) its Evil anomalies. For those who wish to be saved by the Good Guys, the enemy's apparent enemy *seems* like a friend. Those resigned

to false alternatives always have to *choose* sides to avoid *making* sides. All those who try to adapt to and reform the alien economy, like the Saatchi and Saatchi ads, just want to be accepted because of their promises of a better future, because of their 'good intentions' - a convenient mask over the brutal anomalies they perpetuate in their *present practice*. If the jobs the Left are creating *in the present* are anything to go by, our future in their hands will be as bleak as anything the Right could concoct. Like the big increase in the employment of fares inspectors on the tube. Or the massive boom in vacancies for riot cops in Effra Parade in Brixton. Or the mounting prospects for those seeking a job smashing and bricking up squats in various Labour-controlled boroughs. Or the rising possibilities for those whose ambition has always been to become a concerned socialist bailiff, evicting council tenants who don't pay their rent, whilst crying tears of compassion for their plight.

"But what about all the *good* the GLC is doing?", whines the liberal. "Like positive discrimination for minority groups?" "Positive Discrimination" - say, in housing - in the present conditions of artificially enforced scarcity, can only become a way of discriminating against one section of the proletariat and helping another section. It merely inverts the divide and rule operated by the more traditional forms of class power. Why should heterosexual proletarians remain in the housing queue, whilst gays can jump the queue? The GLC obviously doesn't advocate the direct seizure and transformation of territory, of offices, of banks, of university buildings, of hotels, of palaces, etc. as a method of dealing with the false scarcity of housing - because they know that County Hall might be amongst the first to be taken over. Instead they perpetuate the divisions - and give material reasons for 'straight' proletarians to resent gay proletarians, just as gays have good reasons to resent 'straights' in this society. This 'balancing out', under capitalism, shows just what the *ideology* of equality means: equality of resentment, equality of humiliation, equality of separation. This resentment, intensified by the Left's moral blaming attitude, is repeated in the insulting ads for the GLC's anti-racism year: "1 million Londoners are getting a raw deal because the other 6 million let it happen." This liberal garbage takes the blame for racism away from the Nation, its frontiers and

its institutions - and puts it simplistically onto *everyone*, regardless of their material position and their choices. In the riots of '81 (which Ken Livingstone described as "disastrous for the community locally") black and white, gay and 'straight' proletarians discovered true community by attacking directly the "raw deal" they get from this world. Since then, what the Tory's social security race checks and Nationality Acts can't do to prevent such *real* equality from recurring, the Left's patronising 'positive discrimination' will make up for.

Or take the Great Fares Fluctuation Saga - when the GLC tried to encourage the efficient and rapid mobility of wage-slaves and consumer-slaves through the lonely crowds of London's Public Transport. Even within its own narrow terms, one would have thought that Leftists would've at least threatened mass law-breaking in response to this flagrant insult to 'democracy' - even in its bourgeois forms, an insult which led to 80 extra deaths and innumerable extra fumes and ulcers on the roads these last 2 years. But no! - on the day London's fares became the most expensive in the world, Ken Livingdeath dutifully paid his full fare before the TV cameras and said that the way to change this flouting of bourgeois democracy was through...bourgeois democracy! Frightened that the breaking of the Tory law might encourage the rejection of their *own* management of the law, they even introduced a big increase in fares inspectors to deal with both those who refused the law-lords' fare prices, and those who refused to pay altogether. Dave Wetzel, the GLC Transport bureaucrat who in April '82 had been prepared to go to prison, 6 months later decided that *proletarians* should be prepared to go to prison for *him*. And yet Leftists still claim that the GLC is at least a buffer against the harsh force of raw capitalism. With buffers like this we can only expect an endless increase in repeats of the Moorgate disaster!

Far from acting as a buffer, Left-wing capital is merely the soft face of Right-wing capital. That's why the Left's calls for 'Community Policing' have been taken up as Neighbourhood Watch schemes by the Right: either way, it means each person policing the rest in obedience to the laws of the commodity. Since community doesn't exist outside of struggle against this world, Community Policing can only

mean policing the 'community' bound together by a 'respectable' submission to property laws. That's why K.L.'s buddy, Ted Knight, sends the riot cops against squatters. And that's also why Ken Livingstone evicted squatters as Chairman of Camden's Housing Committee.

"The riots will all happen again. I think you will only get real change in Britain when you link the extra-Parliamentary activities of all the groups and their manifestations with a constructive response within Parliament. If you actually think back to what happened in Paris in '68, all that happened completely by-passed the French Assembly and therefore it all peaked out quickly."
- Ken Livingstone, The Face, May 1984.

Doubtless K.L. identifies with those involved in May '68 who *did* push the wildcat General Strike and Occupations Movement into a parliamentary direction - the French Stalinists in the Communist Party. With the Right, the CP managed to seize the initiative and to lie, manipulate and herd the movement back into the estranged isolation of the TV and the ballot box (two capitalist cons that Ken Livingstone is fond of using): these specialists were obviously helped in this by the fact that in May '68 the vast majority of proletarians had still only developed pretty limited initiatives, perspectives and mistakes of their own, and that, despite having launched a movement in which the Left, as usual, were left behind, they largely failed to assert any *decisive* opposition to the Right. This is a mistake the rioters of '81 started to go beyond. For instance, when the Militant Tendency's Claire Coyle spoke of the riots as "understandable but inexcusable" she was howled down. She was further silenced by the repeated chorus, "Bigger cages, longer chains!". Nevertheless, many of those who *have* given the Leftists the boot have got the boot of the State back in their faces - as in Effra Parade in Brixton during March this year, when Ted Knight called out the riot cops, equipped with water cannon, to evict squatters. Or in Bologna in Italy, K.L.'s favourite municipality, which he regards as a centre of "dynamism" (The Face, May '84), where in 1977 the Italian CP dynamically called out the tanks and the cops to crush the massive autonomous movement against work, sacrifice, authority and mediation. Those who, "on behalf of others", seek to use the institutions capital

presents as being the basis of power will inevitably use such forms to crush those who seek to destroy this power.

"If they gave up some of their pen-pushing and bureaucracy, they could get officers back on the streets dealing with crime - including the sale of drugs." - KL, reported in the News of the World, July '81, during the riots.

"Black kids support what I said about the police, and when I walk down the Kilburn High Road, people shake my hand." - K.L. in 'Not...', August '81.

"I feel a degree of regret that Marshall did not push on and abolish the GLC because I think it would have been a major saving and would have released massive resources which could have been put to far more productive use." - KL, 11/3/79.

"If you are a member of the public trying to get something done, trying to defend one of your rights, this [the GLC] can be a very powerful body to fight against, but in terms of using it positively, it is a very difficult and reluctant machine to use." KI, The Face, May 1984.

"The fact that you have skills at...manipulation in politics...does not alter your class."- K.L., The Face, May '84.

Livingstone's nice guy mediocrity, with its self-consciously reasonable tones and gestures, is a superficial *style* of 'honesty' , hiding the inevitable hypocrisy of his bureaucratic position, a position that makes irrelevant all his guilty proclamations of working class credibility. Nevertheless, he serves as a model, for those proletarians who don't want to face and confront their misery, of polite dialogue with the rulers and the Old World, at a time when large numbers of proletarians are refusing such respectful 'criticism' by angrily taking the streets. K.L. - and all those who identify with his 'ordinariness' - can only speak the contradictory language of the rulers, the language of manipulation and of commodity calculations, the language of 2-faced bullshitters, who say and do one thing one moment and say and do the opposite the next.

"At the moment people's confidence has been so damaged by Thatcher that the first thing we must do is give them their confidence back and show them tht you can actually improve things, that things can get better...I think things will get better in the 1990s; you might get a Labour government in the late Eighties. But the next 3 or 4 years: really grim, really bad...I enjoy life immensely...It is so fantastic. There cannot be another job except Prime MInister that can be as rewarding as this one. I have just loved it..." - KL, The Face, May '84

Those for whom life in the present is "really grim" can only get their confidence back by attacking *all* those who immensely enjoy their pesent niche within this society, whether their name is Thatcher, MacGregor, Prince Charles or Ken Livingstone. Thatcher has stated that she had her worst 10 nights of sleep during the riots of July 1981: she won't be the only one with insomnia when proletarians start to wreck the *Left-wing of capital* - and all its would-be Prime Mini-stars, and not just its Right-wing.

The text was followed by a poorly-produced photo of Ken Livingstone shaking the hand of the Queen at the opening ceremony of the Thame Barrier, where he got the Queen to agree to see his mum. A speech bubble is coming out of the Queen's mouth - **"Thank you for helping to protect the Palace from the Thames flooding, and keeping an eye on the IRA, but how are you getting on with the proles?"** KL replies, **"I'm doing the best I can, ma'am, but I'm afraid they're pretty uncontrollable."** Below that there's a cutting from The Face in which KL says, *"Well, although I'm an agnostic my sort of politics is very similar to other people's idea of religion. I am not one of those people, though , that believes in scientific Marxism. I'm a left-winger not because it can be proved correct. I just think there are different ways of running society , and think that socialism is a fairer and better way. Of course, it requires an act of faith. There are too many bits and pieces of thought in me to find a convenient label, but I suppose, I'm an anarcho-syndicalist."* This was followed by a newspaper cutting from the Evening Standard, April 12 1984: **I'm willing to break the law - Livingstone** Mr Livingstone, speaking on LBC, said the Government's actions reminded him of the slogan often seen scrawled about London - "if voting changed anything they would abolish it." *"The Government has done exactly that,"* he said.

This leaflet was handed out at a very crowded festival on the South Bank in and around County Hall. It was accompanied by a tape-recorded parody of a record of Ken Livingstone given out free with every copy of Time Out during the week before the GLC event. On the day we went along to a trade union stall which was giving out free ultra-nationalist literature - with a Union Jack on its cover, found the stall abandoned and took all the crap literature out and dumped it into the Thames.

Shed No Tears For Blunkett

The following was written in December 2004 by Mark Barnsley, but much of it refers to Blunkett's time as leader of Sheffield Council in the 80s, so I've put it here:

SHED NO TEARS FOR BLUNKETT

When David Blunkett boasted, characteristically, that he would make his predecessor as home secretary, Jack Straw, "look like a woolly liberal", I doubt there were too many people who believed this was possible. Even Blunkett may not have been able to make Mad Jack', as he was known in the prison system, look like a liberal, but he is certainly the most right-wing home secretary this country has had in living memory, and he revelled in the fact. Straw may have been at least as Draconian as Michael Howard before him, but he didn't have 9-11, an event, which if one were needed, gave Blunkett's innate authoritarianism and xenophobia full-reign.

In the wake of Blunkett's overdue resignation a picture is being painted, with himself as the primary artist, of an honourable man brought low by love'. The career of this vain, arrogant, conceited individual was not brought to an end

because of Blunkett's private life, something he has done his utmost to deny the rest of us, but because he is a liar and corrupt, neither of which are new.

I first met David Blunkett in 1974, and later suffered under him when he was leader of Sheffield City Council, and neither his dishonesty, nor his corruption, nor his right-wing views are recently acquired. He's simply been better in the past at hiding them. First and foremost though, David Blunkett has been a ruthless careerist - no wonder, like Margaret Thatcher before him, he's blubbing now.

Thatcher was a great political ally to Blunkett in his Sheffield Council days, he could cover up the corruption and incompetence of his administration by blaming everything on central government: Northern Grit squaring up to Whitehall. Thatcher was of course despised in Sheffield, leaving the local Labour administration as secure as a one-party state, and they ran it accordingly. As Blunkett well knew, during this period, you could have put a red ribbon on a dog, and people would have voted for it^[1].

In the 1980's Sheffield City Council may have had a publicity machine worthy of Stalin's Russia, but any talk of socialism' was never more than empty rhetoric for Blunkett and his pals. Look beyond the publicity and their track record shows that.

Under Blunkett, more than half of the council's own 32,000 employees earned basic pay below TUC guidelines, and 10,000 of them were paid less than the Council of Europe decency threshold'. Women workers got a particularly bad deal, earning far less than their male colleagues, and getting fewer promotions. There was also evidence of racial discrimination, with only 1% of council employees being black, a quarter of what it should have been, and rumours of a colour bar' in the Town Hall's heavily subsidised restaurant, where no black person had ever been employed.

While lowly council workers got a raw deal there were plenty of jobs and high

salaries for the Labour Party faithful. Irrespective of their true politics, careerists from all over the country flocked to Sheffield and joined up. Sheffield didn't need freemasonry, we had the Labour Party. Usually the jobs doled out to the boys and girls were in social or youth work, Sheffield had more social-workers per head of population than any other place on the planet. In special cases though, a job would be invented, such as the creation of a highly-paid Peace Officer' role for one Blunkett crony.

Blunkett presided over a huge homeless problem in Sheffield, while massive numbers of council-owned properties lay empty for years, and sometimes for decades. Early in 1983 Peace City' was somewhat embarrassed to find that a group of young peaceniks had squatted one long-empty council-owned building and turned it into a peace centre'. In response, Blunkett's pal Roger Barton, then Chairman of the Nuclear Free Zones Committee', personally went round and cut off the electricity to the building. Blunkett however, faithfully promised the young pacifists that they would not be evicted, a promise he quickly broke.

Another embarrassment for the Blunkettgrad Nuclear Free Zone' was when a British Rail guard blew the whistle on the transportation of nuclear waste through the area, a fact the council had tried hard to keep quiet.

As homeless figures in the city continued to soar, other long-unused council-owned properties were occupied. The council's response was always swift and ruthless. Facing immediate eviction one group of squatters wrote to Blunkett personally to ask for a stay of eviction while they found somewhere else to live. With typical arrogance Blunkett replied, "It would seem to me that anarchy can hardly expect reasoned and structured responses within the system which is being attacked." After the eviction the building stayed empty for several more years.

Blunkett's administration also waged a long and bitter war against travellers, even evicting them in the middle of a TB epidemic. The treatment of Sheffield travellers

led to a perinatal mortality rate of nearly 50%.

Blunkett and his cohorts constantly railed in public about the corruption of Tory politicians in Whitehall, while Sheffield City Council junkets were legendary and almost every night the Town Hall hosted a lavish function or banquet for some group of councillors or another. Some friends of mine once went to visit Blunkett in his Town Hall office in 1983. Walking in unexpectedly they witnessed a huge feast laid out, this was Blunkett's elevenses.

A big part of maintaining the illusion necessary to running Blunkettgrad was the notion of squaring up to Thatcher', so from time to time various stands' were made, with Blunkett & co promising to stand firm' against the Tories on various issues. Things were made easier by the fact that to a very large extent the Council owned' the unions, the tenants associations, the peace groups, and just about every political front, tendency, and organisation operating in the city.

One Blunkett stand' was over rate-capping', when Sheffield and several other Labour council's refused to set a Tory rate'. How Blunkett and his pals puffed and panted about this one, before crumbling at the very first opportunity. The discovery of the Tory' rate demands already typed-up and hidden in Blunkett's office said a lot about his personal integrity. The inside word at the time was that Blunkett had been instructed to back down personally by Labour leader Neil Kinnock, who was then waging a war against Militant Tendency, particularly in Liverpool where they controlled the anti-rate capping council. Blunkett's promised reward was the advancement of his cherished political career. He was elected as MP for Brightside, one of the most solid Labour seats in the country, at the next General Election.

Another stand' was against bus-fare increases. The city's famously low fares had actually begun to increase a few years earlier, but in 1986 Thatcher's deregulation of public transport threatened to send them spiralling. After more hot-air Blunkett again capitulated, and as always he aimed to crush any

uncontrolled dissent ruthlessly. As a member of a group opposed to the fare increases I was sent to prison for putting up a poster advising passengers not to pay. I wasn't prosecuted by the police, I hadn't committed a criminal offence, but by the Labour council, for not having planning permission.

As home secretary Blunkett's abuses of human rights and civil liberties have been staggering. He has introduced internment without trial for suspected foreign terrorists, is introducing military camps for children, and barely a day goes by without him dreaming up another crackpot neo-fascist scheme to attack civil liberties, criminalize working-class communities, and put more and more people behind bars. Under Blunkett the British prison population has risen to more than 75,000. Held in appalling conditions, which Blunkett has consistently ignored, growing numbers of these prisoners are driven to suicide, slashing open their veins with slivers of glass or razor-blade, hanging themselves from heating pipes only inches above the floor, or choking on their own vomit through swallowing pills. Callously, Blunkett has refused to meet the mothers of some of the young women driven to these acts of desperation, while his only comment on prison suicides has been to quip that he was inclined to open a bottle of champagne after Harold Shipman killed himself.

Blunkett has long had a vicious tongue, and as his former cabinet colleagues have witnessed recently, he is not slow to use it. He once famously accused single mothers of deliberately getting pregnant to jump the council housing queue. There was no basis for this accusation whatsoever, but these were young working-class girls, who might need a helping hand, and perhaps a bit of advice on contraception. Not rich, already married, right-wingers who didn't need his sleazy favours (and who might also now be reconsidering the issue of birth-control.)

David Blunkett sought to hide his corruption by playing the 'my private life is my own' card he is trying to deny the rest of us. The man who has consistently assured us, in relation to ID cards, that if we have nothing to hide, we have

nothing to worry about' has come unstuck, and those familiar with his computer-like' mind are probably taking his recent bad memory with a pinch of salt.

Blunkett's assistance with passport and visa applications on behalf of his rich former mistress sits hypocritically with the hard-line stance he has taken with those fleeing war and torture abroad. This is the man who told Kosovan and Afghani refugees to "get back home".

And without wanting to twist the knife too much, his current fixation with acquiring a family, even if it's somebody else's, sits uneasily with his past history. The day after his election as an MP, Blunkett announced he was leaving his wife and children in Sheffield and moving in with his research assistant' in London. His marriage may, as he has recently said, been "a loveless relationship", but he had found it politically expedient to hide that fact for a long time, and he's now finding out that middle-class women don't disappear into the background quite so quickly or so conveniently.

Just like Thatcher before him, the only person David Blunkett is able to shed tears for is himself, snivelling that he doesn't feel sorry for himself and that he'll "try to have something of a Christmas", he sounds like Albert Steptoe. Whatever happens to Blunkett, and unfortunately we may not have seen the last of him², he is sure to have a better festive season than the families of the record 93 British prisoners who have killed themselves so far this year, those locked up without trial in prisons or detention centres, or the vast number of other victims of his reign as home secretary. Shed no tears for Blunkett, he can shed them himself.

Mark Barnsley, 16 December 2004

¹: Samotnaf note, 2005:

In fact, during the 80s in the Sheffield area, one miner told us that the only reason people voted for Blunkett was because they had sympathy for his guide-dog.

\2Samotnaf note, 2005:

The scumbag, predictably, is back in office - in charge of stealing the pensions of the working class. One of the better actions of the late 90s involved just a handful (no more than ten) pensioners blocking off the Humber Bridge (I think) for several hours in protest at the attacks on their pensions. Let's hope such actions multiply against the vicious Minister For Ripping Off Pensioners.

The following, written by Richard Parry (who wrote a book on **The Bonnot Gang**) was a short leaflet produced in 1982, critiquing a Trotskyist group (International Marxist Group/ Socialist League) who collectively "went to the factories" (in this case Cowley) to secretly agitate for their group's politics whilst pretending to be "ordinary workers" and not revealing their political group identity.

One Local Chapter In The Spectacle Of Decomposition

"The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of the revolutionary leadership" concludes the first lesson of Leon Trotsky's 'Transitional Program' (1938). A crisis which "can be resolved only by the Fourth International," in other words by Trotskyist parties coming to power over the entire expanse of the globe. Only thus shall mankind be saved.

Just over 40 years later, the International Marxist Group, arguably the British section of the FI. (disputed by other Trot groups) tried yet another attempt to "organise the ranks" in their quest to capture state power. They called this new policy the 'Turn to Industry'. Unable to actually recruit workers into their organisation, they decided to become workers themselves. By appearing as simple toilers they hoped to deceive workers into following the Party. Conforming to the old dictum "Build the Party! Build the Party!" they would attempt to capture positions of power in the trade unions: "Our work is not intended merely to establish a reputation for ourselves as good militants. We have a specific strategic project - carving out a place for ourselves in the mass organisations of the class and building the British section of the FI."

The 'Turn' resulted in about half the IMG membership getting jobs in key industries - car factories, transport, and communications - the actual locations as yet still (surprisingly) undiscovered by the press.

A year or so later, the IMG, having failed miserably to couple with co-vanguardists, the SWP followed Tariq Ali's lead and joined the Labour Party. The IMG was re-named as the more conservative-sounding 'Socialist League', while the weekly paper became 'Socialist Action' - dropping virtually all international coverage in order to focus almost exclusively on Labour Party affairs. With a wave of the Central Committee's magic wand, IMG cadres became no more than plain old 'Socialist Action Supporters' and members of the Labour Party. But they kept their codenames.

Meanwhile, a microcosm of mankind's historical crisis was being acted out at British Leyland (Cowley).

Having falsified their job application forms and been supplied with fake references by the Party, the successful worker-comrades could obviously not reveal their political allegiance without compromising their clandestine mission - only after 3 months could they announce their conversion to socialism and be seen selling 'Socialist Action'. Hence they played virtually no part when important struggles erupted, such as the washing-up time dispute - they couldn't even gain reputations as militants let alone 'good militants'. For their absurd tactics demanded that their political conspiracy and their past histories (they were almost all ex-students) be kept secret from the friends they had made on the job, other workmates, and the workers in general.

Yet they were bound to be found out sooner or later: if they remained totally underground then their socialism was rendered redundant, and if they owned up to their politics the conspiracy would be found out. It was an infantile plan doomed to failure from the very start.

When their cover was blown (they were shopped to management by a suspicious trade-union bureaucrat) and they were facing dismissal the comrades found themselves unable to summon up any support from the shop floor. Could workers be expected to put their own jobs on the line for people who had deceived them, mediators who sought power, middle-class "revolutionaries" who might find jobs elsewhere as polytechnic lecturers or whatever? The 'Cowley 13' were chucked out without a murmur of dissent from the workforce - giving management further encouragement to carry out victimisations.

The fiasco at Cowley has had one positive effect however - that is the further discrediting of bolshevism in the eyes of the mass of the population. There should be nothing secret about revolution.


But elsewhere, SL moles are continuing to burrow, to try and con the workers into being socialist, and at the same time perpetuating illusions in the efficacy of mediation, as represented by the trade-union and Labour Party bureaucracies: structures which are continually shown to be anti-working-class (the catalogue of their 'sell-outs', 'betrayals', and direct actions against workers is too long to be listed here. Yet, everyday, more and more latter-day bolsheviks rush to join forces with social-democracy in a last-ditch attempt to shore up the whole rotten edifice of leftism.

Desperate in their search for ways to capture state power, the left, from bolsheviks to social-democrats, are without doubt COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY.

Because Revolution, in its essence, is the destruction of power. It has nothing in common with the various forms of leftism which are merely different ways of organising an embryonic state power in spurious opposition to the existing form of power.

The Cowley affair is perhaps the most spectacular recent example of the decomposition of leftism; 'Red Steph'-the militant who sacrifices her self for the Party- plays the most miserable of all roles when she denies (on orders of a Central Committee of which she herself is a member!) that she is in the 'Socialist League' or that it even exists!

If, despite everything, such people persist in putting a guilty conscience and their bitterness in the service of power by creating the conditioning mechanisms that colonize their own lives, and if they choose power because power has already chosen them, then too bad.

COWLEY 13

 ON YER BIKES

The girl BL sacked in Marxist crackdown



THIS is "Red Steph," the punk rocker who turned union activist at a giant BL car plant.

She is one of 12 workers sacked at the Labour Machine Assembly plant at Cowley, Oxford.

Labour had been investigating a plot of Marxist takeover.

By MICHAEL WALLEN

When Michael Waller first met Red Steph, she was a punk rocker. She had long hair, wore a leather jacket and was a member of the Sex Pistols.

She had just moved to Cowley and was working at the Labour Machine Assembly plant.

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