

# SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

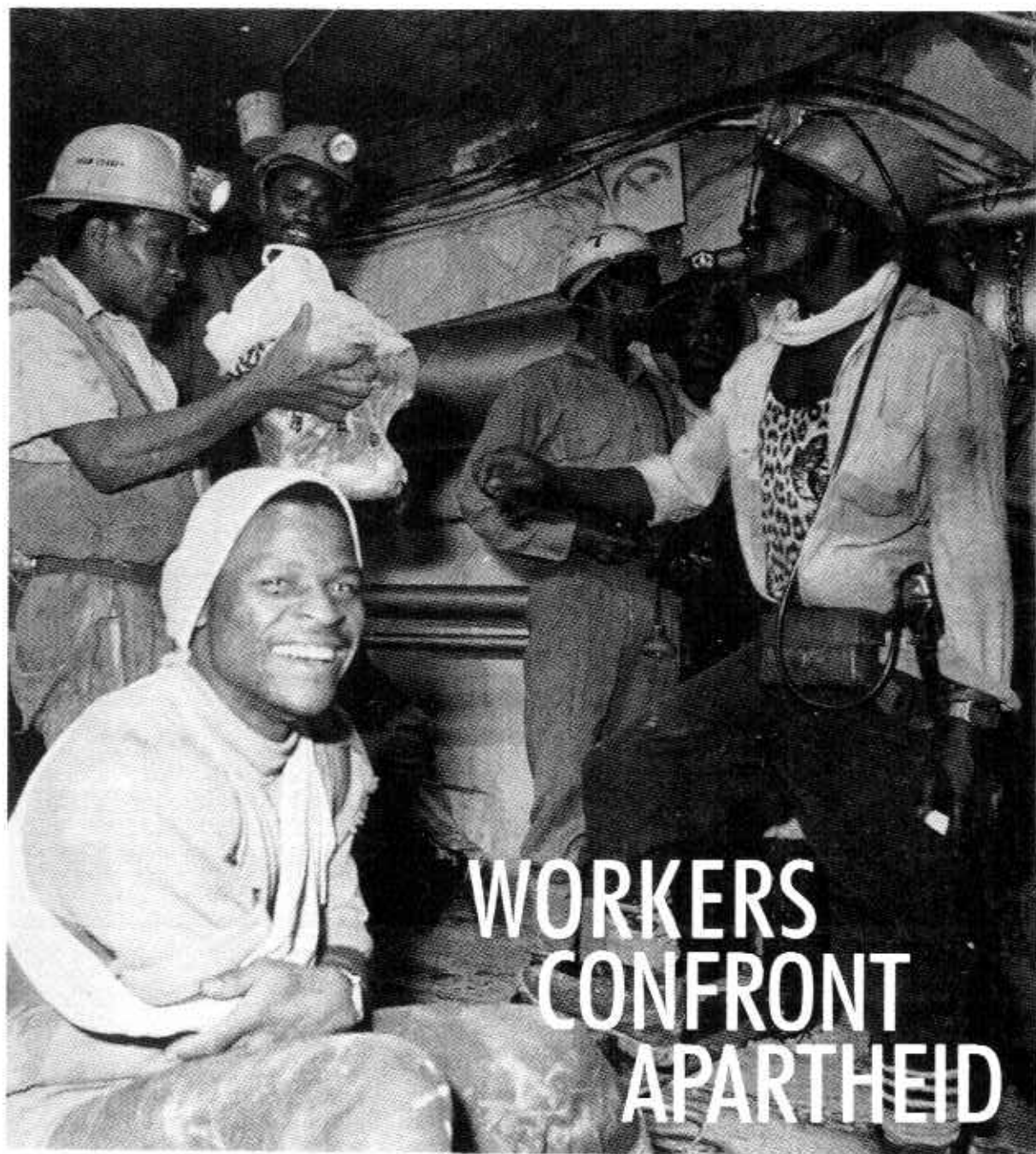
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RIVERAS MURALS



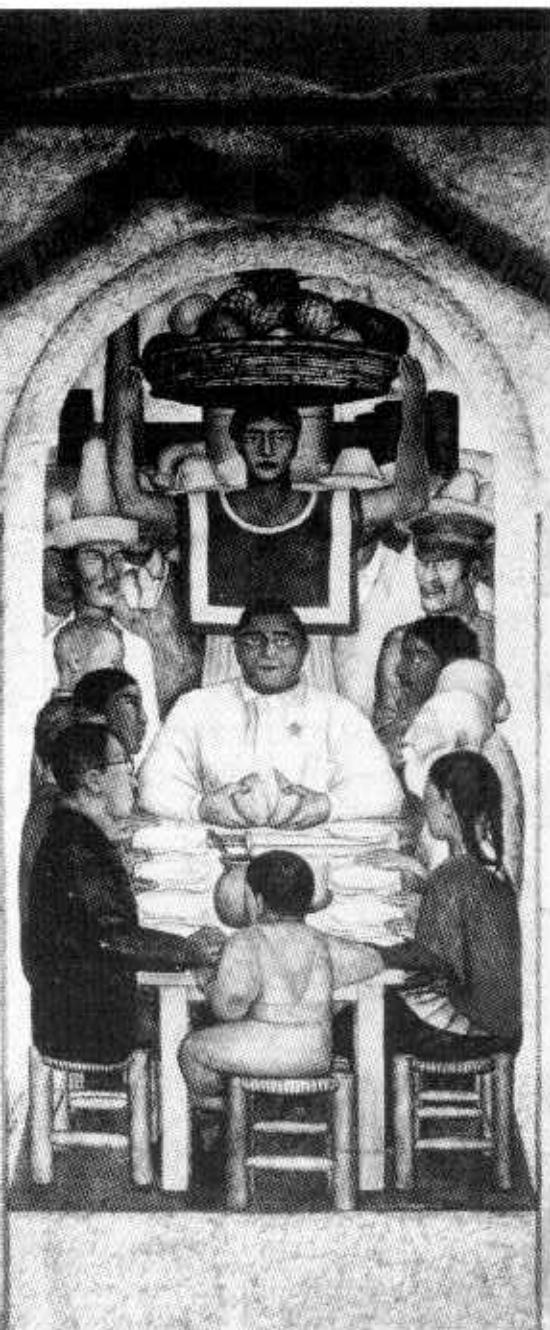
## WORKERS CONFRONT APARTHEID

LABOURS RACISM

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CHILD ABUSE



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## Serious business for the left

FEW LABOUR activists will have bothered to hide their grins and guffaws as they watched the 'silly season' split in the ranks of the SDP. But the sight of David Owen stepping suicidally out into the snow ('I may be some time') should not distract us from the fact that this year's Labour Party conference will offer little to smile about.

The prospects of a truly massive purge of the hard left have receded as the hard left forces have been reduced in size and influence in the pre- and post-election realignment; however there will be some grim battles fought as left and right draw their opposite conclusions from the June election debacle.

To the delight of the soft left, the union bureaucracy and the right wing press, Captain Kinnock will launch his starship 'Compromise' from Brighton on the second leg of his ten year mission — to explore strange new policies, and boldly go where not even Gaitskell boldly went.

Of course few of the policy-makers admit to being right wing; every move to ditch socialist policies is trendily dressed up as 'new thinking' in wordy articles in the *Guardian* and *Marxism Today*.

NUPE chief Tom Sawyer urges Labour to turn away from his own low-paid members and focus instead on the 'home-owning, credit-card-carrying majority'. Michael Meacher is trying to out-do Norman Willis in devising schemas for a 'new image' for the unions as a cross between 'Access', the RAC, and a firm of unpaid management consultants. Bryan Gould floats the idea of dropping Clause 4. In every case the 'new' ideas of the so-called 'left' wind up compromising with or embracing Thatcherism's ruthless focus on the individual at the expense of the majority.

Leading the pack of 'rethinkers' has been the Labour Coordinating Committee, once seen as left wing, but now suggesting a wholesale abandonment of socialist policies on council house sales, privatisation, renationalisation, share issues, tax cuts and Tory plans to hive off schools and council estates from local authority control.

Not to be outdone, Tom Sawyer's union, together with the new-style trendy GMB and the TGWU, have gone further again and drawn up a pay deal for one million local authority manual workers which opens wide the door for at least 100,000 redundancies and the abolition of premium payments for overtime and weekend working; these unions have surrendered to competitive tendering without the slightest attempt at resistance, before the Tories even get round to legislating it!

Small wonder Neil Kinnock approaches the Brighton conference with confidence, and with block

votes on the key issues already in the bag.

But none of this means that the struggle is over.

Though reduced in numbers, there is still an active, committed hard left which rejects the Kinnock line, and which has become even more determined to fight on after the election catastrophe. Though the hard left can expect to win few battles this year, its actions and policies are not by any means irrelevant. Indeed the speed of the pell-mell dash to the right by the erstwhile 'left' LCC and *Tribune* group of MPs has caused something of a crisis within the LCC itself. Four prominent LCCers, Ken Livingstone, George Galloway, Joan Ruddock and Peter Hain have broken ranks and joined with three leaders of Labour Left Liaison to co-sign a 15-point platform appealing for a new unity of the left. This platform makes a welcome change from the defeatist common coin of the LCC: it centres on opposing coalitionism; defence of socialist policies; defence of black sections, and opposition to further witch hunt expulsions.

There are some curious omissions from this new unity appeal: though the document rejects 'business unionism', it fails, even in the midst of renewed miners' struggles, to call clearly for class struggle methods in the unions; there is no specific call for nationalisation or renationalisation; there is no reference to the local government crisis and the fight against cuts; and the whole document is angled towards action by a future Labour government rather than any kind of fight now.

It remains to be seen in practice whether these are chance omissions or whether they really reflect the limitations of the unity on offer: it is already clear, however, that the majority of LCC forces are bitterly opposed to this new platform and firmly wedded to Kinnock's approach. The processes of division and realignment are by no means complete within the labour movement.

In this respect then, the actions and words of the hard left can be decisive in maximising the opportunities to build a real fighting unity against the Tory offensive and against the rightward-moving forces of the Labour and TUC bureaucracy.

For our part, *Socialist Outlook* will continue to press for the broadest democratic unity of forces prepared to fight in practice for action and solidarity on the key class struggle issues of the day. With Captain Kinnock's crew now reinforced by the soft-left 'Clingsons' on the starboard\* bow, real unity of a mobilised left in the Labour Party and in the trade unions is a crucial element of the fightback for socialist policies.

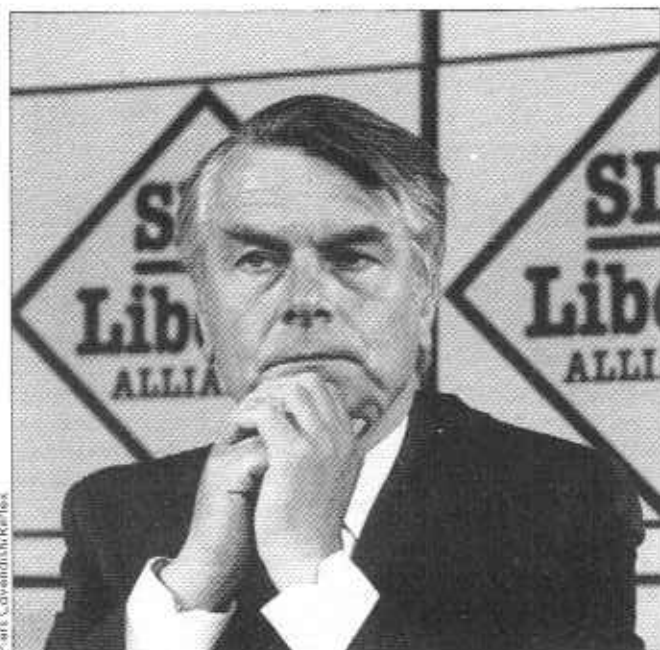
\*Starboard: 'on the right looking forward' (*Oxford Dictionary*); ie on the left looking back.

THE CRISIS in the SDP over merger with the Liberals raises two basic questions. First, why has the division between the Owenites and the SDP pro-merger faction taken place, and are there any real policy differences? And second, will the impending split in the SDP lead simply to an enlarged Liberal Party plus an SDP rump — and hence a decline in the 'third force' in British politics?

The opposition to merger with the Liberals comes not from a fictitious 'grassroots uprising' as alleged by David Owen, but first and foremost from the opposition of a cabal of SDP leaders — David Owen's own coterie to be precise. Doubtless Owen's opposition to merger includes an element of self-aggrandisement and self-promotion, namely that the continued existence of an SDP rump is his sole hope of remaining a party 'leader'. But there are real differences in policy orientation, albeit of a secondary nature, and it is likely that the split in the SDP will exacerbate differences between the Owenites and the new party.

What are these differences? Owen is charting a rightist course which he fears will be incompatible with some of the more radical inclinations of Liberal rank and file activists. In fact this is nothing new; many Liberal rank and filers have been profoundly embarrassed by Owen's refusal to explicitly denounce the vastly expensive Trident nuclear submarine project, and his ambiguous but right wing phrases about the 'social market'.

Leading Owenite Sue Slipman gave the game away at the SDP assembly by talking about the task of 'humanising Thatcherism'. That very frank and revealing phrase caused something of a shock wave in the conference, but of course highlighted a conflict between Owen and Steel during the general election campaign — Owen had said that the Alliance would be prepared to do a coalition deal with Thatcher, while Steel said the opposite!



Paul Connors/Relief

## Alliance turmoil — you ain't seen nothing yet!

Of course, it would be premature to draw a 'left-right' line of divide down the split in the SDP; things are more complicated than that. A fused Liberal-SDP majority party will have some very right wing types in it, not least veterans of the far right inside the Labour Party, people who have always been pro nuclear, pro-American and pro-capitalist.

Bill Rogers, a bitter opponent of David Owen in the present dispute is a case in point. He was one of the main organisers of the 'campaign for democratic socialism' which campaigned against unilateralism in the Labour Party in the early 1960s. Both a new fused party and an 'old' SDP party would be capitalist parties, at first separated mainly by differences of tactics and personality, rather than major differences of ideology, let alone class allegiance.

Still, if Owen wants to carve out a distinct policy profile for the SDP rump, it is hardly likely, either from the point of view of his own

instincts, or that of the political space, that he could move *leftwards*. Much more likely, Owen would seek to define a political profile somewhere in between Thatcherism and the Liberal-dominated 'new' party. There would be difficulties in carrying out this operation, because if people want a very hard-headed right-wing party which is pro-American and pro-nuclear, then why not simply support Thatcher and the Tories? Most likely, the Owen-led SDP rump will undergo a rapid political odyssey; how far right Owen will end up is anybody's guess. It is certainly not inevitable that Owen will always choose to oppose Thatcher from the left.

The future of the Owenite rump is a matter of speculation, however. What is certain is that in ruling class ideological circles there will be strong pressure not to allow the 'third force' in British politics to disappear. For the ruling class the Alliance serves a very precise and useful political function — it helps to

ensure a split in the anti-Tory vote, thus keeping Labour out of power. It also maintains a constant right wing pressure on the Labour leadership. So long as the bourgeoisie regard Labour as an 'unsafe' governmental option — which it will unless or until the left is utterly crushed — they will want to keep their 'reserve team' in operation.

But the function of the Alliance as the permanent obstruction to a Labour majority is beginning to look a little rickety. In October 1974 the Liberals got 18 per cent of the vote, but Labour were still elected. In 1987 the Alliance got only 23 per cent of the vote, before the crisis in the SDP. Therefore, despite the bourgeoisie's wishes, the Alliance project is becoming destabilised through the SDP split. The real question is whether in view of the political infighting that will continue to happen, the new Liberal-SDP majority party will be able to maintain the vote in local and national elections, which the Alliance did previously. If it does not, if its vote goes down to that of the old Liberal Party and the Owenite rump comes to nothing, then we shall be in a position to say that, for the time being at least, the 'breaking the mould' period of British politics is over and we are back to what was simplistically called 'the two party system'. Of course, even if this does happen we will not be back to the 1950s and 1960s because the economic and social context is so different, and because as a consequence we have a very different Tory party, and as yet, a very different Labour party.

Whatever the exact outcome of the Alliance infighting in the months to come, one thing can be said with absolute certainty — for socialists it will be highly entertaining and welcome to see these very nice men and women tear each other to shreds. You thought left wing faction fighting was vicious — well you ain't seen nothing yet!

**PHIL HEARSE**

# UPFRONT



Philip Gordon/PA/Asa

Demonstrating workers from Hyundai corporation

## Korean strike wave

EMBITTERED by poverty-line wages of £10 for a 55-hour working week, and encouraged by the concessions won by demonstrating students and the middle class earlier this year, tens of thousands of South Korean workers stormed out on strike during July and August.

40,000 walked out at the giant Hyundai corporation; 20,000 bus drivers joined the fray; alongside them came thousands more — from the Daewoo shipyards, dockers, miners; Samsung and other electronics workers. In all there were over 1,000 strikes at more than 200 firms.

Strikes have been illegal in South Korea for over 20 years; so have trade unions, with less than one worker in eight a member of the largely tame, pro-management unions that were allowed to function.

High on the list of workers' demands was recognition of new, independent unions, along with calls for wage increases of up to 40 per cent, a shorter working week and

improved pensions and fringe benefits from the booming profits of Korean corporations which have more than doubled productivity in recent years.

Though there were violent clashes between workers and the police, the military regime — keen to avoid any deepening or politicisation of the trade union struggles — used its political weight to pressure some of the biggest employers into talks and

concessions on pay and union recognition. Settlements of upwards of 11 per cent were recorded.

Having broken their prolonged silence, Korean workers still face the task of building their own political and trade union organisations independent of the present bourgeois opposition and their own capitalist bosses. The task is to link up strong working class action with the most militant layers of

students and the middle class in a root and branch challenge to Korean capitalism.

For all the problems in unleashing it, the potential power of the Korean working class today is clearly far greater than the last time workers and students jointly confronted the Seoul regime — when they toppled the Syngman Rhee government in 1960.

**JOHN LISTER**

## Scotland must fight

ELEVEN OF Scotland's seventy-two constituency Labour parties have submitted resolutions on the Scottish Assembly to the 1987 Labour Party conference in Brighton. This autumn the parliamentary Labour party is due to submit a bill to parliament on the setting up of an Assembly. The day of decision looms for the Scottish labour movement.

With fifty of Scotland's

seventy-two parliamentary seats and an overwhelming domination in local government, the Scottish Labour Party now has leadership thrust upon it.

A festival for Scottish Democracy is planned for Glasgow Green on Saturday 12 September. This is the first in a series of meetings, demonstrations and public activity in support of an Assembly and opposing Tory

policies in Scotland.

The first major challenge from the newly re-elected Tory government is already posed. The order commencing the abolition of domestic rates (Scotland) act 1987 requires local authorities as a statutory duty to prepare for the new community charge.

Due to take effect in Scotland by April 1989, one year before it begins its phased introduction in England and

Wales, this poll tax confronts Scottish Labour in its local authority strongholds. Having spent the last few years selling council houses to pay for housing repairs and implementing other Tory policies of cuts in services can we have any faith that these same councillors will suddenly find the gumption to fight the poll tax?

Neil Kinnock is certain about his advice. On a recent visit to Scotland he made it clear he would not condone illegal action: 'I never advise people not to pay their taxes.'

Donald Dewar, shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, is unlikely to disagree with this. 'Everything we can do within the rules of the House of Commons will be done to keep devolution and other issues high on the agenda', stated Dewar at Westminster.

The rewards for such support of the Westminster system have not been slow in coming. Sixteen of Scotland's fifty Labour MPs now hold positions in Neil Kinnock's shadow front bench team.

The question must be asked of Scotland's fifty Labour MPs 'where will their priorities lie in the coming period?' The SNP have not been slow to ask the question.

The Tory party is struggling hard to regain some credibility in Scotland.

Both pro- and anti-devolution Tories have indulged in a little threatening behaviour. Any Assembly would have to mean restricted voting rights at Westminster for Scottish MPs, they argue, and anyway Scotland is over-represented in Westminster so instead of seventy-two MPs there should only be fifty-nine. Further, if an Assembly or Senate is granted then this number should be reduced to forty-seven.

The Tory arguments do not appear to be aimed at the Scottish people. Rather they appear to be designed to warn the Labour Party to keep its people in Scotland quiet or else face a constitutional reform of parliamentary seats which could only further decimate Labour's representation.

The demand for a Scottish Assembly arises from the strength of national identity of the Scots and their awareness that, in the growing crisis of the British capitalist economy, Scottish interests are peripheral when viewed from Westminster. The Assembly is an attempt to gain democratic control of government in Scotland.

Such a democratic demand would have relevance even in a British socialist, planned economy. However, to be won in today's conditions it means challenging the centralised power of Westminster and the financial interests dominating the present Tory government.

To win a Scottish Assembly now will require a radical, popular campaign breaking the labour movement from its tradition of integration into the British state and British constitutional life. Recent reactions from the leadership of the Scottish Labour Party to the arguments and actions of Denis Canavan on parliamentary disruption do not give much encouragement.

Trades councils and CUPs could take the initiative in building local campaign groups. The Campaign for a Scottish Assembly is discussing changing its structure to lay greater emphasis on building

## Outlook for Socialism

'OUTLOOK FOR SOCIALISM' is a weekend of debate and discussion in London on 14/15 November. It will provide an opportunity for socialists to examine and discuss questions like:

- What are the main tasks for socialists inside the trade unions and workplaces?
- What should socialists be doing both inside and outside the Labour Party?
- What can and should socialists do to assist and widen the struggles of the autonomous movements of the oppressed?
- What must we do to help build a united resistance to attacks on civil liberties?
- What are the best ways to aid anti-imperialist and national liberation struggles?
- What should be the attitude of socialists to Gorbachev and 'glasnost' in the Soviet Union?

Speakers will include Ernest Mandel, Tariq Ali, Jeremy Corbyn and others from the international socialist movement.

Registration for the whole weekend is £10.00 (waged), £8.00 (students) and £5.00 (UB40 and OAPs). If registering before 23 October, £2.00 can be deducted from all registration categories.

Registration forms and further details can be obtained from 'Outlook for Socialism', PO Box 705, London SW2 5UN.

such local branches. A growing left wing in the SNP have shown a willingness to get involved in such groups.

The Scottish Assembly deserves the support of socialists throughout Britain.  
**JIM NIBLOCK**

## TUC rightward slide meets resistance

IT WAS SUPPOSED to be business unionism as usual, but all has not gone according to Norman Willis' plan for this year's TUC congress. He and other union leaders had hoped for an uncontroversial slither to the right, setting the scene nicely for more 'new defeatism' at the Labour Party conference.

But the class struggle rudely intervened. The miners showed their resilience by notching up a 77% vote for industrial action against British Coal's draconian disciplinary code; and with a strong lead from Arthur Scargill the NUM executive voted the day before the TUC

opened to set a deadline for an overtime ban.

This in turn added new weight to Scargill's fight to force a debate on the issue of no-strike deals and collaborationist 'business unionism', despite Willis' desperate efforts to dodge the issue and avoid any confrontation with the IETPU.

Scargill's firm line on this was also strengthened by the new left-wing stance of the CPGB, and now the election of deputy general secretary John Macreadie to the general council.

Willis predictably had no problem in persuading Ron Todd to withdraw the TGWU's



Norman Willis prays for a peaceful life

Corbis/Quintessence

own resolution against no-strike deals: but Scargill forced the issue to a vote on the general council, ensuring that even though the congress voted to shelve discussion, it did not keep it out of the public eye.

There was more embarrassment for Willis when the print unions struck to their guns and pressed for rejection of the TUC's line of sweeping the lessons of the Wapping dispute under the carpet.

Not was Willis pleased to see the congress vote for a campaign against the new round of Tory anti-union laws, which will impose new requirements for ballots — but also give legal protection against disciplinary action to scabs who flout ballot decisions for strike action.

These votes and conflicts are a public embarrassment to a TUC leadership which has responded to eight years of Thatcherism by becoming ever more fundamentally right wing and hostile to any form of class struggle resistance.

The 'new realism' looks to collaboration rather than confrontation with the employers. This was why Eric Hammond had been so arrogant and uncompromising in the run-up to the TUC, proclaiming the EETPU-AEU line to be the voice of the future, and threatening to ballot his members on withdrawal from the TUC if they were voted down on no-strike deals.

Far from being blackmailed by Hammond, the trade union movement should have declared that it would be a good thing if this happened. Had the EETPU been correctly expelled last year from the TUC for its scabbing role at Wapping he would not even be able to raise that threat now.

In fact, Hammond is bluffing. He knows he would have everything to lose and nothing to gain by being outside the TUC.

He would lose the general council's protection and the 'no poaching' Bridlington agreement, leaving his members in many industries

## Behind the Gulf crisis

THE HYPOCRISY of the US naval intervention in the Gulf was completely exposed when the Iraqis resumed their attacks on shipping in the Gulf at the end of August. Despite the array of US military firepower, backed up by British and French naval units to defend tankers going to Iraqi ports from the attacks of the Iranians, nearly all the attacks on shipping are being carried out by... the Iraqis. Even more bizarre, the main single event which provoked the Americans to up their profile in the Gulf was the attack on the USS Stark which killed 35 American sailors... by the Iraqi airforce! For this attack, the Iranians got most of the blame.

The basic facts of the Gulf shipping war are simple and straightforward. The tit-for-tat strikes against shipping in the Gulf were started by the Iraqis as a weapon against Iranian oil exports. Whereas Iraqi oil can go via the overland pipeline, all Iranian oil has to go by sea. If we want to examine who gains by the shipping war, we have to start with the basic fact that without Gulf shipping there would be no Iranian oil exports and thus a cruel blow to the Iranian economy.

wide open for recruitment by genuine unions.

Hammond needs TUC protection because his role on behalf of the employers in Britain is far from finished. Even now the EETPU is fighting to recruit in non-electrical jobs ranging from the Aberdeen oil industry to London's docklands light railway.

Despite his setback at the TUC, Hammond knows his is still the dominant mood among most union leaders. The 'Willis plan' for a



Women revolutionary guards march in Tehran

economy has been wrecked by the war. So Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein is desperate for a ceasefire. By stoking up the situation in the Gulf, he calculates that pressure will be built up for Iran to come to the negotiating table.

The conflict in the Gulf comes in the wake of two important political events — the clashes in Mecca between Iranian shi'ites and Saudi sunni pilgrims and police, and the aftermath of the Irangate scandal in the United States.

The Mecca incidents strengthened the belief among the Arab states which have financed Iraq's war effort that Iran was preparing attacks and subversion against them.

In the United States revelations at the Irangate hearings have put pressure on the Reagan administration to show that it's not soft on Iran, does not have any truck

with 'terrorists', and can hold its own in the region. So the request to reflag and escort Kuwaiti tankers was jumped at by the Reagan administration as a tailor-made opportunity to do all those things at once.

It is aimed at shoring up America's power and America's interests in the region.

What of France and Britain? At first Thatcher refused to send mine sweepers to help the Americans, but then did a u-turn and sent the minesweepers anyway. Thatcher always finds it difficult to refuse a request from Reagan. Chirac in France has embroiled himself partly as a response to France's traditionally pro-Iraqi attitude, partly out of a wish to deepen France's simmering war of the diplomats with Iran.

There is now a huge armada of western battleships in the Gulf. Probably the US have nuclear weapons on the assault ship *Guadaluacan*. The scene is being set for a military clash with Iran, and one which has nothing to do with keeping the Gulf open to shipping, which could only be achieved by putting pressure on Iraq to stop the tanker war.

Socialists have no reason to support either Iran or Iraq, both reactionary tyrannies, in the war. But they have every reason to demand that Reagan, Thatcher and Chirac stop their imperialist intervention in the Gulf.

**PHIL HEARSE**

from Norman Willis, vaguely endorsing the idea of women becoming more involved in the movement.

So committed is Willis to this new approach that he flew in his American opposite number, AFL-CIO chief Lane Kirkland, to address the congress: he could of course tell delegates how exactly the Willis model of 'business unionism' has helped American unions to slump to only 18 per cent of the working population. Is this the way of the future?

*Socialist Outlook* wants your letters! If you feel moved to write — and we hope you will — please try and keep to a maximum of 300 words. Send to: PO Box 705, London SW2 5UN.

## Zionism revisited

Dear Comrades,  
Dave Landau's letter (*Socialist Outlook 2*) accuses my article ('Anti-zionism and anti-semitism' — *Socialist Outlook 1*) of using arguments that can easily slip into concessions to anti-semitism. In the article, I asserted that, at every turn, zionism capitulates to anti-semitism, and that the fight against anti-semitism is inseparably linked to the fight against zionism.

Dave asks: 'whether John Turkie is saying that the logical conclusion of zionist principles is to abandon the fight against anti-semitism or whether he is saying the zionists actually do always abandon this struggle. If he means the latter, he is simply wrong and this is a particularly pernicious error. To be sure, sections of the zionist leadership may have played a despicable role in relation to the fight against anti-semitism... But on the ground zionists have been actively involved in such struggles, often laying down their lives.'

Dave writes of 'zionist principles', 'zionists', and 'zionist leadership', but not of 'zionism. Zionism is an ideology and must be understood as such. To go on about the beliefs of individual zionists is to miss the point.

On this crucial point, it seems to me that Dave is confused. He states: 'there is, ultimately, a defeatist logic in the zionist position... Clearly we should stand up and fight for our rights throughout the world,' but then he adds the rider that 'the establishment of a secure sanctuary does seem a wise precaution'.

This plays right into the hands of zionism. Most zionist ideologues believe that anti-semitism is endemic among non-jews. Accordingly, zionism believes that when faced with anti-semitism, jews should not waste time fighting this (incurable) racism, but should simply emigrate to 'the

jewish homeland'. In other words, the problem will be 'solved' by segregation, exactly as the racists recommend. Whilst individual zionists may fight anti-semitism, zionism the ideology clearly does not.

Zionism's response to anti-semitism is one of capitulation. Moreover, the rationalisation of the colonisation of Palestine at the expense of its Arab inhabitants has created an ideology and society which is racist to the core. Anti-racist jews must not support — at any level — 'the jewish homeland' (the 'secure sanctuary' Dave talks about). It is no solution to anti-semitism. The fate of

jews must be seen as inseparable from the fight, alongside all persecuted groups and progressive peoples, against racism and fascism.

There is another clear illustration of Dave's confusion. Whilst agreeing that there is no racial homogeneity amongst the world's 16 million jews, Dave takes issue with me for omitting to mention that 'the colonial people do not have an imperialist homeland. The absence of any homeland is, after all, precisely why they are there! The imperialist powers for whom they are effectively a colonial proxy are countries with which most Israelis have no historical

connection whatsoever.'

Once again, Dave is playing into zionism's hands. The above totally ignores the power of the zionist lobby within these countries to bring about the Israeli state. And anyway, if jews do not constitute a race — a point on which both Dave and I agree — why should we have a 'homeland'?

I am jewish but I am not religious. As a marxist I consider judaism reactionary. To my mind, marxism and judaism are quite incompatible. However, I do not believe, because I have rejected judaism, that I have rejected jewish history or jewish culture.  
**John Turkie**

## Building a class struggle movement in the unions

Dear comrades,  
Congratulations on *Socialist Outlook*. Although I don't agree with everything in it, the general tone is both readable and informative.

I was particularly interested by points raised in articles written by John Lister and Phil Hearse, Anne Somers and Peter Smith concentrating on the industrial issues facing the British working class and the trade unions, in particular.

I entirely agree with comrades Lister and Hearse in the piece 'Preparing the lightbulb' when they argue that the left must build in a far more serious fashion inside the trade union organisations — not least because of their influence within the Labour Party.

It has been frustrating to see the drift towards the right of unions like NUPE without there being a sustained and co-ordinated opposition from whole sections of the left.

The so-called 'hard left' inside the Labour Party appears to have ignored such developments, but if such elements are serious about

rebuilding the left they must now prioritise the building of a left current within the structures of the unions.

Such a left current must, wherever possible, be united whilst at the same time allowing for fraternal criticism and debate within. Tendencies with opposing viewpoints would still be afforded opportunities to raise their publicly without demanding that other groups follow suit.

Secondly, the organised left in the unions must be based at this stage on union activists rather than handfuls of individual union members whose priority is peddling their version of left wing policies at the exclusion of building constructive left opposition.

Thirdly, where the left is organised it must be prepared to challenge the right, the opportunists, and the careerists at every level of each union's structure, at branch, divisional, district, regional and national levels. This will require patient work but will prove to be the best defence against attempts to witchhunt individual activists on the left

for 'bringing the union into disrepute'.

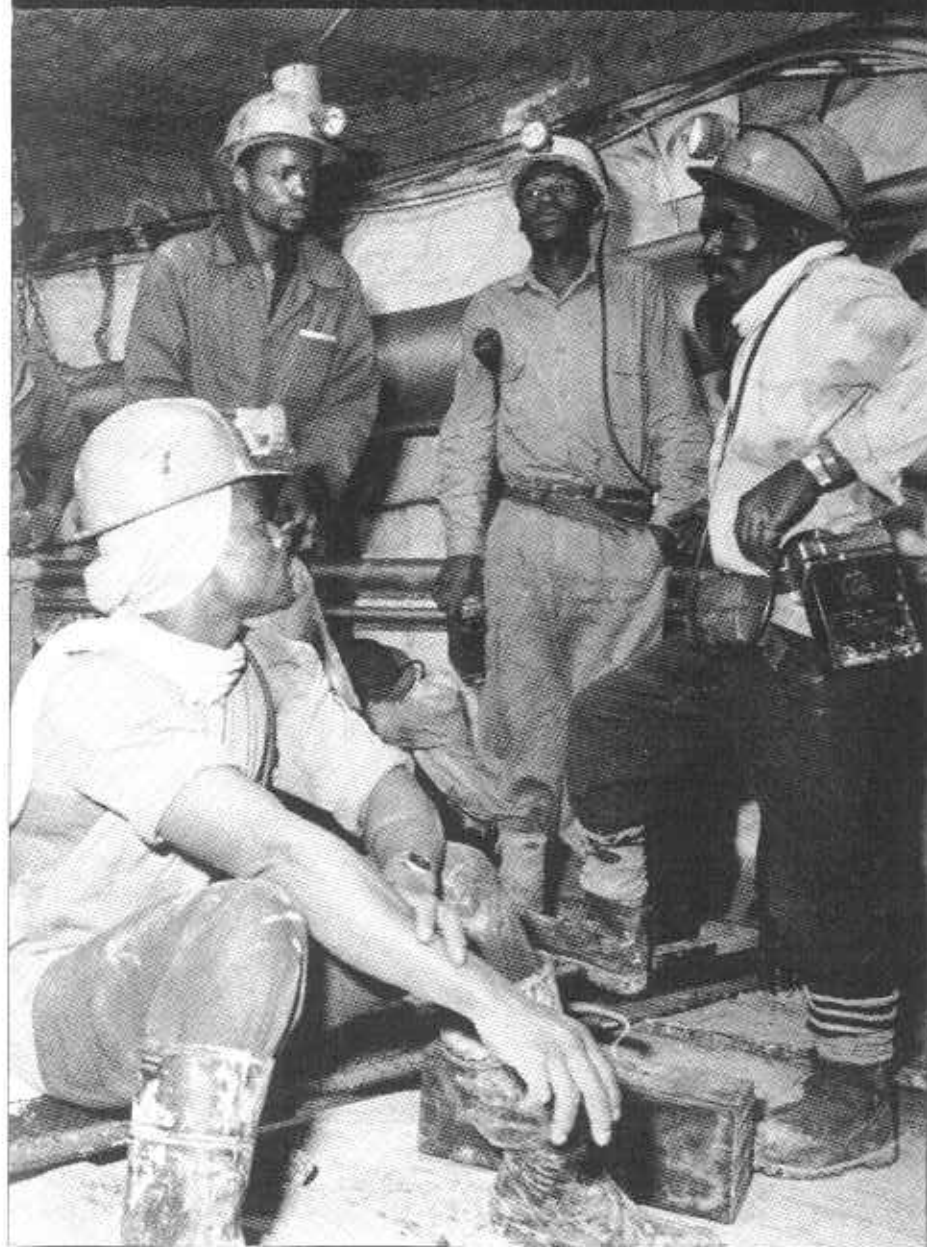
Finally a flexible approach must be adopted towards adherents to eurocommunist and stalinist tendencies. The LCC is bitterly divided, and the only thing that appears to keep the various factions together is a common fear of what they perceive to be Trotskyism. Nevertheless some elements which don't agree with Trotskyism can play an active and even leading role inside a united left opposition.

It is the bulk of trade union activists at rank and file level who do not adhere to any 'line' as such and who can have illusions in left-sounding union leaders at the present who will be looking for answers when the Tory attacks on them and their members intensify over the next period. They will turn away from those who urged them to 'tighten their belts and await a Labour victory' but will they turn to the organised left for solutions?

**Steve Dawe**  
**Bermondsey, London**



## SOUTH AFRICA



## A new stage in the liberation struggle

The recent South African miners' strike demonstrated that the black working class is in first place in the liberation movement. A few weeks before the strike began, the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) held its second congress.

**BRIAN HERON** argues that the congress recognised the leading role of the working class in the struggle against the apartheid regime, and that the adoption by COSATU of the Freedom Charter should be understood within this context. But contradictory currents in the trade unions have emerged in the process.

THE MINERS' strike marks a new stage in the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa. The black South African labour movement has consciously shouldered the responsibility of first place in the liberation struggle.<sup>1</sup>

The three week long South African miners' strike came at the head of the biggest strike wave in South African history.<sup>2</sup> The strike itself embraced 100,000 more workers than the 240,000 membership of the NUM. It was preceded by the second COSATU congress (15-19 July) which represented more than 800,000 organised workers and in which the NUM played a leading role.<sup>3</sup>

On the other side of the mines dispute were ranged Anglo-American, South Africa's biggest corporation, together with other smaller companies (mostly British-owned — like Consolidated Goldfields) in the South African chamber of mines. These companies are responsible for the mining, refining and export of gold and coal, representing 40 per cent and 10 per cent respectively of the volume of South Africa's exports. Behind the chamber of mines stands the state.

The relative independence of South Africa's big business sector from the apartheid regime has proved much less than previously claimed.<sup>4</sup> During the strike eleven miners were killed, at least 500 were injured and more than 400 arrested. The jobs of 36,000 are now on the line. Such is the record of company bosses who are normally strident in their public expressions of distaste for the excesses of the apartheid regime.

Since its founding congress, COSATU has insisted that the big corporations cannot survive without the state. Anglo-American's private army and the South African police attacked meetings, picket lines, bus queues and, after breaking up a union meeting at Klerksdorp, charged 78 strike committee members with conspiracy to murder. These facts speak for themselves.

The recent upsurge in trade union activity makes the decisions of the recent COSATU congress extremely significant. There are mixed views about the content of some of those decisions; they were certainly a definite and deliberate shift in policy direction. This was in large part managed by the NUM (obviously aware of its impending industrial action), it therefore requires urgent evaluation.

When COSATU assembled on 15 July, it was the only part of the liberation movement which remained substantially undamaged, indeed more powerful, than it was a year before. At the founding congress in 1985, barely half a million workers (an immense achievement) registered as part of the confederation. By 1987 that number had almost doubled. This increase in membership was all the more remarkable because the rest of the organised liberation movement had been hit badly by repression in the intervening period.

COSATU itself had not escaped. COSATU house had burned down and several prominent trade union leaders had been

goal (the most important being Moses Mayekiso, now general secretary of COSATU's second largest affiliate, NUMSA, with 136,000 members). Significantly, Mayekiso was arrested for his role in the Alexandra township committee. The United Democratic Front has had 25 of its executive office bearers detained. Many of the most important UDF affiliates have been effectively paralysed and the mass rent strikes continue at a much lower level of co-ordination.

In fact it is the trade union movement that has had the only substantial break-through against the state of emergency. SARHWU's victory against the South African Transport Services in June, after a bitter strike, was a remarkable example of the health of the movement even after 14 months of state repression.

THE TRADE union movement's bedrock of organisation and relative social homogeneity has forced it into first place in the liberation movement. A general retreat by the popular movement but a tougher resistance in the case of the COSATU unions set the scene for the COSATU congress.<sup>8</sup> It was from that point of view that the congress addressed all the main issues of the liberation struggle. The answers given mark a new stage in the ideological maturity of the South African revolution.

Most prominent in the press coverage of the congress's decisions<sup>7</sup> was the resolution taken on sanctions. Concern was expressed about sanctions taking a more prolonged character than initially envisaged and, in any case, having a largely cosmetic role, serving to disguise the continued complicity of international big business with apartheid while at the same time threatening black workers' hard won employment rights.

Many had believed that the sanctions campaign was part of a short term perspective for the overthrow of apartheid which was embraced widely in 1984/5. Instead there appeared to be an increasing price to be paid by black workers through a long drawn out process of international pressure, followed by disinvestment and sell-outs to South African capital. In that regard COSATU avoided an uncritical approach. They noted:

'Sanctions and disinvestment have become the major form of international pressure against the South African racist regime.'

But they added,

'selective sanctions packages as currently applied will not be effective against capital or the state; they can cause serious regional unemployment and they often serve the interests of the imperialist states rather than the South African working class.'

and that

'...without the participation of the working class and its allies in the struggle, sanctions by themselves will not bring about fundamental change.

'The organised working class in South Africa have not had control of sanctions campaigns.'



Gold mine, Roodepoort, near Johannesburg

Therefore COSATU called for '...comprehensive and mandatory sanctions' and all the related demands regarding control over investment, business visits and so on. But a notion on disinvestment commented:

'Disinvestment as is currently carried out by multi-national companies amounts to nothing more than corporate camouflage which often allows these companies to increase their support for the regime.'

Therefore the resolution says COSATU must 'ensure that where disinvestment takes place companies must give COSATU adequate notice of their intention to pull out of South Africa so that bona fide negotiations can take place.'

This same resolution also makes clear where COSATU's priority lies for international action against apartheid:

'To ensure that the social wealth of South Africa remains the property of the people of South Africa for the benefit of all — and further commit ourselves to the principle of international working class solidarity action as the most powerful form of solidarity action in the struggle for national liberation. Our victory will be their victory.'

A major step was taken also on Namibia. Four thousand Namibian miners are currently on strike, despite the bombings, beatings and, most recently, the wholesale arrests of union and SWAPO leaders. The

miners are fighting for an increase in their 30p an hour wage rates. British based BP and Consolidated Goldfields are the employers.<sup>6</sup> Early in the year NUMSA worked with Namibian trade unionists to establish a Namibian metalworkers union. Today the South African trade union movement is taking the lead on work for Namibian independence. COSATU declared its:

'preparedness to take solidarity action if the National Union of Namibian Workers or any of its affiliates come under attack from either the employers, the interim puppet administration or its South African masters.' This makes COSATU, formally, the most advanced organisation in South Africa on the issue of solidarity with the Namibian people.

Similarly, COSATU appears to be determined to give a lead more generally in Africa. It has decided to join the Organisation of African Trade Unions, OATU, explaining it is part of:

'the anti-imperialist struggles fought by the working class ... in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Philippines, Angola and many other parts of the world. Our struggle against apartheid and exploitation is also a struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism.'

At the same time, COSATU reaffirmed its opposition to joining either of the two international trade union federations which continue to split the world trade union movement between Moscow and the capitalist west.

On other questions, COSATU took a real programmatic lead. A resolution on the organisation of domestic workers into a new COSATU affiliate begins 'women workers experience both exploitation as workers and oppression as women and that black women are further discriminated against on the basis of race.' It concludes with the necessity 'to encourage all locals and other COSATU structures to involve women workers in general and domestic workers in particular to take an active involvement in the affairs and direction of COSATU.'

Similarly, a major new step was taken regarding the unemployed. Unemployment is now running at an estimated 25 per cent among blacks. COSATU has helped set up an unemployed workers union, NUWCC. Until the union has been established 'where groups of unemployed have organised themselves, they (are to) be given observor status with full speaking rights in all COSATU structures'.

WITH THIS RECORD it is perhaps surprising that journals like the British *Socialist Worker* register such dismay<sup>7</sup> when they report the results of COSATU's second congress. *Socialist Worker* said that the left in COSATU 'had suffered a serious blow with the adoption of ... the Freedom Charter as the ideological basis for the federation'. It goes on, 'the Freedom Charter says nothing about workers rights. It is not a socialist document and its adoption stands in sharp contrast to the talk of fighting for socialism at the federation's foundation in 1985.'

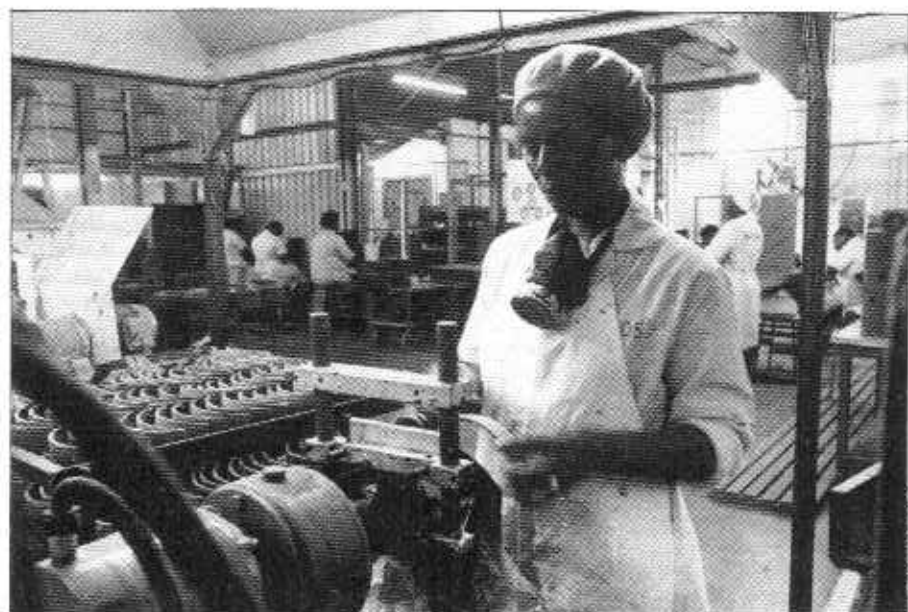
The implication is clear: the decision at the second congress, to adopt the Freedom Charter, was a step backwards.

In a separate article, *Socialist Worker* applies its analysis, accusing the leadership of the most democratic union in South Africa, NUMSA, of being 'like their counterparts in Britain ... more concerned with protecting the union itself than supporting the rank and



file'. This sorry state of affairs has come about through the NUMSA's leadership having 'illusions in legality' a difficult contention to maintain given that the general secretary was elected while in goal facing execution!

What should we make then of the adoption of the Freedom Charter by COSATU? It followed acceptance of the charter by individual affiliates, including the NUM and NUMSA, in the run up to the congress.



Working in an asbestos factory — note the lack of safety precautions

Indeed, most of the liberation movement has come under the charter's umbrella, with the UDF announcing its support on its fourth anniversary, 20 August this year.<sup>11</sup>

It is an explicit part of the discussion that the Freedom Charter is not a socialist document.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, different organisations place the charter into different contexts. The context for COSATU was provided partly by the NUM resolution in congress within which the proposal to adopt the charter appeared. This resolution includes the following:

'Point 3. The struggle against national oppression is inseparable from the struggle against capitalist exploitation.

'Point 4. The unity of the working class, based on the principles of non-racialism,

democracy and workers control, is of paramount importance in our struggle.

'Point 5. While we are involved in a struggle for national liberation, true liberation can only be achieved through an economic and social transformation of our society to serve the interests of the working class.

'Point 6. Workers in our country are not only striving for better conditions in the mines, factories, shops and farms but also for a democratic socialist society controlled by the working class.'

This view is reinforced later in the same resolution.

'There is no conflict between the struggle for national liberation and socialism. The struggle against national oppression and the struggle against capitalist exploitation are complimentary to each other and part of an uninterrupted struggle for total liberation.'

In the same resolution it is stated,

'1. COSATU adopts the Freedom Charter as a guiding document which reflects the views and aspirations of the majority of the oppressed and exploited in our struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation.

'2. COSATU develops and strengthens amongst all workers a coherent working class

understanding of the demands of the Freedom Charter and encourages the fullest discussion on socialism and democracy amongst all progressive and democratic forces.'

Contrary to the claims of *Socialist Worker*, there was no 'sharp contrast with the talk of fighting for socialism at the federation's foundation in 1985'. In fact, the political resolution of 1985 did not mention socialism. The nearest it came was a reference to the struggle for a 'democratic society'. Therefore at one level (and only at one level) the new resolution represents an immense politicisation of the trade union movement in the intervening period. There are, however, other dimensions to the story which *Socialist*

Worker entirely misses.

The congress had guest speakers from the UDF and SAYCO, its recently organised youth affiliate. These speeches were absolutely explicit in what was *not* required from congress. Here are some remarks from the SAYCO representative.

'This debate revolves around the question whether or not the workers in COSATU must adopt the political direction set out in the Freedom Charter or follow what is called the working class programme. While we find this debate important we also find it very queer for the following reasons.

'1) The working class charter does not yet exist. It is still a myth as to what it contains. But still people discuss whether or not to adopt it.

'2) The idea of the workers' charter has got no origin in any known democratic structure. All indications show that it is the result of a very secret caucus not accountable to any democratic structure both underground and above board.'

The speaker from SAYCO proclaimed

'The guidelines for the political direction of COSATU were laid down firmly by the delegation that met with the ANC last year, which through the COSATU general secretary comrade Jay Naidoo acknowledged the leadership of the ANC in the present phase of our revolutionary development.'

About half of the SAYCO speakers' speech was made up of praise for the South African Communist Party, breaking at times into astonishing named attacks on some of its relatively obscure enemies on the left.

'The workers of South Africa do not need but do (already) have a political party of their own and that consistently and correctly stands for the national democratic rights and socialist rights of our people.'

No prizes for guessing which!

SACTU sent a teletype to the congress, congratulating COSATU on its role but making it very plain that it would be a great error to adopt any sort of socialist programme. There could be no doubt about the message, or its source.

The 'problem' that had given immediate rise to these stern strictures from the South African Communist Party and its various allies was the resolution adopted at the founding conference of NUMSA on 23 May. Like the NUM, it had submitted its resolution to the COSATU congress. This resolution<sup>12</sup> also called for the adoption of the Freedom Charter; 'the Freedom Charter is also a good foundation stone on which to start building our working class programme.' The difference in approach to the NUM's resolution was in one important respect:

'the organised working class can only take the lead in the struggle if it has a clear programme and aims which clarify exactly what is wanted by the working class and what is meant by their demands.'

NUMSA decided that all union structures should discuss the proposed content of this workers' political programme. Not content with general statements about socialism,

NUMSA tried to uncover the need for the movement to discuss and prepare a workers' charter around which the workers' goals in the revolution could be focussed and which would safeguard the workers' movement from other social forces on the programmatic and ideological level. It is perhaps not surprising that given the barrage of opposition which we have indicated, the second largest affiliate to COSATU could not find a seconder for its resolution in the congress.

The first consequence of the atmosphere produced by these developments was obvious before the congress met. For some, the adoption of the Freedom Charter gave an ideological edge to the basis for the trade union movement's alliances.<sup>13</sup>

'Thus linkages created do not take the form of the relationship between Unity Movement and COSATU or NUM for that matter; but they are linkages between basic organs of mass activism which are indispensable for our struggle as we move to an alternative society. Members of the Unity Movement or AZAPO or any other obscure organisation are not banned from participating in the struggles of our people.'

Earlier in the same interview, Cyril Ramaphosa, the head of the NUM, said,

'at a political level the Freedom Charter has been adopted as a guiding document and if there is an organisation which is violently opposed to the principles of the Freedom Charter our members would find it very difficult to regard that as a progressive organisation with which they could get into alliance.'

Some are tempted by these facts to claim that COSATU has become dominated by the line of the SACP and its supporters. At this stage such a claim would be false. The actual mechanics of the decision making reveal no 'coup' (although the 'chartists' were obviously very well prepared and organised). There were no vast layers of support for the SACP as such. Rather, a strong link was constructed between the 'chartists' and the largest delegation at the congress, the NUM. The aim of this alliance was not the unrealisable take-over of COSATU but rather the isolation of the 'workers' charter' position. This they effectively achieved. NUMSA will now have to struggle hard for legitimacy in the wider movement for their position.

Further evidence that the SACP did not get everything its own way is not hard to find. Most explicit is the rejection of the open appeal made by a guest speaker for COSATU to take 'its rightful place' in the UDF:

'We urge that the workers as a sector should build together with other sectors such as youth, women, residents; etc., a strong United Democratic Front which must become the first phase of building national unity against apartheid and imperialism. This request should be a conscious decision of COSATU which must ensure that the workers take their rightful leading position of the national politics.' (sic)

COSATU obviously felt it had already taken its rightful position. 'COSATU must remain independent and not affiliate' to any political

organisation within the democratic struggle in South Africa at the present time.' (This was the final clause of the resolution which adopted the Freedom Charter.)

There are many reasons why the pressure of the SACP and the chartists should be particularly felt at this time. The general downturn and the concomitant collapse of the 'victory in the short term' perspective has allowed conditions for the SACP to define the debate in its own more traditional terms.

BOTH ENGLISH speaking and, now, afrikaaner sectors have fractured away from the National Party consensus and defend a negotiated settlement. Under Slabert, the afrikaaners met the ANC in Dacca in July. (Such meetings are inevitable in a prolonged struggle of the sort that the ANC is involved with and there was nothing published about



the Dacca meeting which would indicate that the ANC hinged from its position for the revolutionary nationalist overthrow of the apartheid regime rather than a negotiated settlement.)

Inevitably, however, in the context of the downturn, this meeting was invested with strategic significance, and not just by the world's press. It seemed important to some South African leaders to detach any socialist objectives from democratic ones and that such an approach opened the door to an alliance with sectors of the white ruling class in South Africa. In this light it appeared doubly important to prevent the South African trade union movement, now occupying centre stage in the liberation struggle, embracing openly a transitional type programme including both democratic and socialist demands and raising the question: which class is to rule?

Less important in the SACP offensive are the various attempts (none of which has significant support) to establish a workers'

party to the left of the SACP. Up to now this has been accompanied by ultimatum and sometimes deeply sectarian attitudes towards the mass movement, including the trade unions. Nevertheless the SACP has reacted violently to these efforts, not least at the COSATU congress itself.

'Just to mention ... that the recently launched so-called socialist workers party is a motley conglomeration of white intellectual political hobos of the (name) breed who have no record of political involvement. They are distinguished by one thing, (sic) their superstitious anti-Sovietism and they hold in contempt the national oppression of black people who have spilled so much blood ... as of no importance. (sic)

The trade union movement's own political traditions (which are incredibly rich) are in-

brutal attack from vigilantes and other anti-democratic forces.

The strike wave is a new phase of the struggle in South Africa. As this phase unfolds, all the unanswered questions will be posed again. The workers themselves will reopen the discussion on the 'workers' charter' not in an abstract or formal way, but rather flowing directly from their experience. The needs of the struggle now gripping South Africa will raise new problems of workers' self-defence as state forces are inevitably drawn into the front line of the battle, of the built-in protection of the living standards of working people and the unwaged against roaring inflation; of the control and planning of the country's resources; of organisations which can link all sectors of the mass movement at local, regional and national level, counterposed to the illegitimate apartheid regime; of how political power can be won and kept by the majority.

The townships are ungovernable except through the use of military force. The workers are rapidly making the economy 'ungovernable' in the old way. But it is the battle in the political sphere which will decide the contest and there, despite the great advances registered at the COSATU congress, progress is uneven.

#### Footnotes

1. Despite the state of emergency there are literally hundreds of disputes every month. At the COSATU congress resolution after resolution insisted on the leading role of the working class.
2. 1911-21 was a decade of bitter struggle by mainly white workers. 1916 culminated in a black miners strike involving 80,000 black workers. These were the previous two periods of the highest trade union activity.
3. The NUM had the largest delegation and a comprehensive political perspectives resolution.
4. South Africa contributes nearly 60 per cent of the non-Soviet bloc's output of gold, 34 per cent of the world's manganese, 23 per cent of its uranium, 44 per cent of its plutonium, 15 per cent of its diamonds, 14 per cent of its antimony, 30 per cent of its vanadium. These substances are irreplaceable in modern industrial techniques.
5. 'The test we are going through is precisely a way where liberal white business is trying to find a sustainable pattern of sharing power with black workers.' Bobby Godsell, front-man for Anglo-American, day fifteen of the strike.
6. In negative recognition of this fact Butha promises he is 'preparing new trade union legislation'. We should also note that the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) is an exception to the decline of the popular movement, claiming 80,000 members at its Spring launch.
7. See the front page of *Anti Apartheid News*, September '87.
8. Britain is the major foreign investor in Namibia.
9. *Socialist Worker*, 25/7/87.
10. *The Independent*, 21/8/87.
11. Nelson Mandela, quoted in *International Viewpoint* no. 38.
12. See *Work in Progress* no. 48, for quotes from the NUMSA conference resolution.
13. See interview with Cyril Ramaphosa in *South African Labour Bulletin* Vol. 12 no. 3, May 1987.
14. *Johannesburg Weekly Mail*, 20 July 1987.
15. See index of *Work in Progress*, nos. 47/48.
16. COSATU resolutions 1987.

# Time of destiny

CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN  
reviews a new book on South Africa.

*Martin Murray, South Africa: time of agony, time of destiny. Verso: hardback £29.95; pb £9.95, 469pp.*

SOUTH AFRICA and apartheid have been news, intermittently, for the past two decades. Whenever the dormant resentment of the oppressed majority splutters into life — Sharpeville 1960, Soweto 1976 — the South Africa of the glossy tourist brochures gives way to the realities of life in the black ghettos, only to disappear from high media exposure as the regime succeeds in temporarily pacifying the situation. For the last three years, however, these occasional sporadic outbursts have given place to a persistent wave of revolt which, at times, has reached pre-revolutionary potential. The minority regime's answer was to declare a state of emergency on 20 July 1985, occluded in July this year.

There have been many books and articles written about the momentous events convulsing the sub-continent. Martin Murray's contribution in this volume is among the best.

For the non-academic, the man or woman on the Glapham omnibus, this book provides all the factual data required to achieve an understanding of the issues. It begins by putting South Africa in its continental and international context, explaining the impact of the world economic recession on South Africa. The inter-relationship of the South African economy with international capitalism is essential to understanding the current situation.

How is it that the Republic of South Africa, a modern industrial giant with the most advanced economy in the whole continent, with the oldest and largest black nationalist movement (ANC), and a third or fourth generation urbanised black proletariat, is the only country in South Africa where majority rule has not been established? South African history shows that the black people there have not been lacking in combativity and organised, as well as sporadic, revolt. Yet, to superficial observers, the state seems to be invulnerable. From the birth of the ANC in 1912, through the rise and fall of the ICU in the 1920s; the defiance campaigns of the 1950s; through Sharpeville and Soweto, the minority-ruled state has emerged dented but apparently, irremovable.

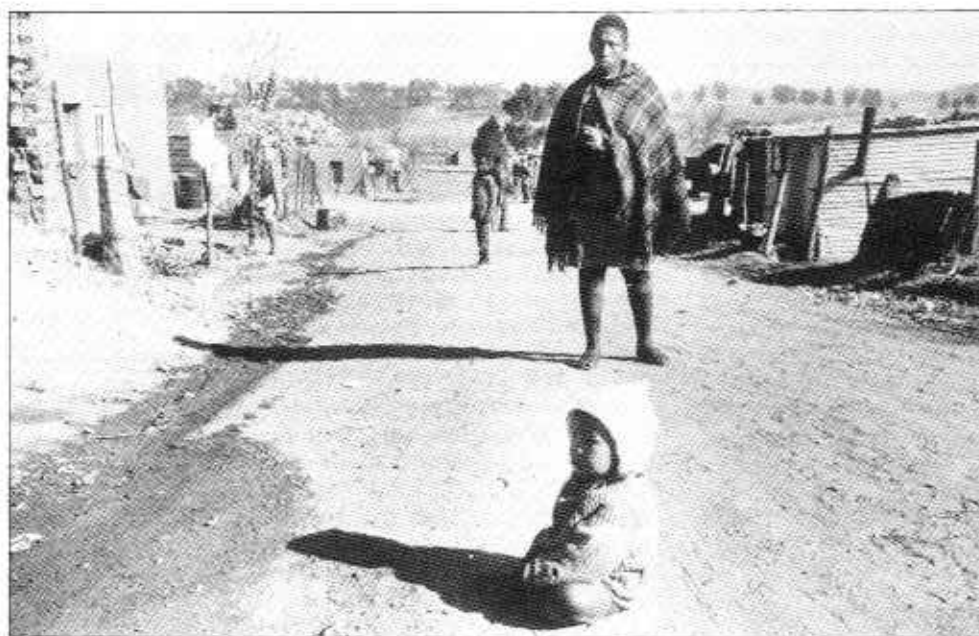
As Martin Murray lays bare the dynamics of the current situation, this illusion — for illusion it is — gives place to the reality of a conflict in which, within measurable time,



Colin M. ...

evitably insufficient to address the problem of political power. From that strategic point of view, the trade unions remain vulnerable to outside analyses, perspectives and programmes. It should be clear from the evidence of the congress, however, that the ideological struggle over the future of the South African revolution is no more over than the revolution itself.

Which brings us back to the current wave of strikes. In May and June of this year, 55 different companies faced industrial action of some sort throughout South Africa. A national dispute between the metal industry and NUMSA waits in the wings. Behind them, these strikes are generating a huge strike support machine. Support-relays of every kind are springing up to service the strikes. A new perspective on the armed struggle going beyond the isolated (if popular) military actions has even been hinted at, 'to consolidate and extend workers' defence to protect the lives and property of thousands of our leaders who today face



Black township

Philip Lihlelo-Raliba

the forces of liberation will emerge victorious.

South Africa's economic power is based on two factors — the vast mineral wealth, comparable only to the Soviet Union, which has provided the primitive accumulation for the development of manufacturing industry and the modernisation of agriculture; and the reserve of cheap black labour which has assured the vast super-profits to attract capital investment. Apartheid, the ultimate refinement of the 'colour bar' which preceded it, was to be the guarantor for the perpetuation of this system of cheap labour.

Strict territorial segregation is basic to apartheid. This, of course, antedates the National Party regime. Its corner stone is the 1913 natives' land act, originated by the 'liberal' General Smuts, which set aside 13 per cent of fragmented land areas for the 75 per cent majority of the population, leaving the remaining 87 per cent for the exclusive use of the white minority. This act was to become the bedrock on which Verwoerd's conception of 'grand apartheid' was to be built. These land fragments are now designated as the so-called 'homelands' for the blacks.

Murray describes how conditions in these 'homelands' have steadily deteriorated. Unable to support themselves through farming activities, the people have been compelled to seek work elsewhere and, principally, in the towns. The resulting black urbanisation 'is perhaps the most important socio-economic phenomenon in South Africa during the post-1948 era.' Today, 'urban black residents account for approximately 50 per cent of the total metropolitan population of South Africa'.

The author sums up the basis which has sustained the apartheid regime of accumulation as follows: the widening of the domestic economic base caused by rapid industrialisation and the attendant expansion of regional commercial networks; second, the deepening of internal economic structures by complementing the peripheral agro-mineral extractive sectors with 'autocentric' growth poles in

manufacturing and commerce — thereby bringing South Africa's economic structure more in line with the metropolitan zone of the capitalist world economy; and, third, the institutionalisation of rigid racial compartmentalisation.

As Karl Marx noted over 100 years ago: the growth of industrial capitalism produces its own grave digger — the industrial proletariat. The current explosive situation in South Africa is living proof of this.

### 'in the new wave of unrest, political and economic demands are intertwined'

'The formation of the black trade unions is the 'key ingredient in the growth of black working class militancy... This maturation of shop-floor militancy was paralleled by the development of a huge mass movement in the townships and in the schools.'

It is against this economic and political background that Martin Murray dissects the current struggles. He also gives a graphic description of the rise to political power of the afrikaner National Party in 1948 and the beginnings of 'grand apartheid' which was designed to consolidate white rule and afrikaner domination within the white minority.

But South Africa's rapid economic growth (from 1948-1970 second only to Japan) was undermining the very foundations of apartheid. The fast-expanding industries gave rise to an insatiable demand for labour. This, combined with the poverty in the 'homelands' was driving workers into the urban ghettos despite restrictive legislation. Schisms developed within the ruling National Party. A 'verligte' faction emerged with a reformist strategy, advocating market-oriented economic growth, the relaxation of job preservation and the provision of job-training for wage-earners.

The 'total strategy' doctrine which, nascent under JB Forster's leadership came to the fore under the premiership of PW Botha, 'represented a political programme that aimed not only to restructure the dominant bloc of class forces but also to forge new forms of legitimisation that relied more upon market forces than a formalised radical discrimination to secure bourgeois rule'.

These economic and political factors gave rise to the independent black trade unions. The Wiehahn trade union and labour 'reforms' only legitimised existing structures. Trade union rights 'were acquired through shop-floor battles, "illegal" strikes, and so forth'. It was the growth and organised strength of the trade unions, together with the successful liberation struggles of the Portuguese colonies to the north which gave fresh impetus and cohesiveness to the movement of revolt in South Africa after Soweto in 1976. Coinciding with an economic crisis which led to an inflationary spiral of surging food prices, sharply increased rents, electricity and gas prices and so on, in the new wave of unrest, political and economic demands were intertwined.

The events Murray analyses have been chronicled elsewhere, but never as concisely as in this volume. The difference between the current struggle and previous revolts is underlined. After Sharpeville, a state of emergency successfully introduced a decade of quiescence by banning organisations (ANC, PAC) and arresting a few charismatic leaders.

Today that is not the case. As Martin Murray puts it, 'social violence has become so routinised and endemic in the townships that it appears to have evolved into the 'normal' state of affairs'. He concludes that '... the profound experience of pitched and bloody confrontations between increasingly polarised antagonists seems to have convinced growing numbers on both sides that a military test of strength and will is both an unavoidable and inevitable outcome of the continuous political unrest'.

# After the miners' strike

SOCIALISTS who were united in their solidarity behind the heroic strike of the black miners in South Africa will now be debating the outcome of the dispute.

It would be easy but mistaken to write off the strike in the coal and gold fields as simply a defeat.

Defeat it certainly was. The miners are back down the mines. 30,000 of them have been sacked with no other means of livelihood to fall back on, although reports suggest that some are being rehired. They did not get the 30 per cent across the board wage increase they demanded.

The chamber of mines, headed by the Anglo-American colossus, was prepared to make some concessions — an improved package on holidays and death benefits. With the death of more than 60 black workers in the Welkom mining disaster the day after the return to work, this latter concession may bring some small compensation to the surviving relatives. But the abrupt way in which the strike came to an end by decision of the NUM leaders and without, it seems, reference back to the rank and file has not helped to consolidate the strengths that the strike had shown.

The NUM, only five years old, succeeded in bringing out over 300,000 miners, and keeping them out for 21 days, despite the brutal intimidation of the state and the thugs mobilised by the mine-owners. This was the biggest strike in South Africa's history, hitting at the very heart of the economy. Its size and durability shook the bosses. As Jay Naidoo, general secretary of the COSATU union federation put it: 'The strike has transformed the face of labour relations in South Africa'.

Why then did the strike fail? And how should we understand the sudden decision of the leadership to call it off? The discussion will go on over this, and further information will help us assess the situation that faced Cyril Ramaphosa and the NUM leaders. However some factors are already clear.

The employers had this time prepared for a real battle. After years of cushioning themselves in the belief that the black workers in the company-controlled compounds could not be unionised, they recognised a change in the strength and mood of the NUM. They stock-piled unprocessed gold ore underground to be used when production was cut. They were ready for potential losses of £100m or more, secured by the bumper profits from the rising gold price (in much the same way as British Coal and the Thatcher government were prepared to lose billions to confront the NUM).

The South African NUM had no finan-

cial reserves. Striking miners got no strike pay. The Reserve Bank had taken steps to block any foreign financial aid to the strikers. Also hanging over their heads was the threat of the sack, and the knowledge that there were tens of thousands of poverty-stricken unemployed in Lesotho, Botswana and the 'homelands', among them many ex-miners with the necessary skills, ready to take their jobs.

Despite its growth, and its ability to pull out 100,000 miners over and above its signed-up membership, the NUM has only organised about half the mine workforce. It has great difficulty in organising the Gold Fields and Anglovaal mines. But even Anglo-American managed to produce between 10-40 per cent of their normal output during the strike.



David Lurie/Reuters

It was also clear that a prolonged strike in this key industry was bound to produce state intervention. Gold sales contribute half of South Africa's foreign exchange earnings. The Botha government would not have permitted the strike to threaten this. The miners knew that: and the chamber of mines were banking on it, which was why they so stubbornly resisted the wage demand.

However one problem in the conduct of the strike was the NUM leadership's insistence — as shown both in their public statements (possibly tactical) and in their actions — that it was simply a wages issue. If the NUM leaders really went into the strike thinking that a confrontation with the state could be avoided, and therefore making no preparations for it in their strategy, this was a big problem from the outset.

Of course it was correct for the NUM to use every possible loophole and avenue to establish the basis for a legal strike. But it appears that the NUM leaders'

abrupt decision to call off the strike arose from the threat of state intervention, following the injunction ordering the strikers to leave the occupied dormitory buildings.

There is little doubt that to have challenged that injunction would have led to the use of the army. It is not possible from this distance to judge the situation precisely: there may be factors we are not aware of. However, reports here did not show the strike fragmenting at the point when the injunction was issued, and the army had not yet been called in.

Yet the NUM leaders called off the strike without explanation, accepting without any improvement an employers' offer which they had only a few days before ridiculed and seen overwhelmingly rejected by a vote of the membership. NUM members who had solidly backed the union were given no say on the return to work — in breach of the NUM's own constitution.

Obviously it is not easy to defy the armed power of the South African state. But only recently the rail workers in an even longer dispute did so; they sustained heavy losses, but made real gains. If it is really impossible to defy the state then it is impossible at the present time to win such major strikes in such sensitive sectors of the South African economy.

One crucial factor was, as in the British miners' strike, breaking the isolation of the striking miners, and thus hampering the state's ability to intervene. The strike must have had a radicalising effect among black trade unionists. COSATU leaders kept saying they were in favour of spreading the strike. But the NUM leaders did not put this to the test by asking for supporting action. Instead another section of workers — postal workers — called off their dispute while the miners were still out.

There is no doubt that there will be more struggles by the South African miners. The end of the strike has not broken the NUM. But there can be little doubt that the abrupt ending of the dispute, leaving 30,000 victimised and many questions unanswered is a long way short of an orderly return to work. The miners did not go into this battle as a dress rehearsal for later events: they went in to win. Socialists have a responsibility to examine and explain why they didn't.

In South Africa it is illegal to build up strike funds. But for future struggles, clandestine methods of doing this must be found. The international solidarity movement must direct its attention to shoring up the NUM and other COSATU unions financially.

# Miners' agenda for action

Following the huge vote by miners in favour of industrial action against BC's new 'code of conduct', H GREENAWAY from Yorkshire NUM looks at the problems of organising the rank and file.

THE 1987 conference of the NUM in July decided to hold three pithead ballots. Although the conference decided to take each of these ballots separately, each was the result of aspects of the generalised attack on living standards, working conditions and union organisation in the pits. The outcome of these ballots, and the struggles waged around them, will make a crucial impact on the continuing struggle in the coalfields.

The first of these ballots, the result already announced, was the ballot on opposing the National Coal Board ('British Coal') disciplinary code of conduct. This code of conduct, if implemented in its original form, would mark a new stage in the whole battle in industry. Its provisions are utterly draconian, allowing for sacking miners for virtually anything, at work or outside, which the Board considered offensive. It was the code which led to the strike of 16,000 miners, originating in rank and file action at Frickley colliery in South Yorkshire in July. In view of the conditions of the code, it was not surprising that the outcome of the ballot was an overwhelming mandate for industrial action. Although the Board, taken aback by the vote, have made noises about concessions, there is still a good chance of industrial action, probably an overtime ban, taking place. If the Board do not back down this will be a vital struggle.

The second ballot is for industrial action against the so-called Wheeler plan (named after BC's Doncaster director) which calls for longer hours, a six-day coal producing week, changes to the health and safety legislation and claw-back 'bonus incentive' schemes. These schemes reward a few workers at the point of coal production while making it impossible for the majority of miners to achieve production targets.

The third ballot, the most difficult to win, is demanding action for the 330 sacked and victimised miners still not reinstated. No date has been fixed for this ballot, and it seems likely that the semi-Kinnockite and Stalinist majority on the NUM executive will delay the vote indefinitely. The sacked and victimised miners demand one day strikes as a minimum for their case to be carried for-



Carole Gwynn/Reflex

ward. A conference of sacked miners is also planned.

While the first ballot has achieved a good result, it is a pity that all three issues were not linked, so that the character of the combined and all-out attack on the workforce could have been brought out — and a more generalised response, putting all-out strike action on the agenda, achieved.

Needless to say, the response of the wab UDM has been to accept the code of conduct, condemn the sacked and victimised miners as criminals and crucially to accept a six-day working week.

The ballot on the Wheeler plan, which includes a six-day working week, will also be crucial to win. While the vote at the NUM conference against six-day working was a major step forward, the threat of this being undermined by the UDM and by the threat of the IGWU in Wales to organise the new Margam pit in South Wales is very real. Only a united response by the NUM can defeat the plans for a six-day week, with a nine-hour day.

The present offensive against the miners is a direct attempt to implement the 'Miron plan', a plan drawn up by an NCB director, William Miron, in 1974. His secret plan included four crucial elements aimed at crushing the NUM and deunionising the pits. These were as follows:

- A production-based 'bonus incentive scheme', negotiated at individual unit

level designed to destroy unity and create splits between area and area, further weakening 'collective bargaining' at national level. It would return to management a degree of control over the miners and thus control of production. This level of control had been lost in the 1960s with the introduction of mechanisation and the miners demand for a national day wage, which was won with the introduction of the NPLA (National Power Loading Agreement)



Philip Gordon/Reflex





● Huge capital investment in 'sunrise technology', to maximise available machine time, increase reliability by 'system monitoring', maximise output and control of product quality. New technology, coupled to a unit-by-unit viability study, would determine where to invest and where to cut back. A review of the current and future home and export market for coal would be an additional factor to determine where the investment would give the highest return



for the least outlay. The Tory government's insistence on pursuing its nuclear programme would also be a governing factor.

The concentration of capital into the 'central coalfields' of Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire where there is a captive market at the Trent and Aire valley power stations, is an additional incentive for privatisation, as supply of coal and electrical generation are very close geographically, ie the Aire valley power stations of Ferrybridge, Drax and Eggborough could be linked to the new Selby super-pit complex which is expected to produce 15 million tonnes of power station quality coal per year. The two to-

### 'the Kinnockites and Stalinists have put Scargill in a minority on the executive'

gether could be sold off as a package, the mines exhausting as the power stations require closing.

● To break away from national bargaining on wages and working conditions, eg imposition of the 1987 wage award, imposition of a new non-negotiable disciplinary code of conduct, thus clawing back more management control of the working practices and conduct of the mineworkers, with the ultimate right to sack any mineworker the Board decides is unsuitable to continue within the industry.

● The destruction of the five-day week agreement, which in the days of management shut-downs and lock-outs, guaranteed five days pay. This to be replaced with flexible working which would require a mineworker to work 9 hours instead of 7.25 hours, 6/7 days per week where the norm today is 5 days per week; leading where possible to 24 hour/7 day continuous mining and thus maximising machine available time, increasing production automatically by 50% per annum. The combined effect would be to produce the same annual tonnage, at a greatly reduced cost, from a passive de-unionised workforce of less than 50,000 mineworkers. A prime plum for privatisation.

The similarity between the Miron plan and what has been implemented, or is in the pipe-line — is obvious. It shows that the 1984/5 coal strike was just one part of the struggle against protracted plans to restructure the coal industry and indeed the whole framework of energy provision in this country, and in the process to crush the NUM.

What then are the prospects for the fight back? In addition to the positive signal of the ballot result on the disciplinary code, coalfield militancy has been growing. There have been numerous local strikes since the national strike. In the financial year from January 1986 there were 51 unofficial stoppages: in the showpiece Selby complex alone. Despite the defeat of the miners strike, rank and file militancy has recovered rapidly. However, the main problem in co-ordinating action which could decisively rebuff the Board, and actually do something for the sacked and victimised miners, has been the lack of co-ordination and leadership.

The problem can be summed up simply. On the one hand you have many in the rank and file who want a fight, and the Scargill group in the leadership who want to fight back as well. They are opposed, however, by the majority of the national executive, which, under the influence of the soft left and the Communist Party, opposes Scargill's line. Also, with the death of Jack Collins in Kent, the area leaderships almost all oppose a militant line.

Given the reluctance of the executive and the area leaderships to fight, the rank and file need to organise. There are a number of, mainly local, rank and file groups in the NUM. Many of these groups put out their own bulletins, hold meetings and organise support for the sacked and victimised miners. But they need to be brought together in a national rank and file grouping, a democratically-organised national left wing, committed to class struggle not class collaboration. Probably the only person who could bring such a formation rapidly into existence is Arthur Scargill himself. Now that the Communist Party and the Kinnockites have put him in a minority on the national executive, his only way of really outflanking the right would be to help organise a national left wing.

Beyond this, however, Thatcher's plans to privatise the mines and electricity generation announced in the queens speech should be enough to wake up the leaderships of the unions in both industries to the fact that they have a common enemy. A triple alliance of coal, gas and electricity would have more industrial muscle than the old alliance of coal, steel and rail. If the government and the bosses can have a co-ordinated strategy, then why not the unions?

● In the next issue of Socialist Outlook *H Greenaway* looks at the plans for a european electricity grid, and what the response of the unions should be on a european scale.

# Civil servants pay campaign lost

THE CPSA pay dispute has now ended. The result of the national ballot to escalate the dispute to all out indefinite strike action was lost by a margin of nearly 3:1. Only 13 per cent of the union's members supported the strike call and only 50 per cent bothered to vote. A defeat of this size presents serious problems for the left within CPSA and it is important to analyse how and why it occurred.

CPSA is dominated by three political factions. First is the Broad Left (BL) — which is dominated by *Militant* but also contains all the other major groupings on the hard left, including *Briefing* supporters.

Second, the national moderate group, a right wing grouping with members in the conservative trade unionists and the SDP. (The group receives regular support from luminaries such as Bernard Levin and Woodrow Wyatt. It is led by veteran 'anti-communist' Kate Losinska.)

Finally, Broad Left '84 (BL '84), a grouping of Communist Party and soft-left Labour Party members which split from the Broad Left in 1984 in the wake of the 5 month long DHSS Newcastle central office dispute.

There is no such thing as an 'independent' in CPSA. Virtually all committees at every level contain *only* members of the above groups. The individual workplace balloting system which has been in place since 1981 means that there is a very high level of politicisation among rank and file members. It is central to any understanding of the sometimes bizarre politics of the union that this point is understood.

The pay campaign originated with a special conference in November 1986. As a result of the shifting balance of forces on the floor of conference the claim was the one put forward by the BL. The strategy was devised by BL '84. The right wing, who controlled the NEC at the time, were left to carry it out. The first question is therefore why the campaign was not strangled at birth.

The answer is twofold. First, there was a genuine mood among the membership that 'enough was enough'. This mood has however existed in previous years and has not been sufficient. The second and more important reason is that the right wing had a project to end collective bargaining and to move to a settled pay system. In order to do this they had to smash any belief in the power of industrial action by trying it out, sabotaging it, and thus 'proving' that it does not work. Unfortunately for them, industrial action in CPSA, as in any other union, has a dynamic of its own. Once started, the activists took control and delivered the best support in the union's history. Manage-

## STEVE FRENCH analyses the problems for the left in the CPSA.

ment's own figures put the initial strikes at 85 per cent solid.

The initial action, however, also led to two very important mistakes. The strategy was one which involved every region of the country taking one week's strike in rotation. It lasted six weeks and covered the period in the run up to the CPSA conference in early May. At the time activists were primarily concerned with delivering successful action in their own region. As a result the union became parcelled up — regions became isolated from each other. This was compounded by the right wing NEC who were giving no national leadership, and by the press who gave no national coverage. It was therefore the role of the Broad Left which was effectively running the campaign on the ground, to give it a national dimension. It didn't. That was the first mistake.

The second mistake was that although all the *activists* were aware that selective action would not move the Tories and was merely designed to build confidence for an all out confrontation, the members were not. The lessons of the 22 week long pay strike in 1981 were not familiar to a membership the majority of whom were at school at the time. Again it was the role of the Broad Left to hammer those lessons home and to destroy any illusion in the power of selective action to win the pay claim. This task was also neglected.

It would be an oversimplification to make a blanket condemnation of the Broad Left leadership for these mistakes. There were genuine logistical problems in organising a campaign of this size. However, it should be recorded that there was not one national Broad Left leaflet during the first six weeks of the action. This should be set against the massive level of activity around the three campaigns to have John Macreadie elected as general secretary of the union.

The answer probably lies in *Militant's* belief that the problems of the union, and thus the problems of the pay campaign, could be solved by taking control of the leadership. The latter task was therefore given the major priority. Events, however, proved that this was mistaken. The watershed in the dispute came during the CPSA conference in May. Against a background of massively successful selective action, the Broad Left submitted a model resolution calling for escalation to all out indefinite strike action. The motion was supported by

the right wing who clearly believed that a ballot on all out action would be lost and would thus end the campaign.

The motion was defeated. The soft left BL '84 and their political allies in the leadership of the SCPS (the middle management union with whom the campaign was being jointly run) capitalised on uncertainty which existed in CPSA, arguing that 'the time was not right' and what was required instead was more confidence-building selective action. In reality they had no intention of ever supporting all out action. Like the strategy of the soft-left in local government they were banking on a Labour victory to hail them out.

The irony was that after losing its position at the conference the Broad Left then won control of the union gaining an 18.6 majority on the executive, and was left to carry out the soft-left strategy.

From the point of defeat of the all-out strike strategy, the campaign began spiralling downwards. Virtually nothing happened for a month. The Broad Left NEC was prevented from taking office by right-wing manoeuvring until 3 June. The following week the defeat of Labour in the general election caused massive demoralisation among the membership which was exaggerated because the Tories are also the employer.

When the selective action did resume it was sabotaged in a spectacular fashion by the SCPS leadership who pulled out of it two days before it was due to hit London. Their justification that CPSA had broken unity (the new NEC had committed the union to an all out strike ballot once the selective action was completed) did not wash with their membership who rained censure motions on them. It was clear that the primary motivation was to undermine the new Broad Left leadership.

The immediate effect was to deal the killer blow to any hope that the civil service pay campaign could be saved. The choice open to the CPSA was then capitulation or to continue to pose the only solution; all out action. The leadership correctly chose the latter course.

Sections of the hard left (most notably the SWP) are already saying that the Broad Left leadership are responsible for losing the ballot by not putting sufficient resources or commitment into it. This view cannot be sustained by the facts. The ballot was not posed in a way which merely got the leadership off the hook. It was seriously campaigned for; it was however already too late for such a ballot to be won.

The size of the defeat presents problems. Both the Tories and the right wing within CPSA will be on the offensive. The result could be the imposition of regional and 'merit' pay within the civil service and thus an end to national pay bargaining. The defeat also undermines the confidence of members involved in other struggles, for example the fight against limited period appointments in the DHSS. Ultimately the future depends on the lessons that the Broad Left draws from the experiences of the past four months.



## Washington behind closed doors

Investigations into the background of 'Contragate' by the American civil liberties organisation, the Christie Institute, has revealed much more startling information than ever came out at the Congressional hearings on arms sales to Iran. Their investigation has revealed the existence of a 'secret team' of counter-insurgency 'dirty tricks' specialists, which goes back to operations against Cuba in the early 1960s.



This team has worked with the CIA in Cuba, in Vietnam and now helps support the Nicaraguan contras. The same people, the investigation shows, carry out the dirty work of US imperialism wherever it is challenged. Here **JEFF MACKLER**, a leading supporter of the US Trotskyist paper *Socialist Action*, relates the story of the secret team. While the outline of the Christie Institute investigation and its associated lawsuit has appeared in the *Guardian* newspaper, this is the first time the whole story has been told in this country.



North, Poindexter, Shultz and McFarlane testify

AT THE opening of the Contragate hearings, the main question to be posed by the congressional 'guardians' of law and order was: did President Reagan know that the top government officials in his National Security Council (NSC) were funnelling money to the Nicaraguan contras? The answer to this question soon became obvious when virtually every 'witness' provided information to implicate the president, who continued to deny his involvement.

The American public was far ahead of the Congressional 'investigators'. National polls taken before the opening of the hearings indicated that more than 66 per cent of the public believed that President Reagan was lying.

Reagan was compelled to shift to higher ground. Admitting his intimate knowledge of the contra arms shipments, he asserted that the Boland amendment, the legislation supposedly prohibiting such shipments, was limited in its application to the 'intelligence' gathering agencies of the United States — such as the CIA.

The National Security Council, Reagan argued, was merely his personal advisory board, not a formal agency of the government. It was exempt from the Congressional ban and was therefore not prevented from organising a massive flow of arms, planes, explosives, and other weapons to the professional murderers Reagan likened to the 'founding fathers' of the United States.

While Congressional lawyers and constitutional experts puzzled over the legal aspects of Reagan's claim, a little-known and unlikely candidate for the job of exposing at least a portion of the truth behind the cover up has begun to emerge.

Daniel Sheehan, general counsel of the Christie Institute — a public-interest law firm and interfaith public-policy centre in Washington DC — has filed a lawsuit under the provisions of the Racketeer Influence and Corrupt Organisation Act (RICO). The suit was filed in a Florida federal district court on 12 December 1986.

In the suit, Sheehan and plaintiffs Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey directly link the president of the United States to a chain of illegal terrorist acts against the people of Nicaragua.

But their suit does more. It demonstrates that the perpetrators of these crimes — including Reagan; the highest officials in the US government, and their underlings — carry out vital aspects of the foreign policy of the US ruling class through a 'secret team' which has functioned clandestinely over the past 27 years.

Sheehan's affidavit documents how this team — which is largely directed by the National Security Council — is

responsible for a series of US-sponsored acts of international terror. The list begins with the 1961 invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs and runs through acts of individual assassination and mass murder in Vietnam, Laos, Iran and Libya.

The suit focuses its central attention on the direct responsibility of the US president and the 'secret team' for the illegal terrorist activity of the Nicaraguan contras. Sheehan's case has already withstood all efforts to dismiss it from court.

The suit has met the legal requirements to show 'probable cause' to substantiate its allegations against 29 defendants. The list of defendants includes Contragate hearing witness Major General Richard Secord; Major General John Singlaub;



**Fidel Castro — survivor of numerous covert assassination attempts**

businessman Albert Hakim; and Robert Owen, the man who functioned as Lt Colonel Oliver North's personal representative to the contras.

Other defendants include top CIA officials in four administrations, a number of professional assassins directly linked to the Mafia and organised crime, former terrorist supporters of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, and the central Colombian crime figures behind the massive importation of cocaine into the United States.

Christie Institute attorneys, armed with a court order granting the right of 25 years 'discovery', are proceeding through the information-gathering stage of the lawsuit. The material they have already presented implicates the Democratic and Republican administrations since Eisenhower in illegal terrorist and genocidal acts.

The uniqueness of this lawsuit, funded in part by church-based foun-

dations, is its exposure of the functioning of the internal decision-making bodies of the US ruling class — primarily the National Security Council.

### 'Operation 40'

IN 1959: immediately after the revolutionary victory of the Cuban people led by Fidel Castro, vice president Richard Nixon — with the full authorisation of President Dwight Eisenhower — chaired a special committee of the National Security Council to organise a plan code-named 'Operation 40'. The purpose of the plan was to undermine, weaken, and eventually overthrow the government of Cuba. The plan included the use of right wing pro-Batista Cubans.

In late 1959, Nixon and CIA director Allen Dulles supervised the recruitment of expatriate, right wing Cubans and set up two training bases — one in Miami, the other in Guatemala. The aim was to send these Cubans back to Cuba to set up guerrilla operations against Castro and to mount terrorist military attacks against the economic infrastructure of Cuba.

In early 1960, Nixon directed Howard Maheu, director of billionaire Howard Hunt's financial empire, to meet secretly with two men, Sam Giancana and John Roselli. These men represented former Havana Mafia 'Don' Santo Trafficante, whose Havana casino, hotel, and prostitution operation was run by Resorts International, Inc.'s Meyer Lansky mafia company. Trafficante was Lansky's lieutenant.

It was agreed at this meeting that Nixon's secret NSC 'Operation 40' would be supplemented by a private organisation headed by Trafficante with the goal of assassinating Fidel Castro, his brother Raul Castro, Che Guevara, and five other Cuban revolutionary leaders.

The assassination squad, known as the 'shooter team', was selected by Trafficante. Its members were Rafael 'Chi Chi' Quintero, Felix Rodriguez (aka 'Max Gomez'), Luis Posada Carriles (aka 'Ramon Medina'), Rafael Villaverde, Raul Villaverde, Ricardo Chavez, Frank Fiorini (aka Frank Sturgis), Rolando Martinez and two other Cuban Americans.

Most of the above mentioned are directly named by Sheehan as defendants in the Christie Institute lawsuit. They are charged with working directly with President Reagan's 'secret team' in the illegal funding of the contra war in Nicaragua.

In the summer of 1960, when John F Kennedy won the Democratic Party presidential nomination, he was briefed by Dulles of the CIA about 'Operation 40'.

The order by the CIA against Fidel Castro, 'terminate with extreme prejudice', was pursued by the 'shooter team' between 1960 and 1963. During this period several assassination attempts against Castro were carried out.

Contra bases were established by the CIA in the Escambray mountains of Cuba in July 1960. These bases were supplied with incendiary bombs and other explosives for use against Cuba's major urban centres. Between January 1961 and April 1961, the low-profile guerrilla-infiltration strategy of 'Operation 40' was transmuted into a plan for a full-scale invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs.

The invasion of April 1961 used the personnel of 'Operation 40' and thousands of Cuban counter-revolutionary mercenaries trained under Eisenhower and Kennedy. These contras were armed with US naval, air and army weapons. Within three days of their landing in Cuba, the contra army was routed by an aroused Cuban population that included an armed militia of 250,000 workers and students.

By June 1961 Robert Kennedy regrouped the tattered remains of 'Operation 40' and reinitiated the old low-profile guerrilla 'raids' into Cuba. 'Operation 40' was renamed 'Operation Mongoose' and was continued by the Kennedy administration until November 1963. The supervisor of 'Operation Mongoose' was 34-year old CIA agent Theodore Shackley. His deputy was Thomas Clines. 'Operation Mongoose' functioned in a working partnership with Mafia lieutenant Santo Trafficante. The combined programme, code-named 'JM/wave' was shut down and Shackley and Clines were transferred to Laos. Shackley became deputy chief of station for the CIA. Clines was his deputy. Shackley and Clines provided air support for one Van Pao in a three-sided drug war for control of the illegal opium trade in Laos. Van Pao's competitors were mysteriously assassinated.

Shackley and Clines initiated a secret training programme of S'mong tribesmen in 'unconventional warfare'. This included training in political assassination. By 1966, their special operations were financed by Van Pao.

#### Ollie North in Laos

IN 1964, a multi-service group known as the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam - Special Operations Group (MACV/SOG) — was set up in Saigon. Commanded by General John K. Singlaub, the group 'supervised' political assassinations in Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand.

Serving under Singlaub in 1968 in Laos, was a second lieutenant named

Oliver North, the same North who, until his resignation a few months ago, served as President Reagan's chief organiser of US military aid to the contras.

The deputy air-wing commander for the group was then air force Lt Colonel Richard Secord, later promoted to the rank of major general. Secord resigned from the air force some 19 years later when one of his subordinates was about to be indicted for smuggling arms to Libya.

The assassination programme was under the direct control of Shackley and Clines, who operated out of Laos. Between 1966 and 1975 the Special Operations Group in Laos, through the secret programme funded by Van Pao's opium income, assassinated over 100,000 non-combatant village mayors, book-keepers, clerks and other civilian officials in Laos, Cambodia and Thailand.

In 1968, Shackley was transferred to Saigon, where he became CIA station chief. At this time, Shackley's former associate in the 'JM/wave' operation in Miami, Santo Trafficante, flew to Saigon to meet Shackley's Laotian associate Van Pao. They formed a partnership to import china white heroin into the United States. By 1969, Trafficante became the top US heroin importer. Van Pao's financial contributions to the 'unconventional warfare' project of Shackley and Clines increased correspondingly.

In 1972, Shackley was transferred to the United States, where he became chief of the CIA's operations for Central and Latin America. Clines went along as his deputy. Shackley and Clines directed the project known as 'Track II' in Chile, which included the assassination of Chilean president Salvador Allende and the overthrow by the Chilean military of the Allende government in September 1973.

In 1973, Shackley and Clines were transferred to CIA headquarters in Langley, where Shackley headed the East Asia division of the CIA with Clines as his deputy. They directed the 'phoenix project' in Vietnam in 1974/75, a programme designed to cripple the infrastructure of Vietnam after a US troop withdrawal. This included the assassination of some 60,000 village mayors, treasurers, school teachers, and other 'non-Viet Cong' administrators.

The programme was financed by Shackley and Clines, again using Van Pao opium money. The opium accounts were administered by a US navy official in Saigon out of the US Office of Naval Operations. The 'bur-

**Sandinista rapid deployment unit prosecuting the war against the contras**



sar' for the Vietnam 'phoenix project' was Richard Armitage.

In 1973, Shackley, Clines and Armitage made preparations for their own private, non-CIA, assassination and unconventional warfare programme. This preparation included smuggling large quantities of money from the opium fund out of Vietnam. The money was taken to Australia by Secord and Clines and secretly deposited in the Nugen-Hand Bank and other accounts accessible only to Shackley, Clines and Secord.

This 'secret team' also smuggled thousands of tons of weapons, munitions and explosives out of Vietnam into a secret arms 'cache' in Thailand.

Shackley's liaison officer in Washington, DC, from the 'Operation 40' committee in the Nixon White House was Eric Von Marbod, an assistant secretary of State for Far Eastern affairs. Von Marbod shared this information on the 'phoenix project' directly with his supervisor, US secretary of state Henry Kissinger.

#### Secret team moves to Iran

SAIGON WAS liberated by the Vietnamese people in April 1975. The Vietnam war was over, and the 'secret team' shifted its operations.

Following the US evacuation from Vietnam, Richard Armitage was sent to Teheran by Shackley and Clines. His mission was to set up Iranian bank accounts for Van Pao opium money for the now so-called private 'secret team'. The function of the team was to seek out, identify, and assassinate socialist and communist sympathisers, who were viewed by the 'secret team' to be 'potential terrorists' against the Shah's government.

Shackley and Clines, still CIA agents but operating 'privately' in the United States, supervised this secret assassination project from 1976 to the fall of the Shah in 1979. Shackley was then the assistant deputy director of operations for the CIA. Clines was his assistant.

In late 1975 they hired Edwin Wilson to take direct responsibility for the assassination programme. Wilson worked out of the US Military Mission in Iran as a so-called anti-terrorist specialist. Wilson's other assignments included supplying arms and explosives to Libya, a project the 'secret team' supposedly took on to foil alleged assassination efforts directed by Libyan president Mohammad Qaddafi.

At the same time, Wilson headed a CIA project to murder Qaddafi. This involved blowing up Qaddafi's personal aeroplane, a project which was actually carried out but which fell short of its goal when Qaddafi left the plane to place a phone call moments before the explosion occurred.

When Wilson's illegal arms sales to Libya were accidentally revealed, he was indicted by the US government and jailed. Wilson is now serving a 50 year prison term in Marion prison in Illinois. He has requested immunity from criminal prosecution for testimony confirming the illegal conduct of the 'secret team'.

His superiors, Shackley and Clines, were allowed to resign from the CIA by Carter-appointed CIA Director Stansfield Turner. After resigning from the CIA, Shackley and Clines continued to work with Secord as part of the so-called private 'secret team'.

In 1976 Richard Secord was transferred to Iran to serve as assistant secretary of defence in charge of the Middle Eastern division of the defence security assistance administration. In this capacity he was in charge of foreign military sales of US aircraft, weapons, and military equipment to



Vietnam — where many of the covert team met

Middle Eastern nations allied with the United States.

Secord, however, did not arrange for the direct nation-to-nation sale of these weapons. Instead, by the use of a middle-man, Albert Hakim, an Iranian-born US businessman, Secord purchased weapons from the US government at the low 'manufacturer's cost' and resold them at the higher 'replacement cost'.

The difference was pocketed by Hakim and Secord and transferred to Shackley's 'secret team' accounts inside Iran and into the Nugen-Hand bank account in Australia.

By 1976, Hakim became a member and business partner of the 'secret team'. Between 1976 and 1979, the 'secret team' set up several corporations and subsidiaries around the world to conceal their secret operations. Through these corporations they laundered hundreds of millions of dollars of Van Pao opium money and pilfered profits from foreign military sales.

#### Nicaragua

In the spring of 1978, the 'secret

team' sent Edwin Wilson to Nicaragua to offer its 'private' assassination squad to the Somoza dictatorship. Their proposal was to assassinate the top leadership of the Sandinista revolutionary movement.

Wilson proposed a package totalling \$650,000 per year which was to include the services of five assassins at \$80,000 each and an annual expense account of \$250,000. One of the assassins was to be Rafael 'Chi Chi' Quintero. The others were also members of the 1960 Nixon/Santo Trafficante 'shooter team'. Differences over the cost of the 'secret team's' proposal prevented a firm agreement with Somoza.

Wilson returned to Nicaragua to continue negotiations a year later. This time the purpose was to arrange for the secret purchase of military equipment, ammunition, and explosives given that Somoza had been formally cut off from purchasing US weapons by the Carter administration's invocation of the congressional Harkin amendment in January 1979. This amendment prohibited US military aid to any government found to have systematically violated the human rights of its own citizens.

Rafael Quintero, representing the 'secret team', finally negotiated an arms contract with Somoza on the team's third trip to Nicaragua in early 1979. The contract provided for the illegal shipment to the Somoza dictatorship of weapons, ammunition, aircraft, and explosives.

In the period between the time of the signing of this contract and Somoza's departure from Nicaragua, a period of some six months, an estimated 60,000 Nicaraguan civilians were murdered by Somoza's national guard. Before this shipment, the guard had sufficient arms to last for only a few weeks.

Somoza fled Nicaragua on 17 July, 1979, to the island of North Cay in the Bahamas. There he again met with representatives of the 'secret team' to negotiate the illegal sale of their 'private' weapons.

This sale enabled Somoza and his national guard generals to begin what later became the 'contra' war against the legally recognised (by the United States) government of Nicaragua. The planned secret war was identical to the one Shackley and Clines had organised against the government of Cuba between 1961 and 1965.

The 'secret team', operating as business partners with Edwin Wilson in the Egyptian-American Transport and Service Co. (incorporated in January 1979), supplied weapons to the contras. They operated out of Honduras beginning in August 1979.

They later did the same in Costa Rica in 1983-84, operating out of the

privately owned ranch of 'secret team' member and CIA operative John Hull, a US businessman. This arms supply continued through October 1986, with the exception of the period between June 1981 and March 1984, when the weapons were supplied directly by William Casey of the CIA.

The 'field officer' of the 'secret team' was Farael Quintero, the man who met with the contras in Honduras and Costa Rica and ensured delivery of the weapons. Quintero operated out of the Miami-based Orca Supply Co., a company originally set up by Edwin Wilson. Quintero previously worked for Wilson as a professional assassin in Libya.

When Reagan took office in January 1981, a series of White House meetings took place where it was decided to formally — but secretly — continue aid to the contras. Involved in these meetings were White House chief of staff Edwin Meese, national security adviser Richard Allen, CIA Director William Casey, vice president of the United States and chair of the NSC task force on terrorism George Bush, and President Ronald Reagan. It was agreed that Casey and the CIA would continue the covert funding of the contras. The 'secret team' continued to supply weapons until June 1981, when the operation was officially but secretly taken over by the CIA.

In June 1981, Reagan signed a classified national security decision directive expressly authorising CIA Director Casey to undertake the financing, training and military supply of the Honduran-based contras. Reagan specified that this support was conditional upon the contras forming themselves into a cohesive, centralised, and united force to which the CIA could channel support. This continued throughout 1982. During this entire period, Reagan expressly denied that the US government was providing any support for the contras.

When pressed, Reagan claimed that there was only minimal aid to 'interdict' supplies allegedly sent by the Sandinistas to the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in El Salvador.

The CIA assigned agent David McMichael to prepare a report to document this alleged shipment of arms to the FMLN. McMichael's report concluded that there was no evidence to document Reagan's claim. He was fired by the CIA.

In 1983 the CIA was caught and publicly exposed for mining Nicaragua's civilian harbours and for passing out manuals to the contras that openly advocated the assassination of Nicaraguan government authorities. Both these activities were

violations of international law, according to the World Court. Reagan publicly stated that his objective was the violent overthrow of the Sandinista government to 'prevent the establishment in Latin America of a Soviet military base'.

Following the international uproar over the conduct of the CIA, Congress began to draft legislation to prevent direct and indirect aid to the contras. In response, Reagan, Meese, Bush, Robert McFarlane, and national security council deputy director Lt Col Oliver North met to devise another illegal plan to circumvent the congressional ban.

After the passage of the Boland Amendment, which ordered the cessation of all US government aid to the contras, Lt Col Oliver North contracted the 'secret team' to reactivate their military supply operations to the contras. The plan was to have Robert Owen resume the secret support network that was operative prior to June 1981. Owen was the direct personal representative of Oliver North to the contras.

Owen, North, and their cohorts were also pressing to unify the competing contra groups in order to better persuade Congress to resume formal funding to the contras — which Congress eventually did, in defiance of international law and despite the ample documentation of the contras' terrorist record.

In the meantime, Owen's key assignment was to set up a series of private organisations to secretly raise funds for the contras. To this end he contracted General Singlaub, who in turn set up the US Council on World Freedom to begin the illegal collection process.

Another 'private' source of arms for the contras was Thomas Posey and his Civilian Military Assistance organisation. Posey's group worked directly with former members of the US Armed Forces, current National Guardsmen, and anti-communist Cubans and Nicaraguans to organise and finance the contra army.

So-called surplus arms were obtained directly by Posey from the 20th Special Forces Unit of the US Army in Alabama. A 'surplus' US Armed Forces airplane was obtained in New Jersey for shipment of arms to Ilopango Air Base in El Salvador and then to Costa Rica, Honduras and Nicaragua. Posey's personal diary, part of the evidence in the lawsuit, detailed all this activity.

The effort to funnel aid to the contras through quasi-autonomous sources like Posey was small scale when compared to projects formally but not publicly contemplated by the Reagan administration.

### 'REX 84'

IN APRIL 1984, for example, President Reagan issued National Security Decision Directive 52, which authorised Federal Emergency Management Agency Director Louis O. Guiffreda to prepare a secret nationwide 'readiness exercise' code-named 'REX 84'.

The programme was to be designed to test the readiness of US defence forces to accomplish two purposes:

- to round up and intern in ten federal detention camps some 100,000 Central American undocumented aliens in the event of a presidentially declared state of domestic emergency following a US invasion of Nicaragua, and;
- to transfer hundreds of tons of small arms and other weapons from the Department of Defence to various



**William Casey, head of the CIA, died conveniently just prior to the contragate hearings**

National Guard units and then to various specially created State Defence Forces, formed by act of the state legislatures of Texas, Alabama, and Louisiana.

The weapons were then to be sent to secret contra training camps in the United States for shipment to the contras. Some of these camps were already operational and were observed by sources identified by the Christie Institute lawsuit.

A key component of the 'secret team'/CIA contra-aid programme was the construction of a secret contra base and airstrip on a cattle ranch on Costa Rica's Nicaraguan border. Heading this programme was 'secret team' leader John Hull, whose private ranch became the staging area for contra

operations.

Hull also headed a special unit of an 'international brigade' operating from his ranch. This group organised a plot to carry out a terrorist bombing of the US embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica. Included was a plot to assassinate the new US ambassador to Costa Rica, Lewis Tambis. The idea was to blame the assassination on the Sandinista government, thus providing a plausible pretext for a US invasion.

Hull's 'International Brigade' also operated a programme to ship large quantities of cocaine from Colombia to Hull's ranch. A specially lengthened airstrip was constructed for this purpose under the supervision of Rafael Quintero.

With the help of Cuban-American drug-traffickers Felipe Vidal and Rene Corbo, the cocaine — up to one ton per week — was then shipped to Miami, New Orleans, and Memphis, where it was sold. Part of the profits were diverted back to Hull, who used the money for the purchase of arms for the contras. The cocaine was provided to Hull by Pablo Escobar and Jorge Ochoa, Colombia's two largest cocaine exporters.

Richard Secord purchased the airplanes used by the contras to ferry weapons from Ptopango Air Force Base in El Salvador back to Hull's ranch in Costa Rica.

In late April 1985, the Costa Rican rural national guard raided a contra camp on Hull's property and confiscated large quantities of weapons, ammunition, and explosives. Several Nicaraguan contra mercenaries and several foreign mercenaries — including two Americans — were arrested. They confiscated weapons specifically purchased and registered by Thomas Posey in the United States.

With the failure of the CIA to unify the various contra organisations, the 'secret team'/CIA collaborated with Adolfo Calero's Honduran-based contra organisation, the National Democratic Force (FDN), in a plot to assassinate rival contra leader Eden Pastora. The CIA objected to Pastora's refusal to integrate his Costa Rican-based ARDE forces with Miami-based Cuban mercenaries and Calero's ex-Somoza generals.

The attempts to murder Pastora took place on 30 May, 1984, at an ARDE press conference in La Penca, on the Nicaraguan-Costa Rica border, called by Pastora to denounce the CIA. The attack was organised by John Hull and Costa Rican-based contras. The weapons and C-4 explosives were provided by Posey, Hull, and the 'secret team'.

The actual assassination attempt was executed by Amac Galil, a notorious right-wing terrorist who had

been previously employed by the secret police of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. Galil was paid \$50,000 to carry out the Pastora assassination.

He received the potent C-4 explosive from John Hull at his ranch. Portions of the explosive were smuggled to Hull with the direct assistance of former CIA agents Theodore Shackley and Tomas Clines. Also involved in the smuggling of the C-4 explosive were Richard Secord and 'businessman' Albert Hakim.

While Pastora was seriously injured in this effort, a number of journalists — including one American — were killed. Scores of others were maimed and otherwise seriously wounded, including American ABC cameraman Tony Avirgan who is, along with Daniel Sheehan, the prime initiator of the lawsuit against the 'secret team'.

President Reagan, White House chief of staff Edwin Meese, CIA director William Casey, Robert McFarlane, John Pointexter, and Lt Col Oliver North contacted the 'secret team' to arrange for the illegal sale of weapons to Iran. As in the past, the deal included manipulation of the price of these weapons in order to arrange for a profit to be used to purchase weapons for the contras. When their secret arrangements were accidentally revealed by a member of the Iranian government, a chain of events began to unfold which exposed an aspect of functioning of the US ruling class which is not often seen.

(For more information on the lawsuit write to the Christie Institute, 1324 North Capitol Street, NW, Washington D.C. 20002, Tel. (202) 797 8106.)

This is an edited version of an article which first appeared in *Socialist Action* (US) Vol. 5, no. 7, July 1987.

1 Portions of this article are based on material taken from an affidavit filed by Daniel Sheehan of the Christie Institute in December 1986. In some instances, formulations have been taken directly from the affidavit.

Although the Christie Institute's allegations have not yet been certified in a US court of law, the charges presented are consistent with numerous published findings on this subject as well as the conclusions of the World Court and the Bertrand Russell War Crimes Tribunal.

2 The Christie Institute affidavit states that the Kennedy brothers were not briefed on the existence of the 'shooter team'. This is incorrect. Numerous sources, including a 19 January 1971 *San Francisco Chronicle* article by Jack Anderson (p. 33) discusses the Kennedy brothers' involvement in authorising the assassination team against Fidel Castro.

3 The lawsuit asserts that President Jimmy Carter and CIA Director Stansfield Turner were ignorant of this contract. This seems highly unlikely.

It should be remembered that Carter maintained Richard Helms as his ambassador to Tehran. Helms — who had been CIA director during the Johnson, Ford and Nixon administrations — presided over Shackley's operations.

Carter, moreover, directed General Heuser, director of NATO, to set up in Teheran the Council of Generals. For six months, Gen. Heuser sought to coordinate a coup in Teheran which had targeted tens of thousands of people for assassination.

In addition, under the Carter administration, the US government and the CIA provided Roberto D'Aubuisson and the Salvadoran death squads with the intelligence files used to finger thousands of their victims. (Source: Allan Nairn, *The Progressive*, May 1984.)

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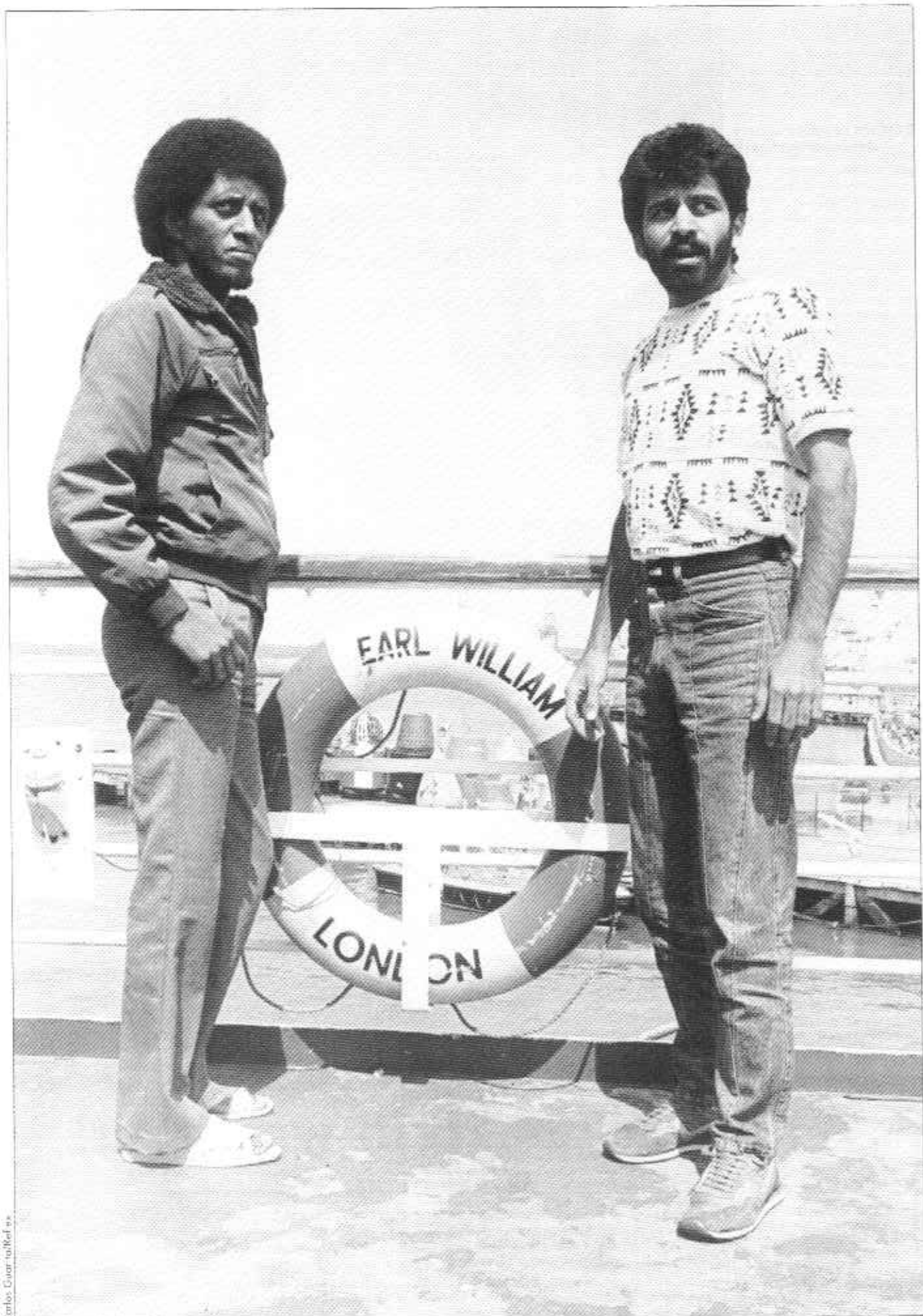
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Carlos Guerin/Rutlex

## Why Sharon Atkin was right!

Just before the election, Sharon Atkin's speech at a black section meeting in Birmingham, in which she denounced the 'racist Labour Party' caused a furore. Even many on the left of the party thought that the term 'racist' was

over the top. But, says **RICHARD HATCHER**, black people are right to call the Labour Party racist. It is not a question of overt racism in Labour's ranks, but of the overall practice of the party.



Carlos Cuatrecasas

Immigration detention ship 'Earl William' at Harwich. Left, Simon Tesfagergish, EPLF fighter stopped on his way to Belgium and right Omid Ashabi, an Iranian christian. Would a Labour government grant them asylum?

WHAT DOES it mean to say that the Labour Party is racist? It means that in spite of its formal commitment to racial equality Labour has failed to effectively challenge racism in practice. By racism we mean not simply individual discriminatory acts, but the racial discrimination that is institutionalised in the structures of British society, in particular those of the economy and the state. The charge of racism that we bring against the Labour Party is based on the policies pursued by the national leadership of the Labour Party, especially when in office. Notwithstanding a number of progressive positions that Labour has taken, the overall balance sheet of its record is one of support for policies which have condoned and reinforced racial discrimination, and both traded on and fostered popular ideologies of 'race'. That is the charge. For the evidence we shall examine the records of the three post-war Labour governments.

### The Attlee government: setting the racist agenda

THE ROOTS of Labour's racism lie in its complicity in Britain's imperial role. The Labour Party never had a position of principled opposition to empire. On the contrary, Labour's reforms were to be paid for out of the super-profits of British imperialism. Its attitude to decolonisation was consequently governed by what was most expedient for Britain, not by an internationalist principle of self-determination. Thus the Attlee government conceded independence to India under pressure, granted it to Malaya once a bloody colonial war had ensured a pro-British succession, and opposed it in Africa. (These sentiments were shared by the Labour left. As *Tribune* said (20/8/1948): 'We do not need to apologise for our mission in Africa. Whatever the reasons which took our forebears there we must stay'.)

As Labour shouldered its share of the white man's burden abroad, it also inherited the mantle of patriotic antipathy to foreign immigrants to Britain. The racism that had earlier greeted Irish and Jewish immigrants, in which labour movement leaders had joined, was now transferred to black immigrants. It is often thought that the Labour Party only capitulated to racism against black immigration in the wake of Tory immigration controls in the early 1960s. In fact the foundations of Labour's subsequent racist policies were laid under the post-1945 Attlee government.

From the very beginning of post-war black immigration, leading figures in the Attlee government were constructing it as a problem. As early as 1946 Chuter-Ede, the home secretary, said at a meeting of the cabinet foreign labour committee that 'he would be much happier if the intake could be limited to contracts from the western countries, whose traditions and social backgrounds were more nearly equal to our own and in whose case it would be possible to apply the sanction of deportation.' In 1948 Isaacs, the minister of labour, questioned in parliament about the arrival of a few hundred West Indians in search of work, at a time of labour shortage in Britain, said 'I hope no encouragement will be given to others to follow their example.'<sup>2</sup> In 1949 a royal commission reported on future possible labour shortages and said 'immigration on a large scale into a fully established society like ours would only be welcomed without reserve if the immigrants were of good stock and were not prevented by their religion or race from intermarrying with the host population and becoming merged in it'.<sup>3</sup>

In 1950 the Labour government first posed the possibility of restricting black immigration. It set up a cabinet committee for 'a review to be made of the further means which might be adopted to check the immigration into this country of coloured people from the British colonial territories'.<sup>4</sup> The 'problems' in question were unemployment, illegal immigrants and welfare 'scroungers'. The review concluded that controls were not advisable at that time, but might become so in the future.

From the above examples, we can see it was the Attlee government, supposedly the most radical ever, which forty

years ago established the premises which governed subsequent policy on black immigration by all governments, Labour and Tory.

Those premises were as follows. Black immigration was a 'problem' — but immigration by European and Irish workers was encouraged by the Attlee government. It was a problem because they were 'of alien race', not 'of good stock', and therefore a threat to the social cohesiveness and stability of the British nation. The overriding issue for government policy was not combatting racial discrimination, or ensuring good conditions of housing, etc., for immigrant blacks, but controlling the numbers. These were the themes of the bipartisan approach to black immigration that both Labour and Tories implemented in the sixties and seventies.



Diane Abbott, first black woman MP; Sharon Atkin could have joined her but for Labour's leadership

### The 1964-70 Wilson government: appeasing racism

THE CLIMATE of racism began to worsen appreciably in the late 1950s, but the Labour leadership initially resisted pressure for immigration controls. Gaitskill strongly attacked the Tory government's commonwealth immigration bill in the house of commons in 1961, in the name of the right of free entry of commonwealth citizens and of the racist nature of the proposed controls (the Irish were excluded). This was to be the last time a Labour leadership took its stand on these principles.

By 1963, even before Smethwick, Labour under Wilson had capitulated to popular pressure and had switched to support for immigration controls. The success of the racist Tory election campaign in Smethwick in 1961 dramatically confirmed the strength of racism among Labour's traditional supporters. Labour was faced with a choice. It could have stood firm, at least on the ground of free entry for commonwealth citizens, and waged a campaign against racism, including in its own ranks. There is no evidence that the Labour leadership even considered this option. Everything was sacrificed to electoral expediency, as Richard Crossman, a leading Cabinet minister, made clear. In 1962 he wrote: 'I am proud the Labour Party is leading the fight against the government's immigration bill. We oppose it as a shameful piece of colour bar legislation'.<sup>5</sup>

But after Smethwick he wrote in his *Diarist*: 'Ever since the Smethwick election it has been quite clear that immigration can be the greatest potential vote loser for the Labour Party if we are seen to be permitting a flood of immigrants to come in and blight the central areas of our cities'.<sup>6</sup>

Having decided that black immigration was a vote loser for Labour, the Wilson government attempted to nullify, not racism but this 'political disadvantage', by entering into what became a Dutch auction with the Tories over immigration controls, with Powell calling the bids. It would be wrong however to say that they were trying to steal the Tories' clothes. They were simply resurrecting the themes of British labourism that we have identified under the Attlee government, now put into motion by the logic of electoralism.

The Wilson government pursued a two-pronged strategy sometimes described as 'keep them out, but treat the ones who've got in nicely'. Each bitter pill of further restrictions on black immigration was sugared with a measure to counter racial discrimination — the race relations acts, the CRC, section 11, the urban aid programme. We assess their effectiveness below.

There is not space here to deal with the full record of the Wilson government, from its first act — the renewal of the Tories' 1962 act — to its last — the 1969 immigration appeals act, which deliberately placed bureaucratic delays in the way of those entitled to enter, often of three, four or five years. But it is worth mentioning perhaps the nadir of Labour's policy of appeasing racism, the 1968 commonwealth immigrants act. In response to racist agitation by the Tories and the popular press about a move by several thousand Asians who were British passport holders living in Kenya to come to Britain, the Labour government, with Callaghan as home secretary, rushed a new bill through parliament in three days to deprive them of the right of entry. This act was explicitly racist, introducing the new concept of 'patriality' to deny the right of entry to all those who did not have a parent or grandparent born in Britain. Patriality became the basis of the Tories' 1971 immigration act.

### 'Wilson capitulated to popular pressure and switched to supporting immigration control'

#### The 1974-79 Labour Government

ALTHOUGH OPPOSED to the 1971 Act, the second Wilson government made no moves to abolish it. It began by making a number of minor concessions in entry procedures, but retreated once more in the face of the rising wave of racism in the second half of the decade. In 1976 Alex Lyon, the home office minister in charge of immigration, was sacked for being too liberal. In 1977 the Callaghan government published a green paper on nationality law, proposing two classes of British citizenship — a proposal that was taken up by the Tories and used as the basis of their notorious 1981 nationality act.

As we have said, since the mid-sixties Labour had pursued a two-pronged strategy, in which strict control of black immigration, the precondition of good 'race relations', was accompanied by a battery of measures to achieve them: the race relations act, the urban programme, section 11, the Commission for Racial Equality and the CRCs. They reached their apogee under the 1974-79 Labour government: the 1976 race relations act, the 1977 enhanced urban programme, the 1979 ethnic groups bill. There is not the space here to describe these measures in detail or to assess their shortcomings: the paucity of finance, the lack of teeth, the failure to target black people effectively, the tendency to marginalise 'ethnic' provision. It is no accident that the Tories were able to vote for all these measures.

But we can draw a balance-sheet of the effectiveness of this strategy to eradicate racism simply by asking if by the end of the 1970s racial discrimination had significantly diminished? The answer is no, and we have two authoritative sources for it. The first is surveys such as that conducted by the Policy Studies

Institute in 1984, which concluded that discrimination continued to have a powerful impact on the lives of black people, and that there was no evidence of any real improvement in the economic situation of black people since similar studies a decade earlier.<sup>7</sup> The same picture is reflected in the Runnymede Trust reports *Different Worlds*, published in 1983 and 1986.

The second authoritative source is the views of black people themselves, demonstrated most graphically in the riots of 1980 and 1981.

To complete the record of the last Labour government, one other issue needs to be mentioned: that of the police. During this period they combined the persistent harassment of black people with militaristic operations against anti-racists (culminating in Southall in 1979 when some 350 were arrested and Blair Peach was killed) and a calculated ideological offensive aimed at criminalising black youth. All this took place under a Labour government supposedly committed to ending racial discrimination.

#### Picket in support of Winston Silcott outside the Old Bailey



Neil Kinnock working on another ha

#### Labour under Thatcher

DURING THE first term of the Thatcher government, the Labour leadership adopted a more explicitly anti-racist stance in three main policy areas. In 1980 the NEC circulated an advice note to all GLPs — *Labour and the black electorate* — which drew a highly critical balance-sheet of the 1974-79 Labour government.<sup>8</sup> Roy Hattersley became shadow home secretary, made a self-criticism for having supported the 1968 commonwealth immigrants act, and launched a strong offensive against the Tory government's new nationality bill, promising a 'non-racist, non-sexist nationality act' when Labour returned to power.

The second issue that the Labour leadership took up was the riots of 1980 and 1981. On this issue they were less prepared to acknowledge the centrality of racism, choosing instead to subsume the specific oppression of black youth in a more general, and traditionally Labourist, critique of inner city deprivation.

The third issue was that of positive action policies, mainly in employment, housing and education. Here the lead was taken by a number of Labour councils, most notably the GLC. A programme drawing on these initiatives was included in Labour's programme in 1982, and formed the basis of the proposals in the 1983 election manifesto. They included a senior

minister for racial equality, 'racial disadvantage units' in government departments, positive action programmes with increased resourcing, stronger laws against racist activity, and a major public education campaign against racial prejudice. The manifesto also included a commitment to repeal the 1971 immigration act and the 1981 nationality act (although, sharing the Tories' premise of strict control of black immigration, they proposed to replace them with legislation that was not that dissimilar).

Labour's policies on race in the early eighties were no more radical than those of the Alliance, which they closely paralleled. Yet it is true to say that this was the most explicitly anti-racist stance that Labour had yet taken. What were the reasons for Labour raising the profile of racial inequality in this period? The fundamental reason was the same as that which triggered Labour's shift to the right in the early 1960s when it espoused immigration controls — the calculation of electoral advantage.

In the early 1980s Labour came under increased pressure

left, particularly with councils such as the GLC, Brent and Lambeth. The other, related, factor was the rise of black sections; demanding more radical policies on racism and power to black people within the Labour Party.

The combination of these factors provoked a racist response from a section of the electorate, relentlessly fomented by the Tories and the media. Once again the Labour leadership retreated.

Its current position is reflected in the 1987 election manifesto which has abandoned virtually every one of the commitments contained in the 1983 manifesto on race (except for an unspecified strengthening of the law on racial hatred, and the addition of a vague though welcome encouragement for contract compliance clauses). Notably, it stresses the need for 'firm and fair immigration control' and abandons the commitment to repeal the 1971 and 1981 acts.<sup>10</sup>



Carlton Quarterly/Rediff

hard-hitting speech in defence of black people's rights?

from the black electorate. A number of developments, in particular the riots and the nationality act, served to place race at the top of the political agenda. Labour had done disastrously in the general election, but the most loyal section of Labour's support proved to be black voters, who now assumed a greater proportion of the electoral base of Labour MPs. The creation of the Alliance meant a potential alternative to Labour for black voters. Labour responded to this complex of factors by giving greater emphasis to policies for racial equality.

This shift turned out to be short-lived. The watershed was the 1983 general election. Defeat for Labour led to a general retreat to the right by the Kinnock leadership on all policy issues, including racial equality. In addition, there were four factors specific to race. The first was a reassessment of the black vote. The 1983 election demonstrated that black voters would overwhelmingly vote Labour on class grounds, almost regardless of its policies on race.<sup>1</sup> The second — the other side of this coin — was that anti-racist policies risked losing white votes for Labour. The politics of electoral arithmetic dictated moderation.

This calculation was powerfully affected by two other factors. The first was the association of anti-racism with the hard

1. Quoted in S. Joshi and B. Carter, 'Labour and the creation of racial Britain', *Race and Class* vol XXV no 3, p 56.

2. *Ibid* p 57.

3. Quoted in R. Miles and A. Phizackley, *White Man's Country*, Pluto 1984, p 24.

4. Quoted in Joshi and Carter, p 61.

5. Quoted in Z. Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Race in Britain*, Allen and Unwin 1984, p 60.

6. *Ibid*.

7. I. Brown, *Black and White Britain*, Heinemann 1984.

8. It said the Labour Party had:

'failed to deliver the promised changes in the living and working conditions of Britain's ethnic minorities. We failed to replace the racist immigration laws; or to make immigration laws more flexible in operation; or to end the harassment of blacks by the police — by, for example, repealing "sus" and disbanding the Special Patrol Group; or to take adequate steps to tackle racial disadvantage and give a clear lead in the promotion of equal opportunity policies especially in employment.'

Quoted in M. Fitzgerald and Z. Layton-Henry, 'Opposition Parties and Race Policies 1979-83', in *Race, Government and Politics in Britain*, ed. Z. Layton-Henry and P. Rich, Macmillan 1986, p 109.

9. See Fitzgerald and Layton-Henry p 22.

10. Thanks to Walid Haddad for his comments on this article.

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Many people inside the Labour Party accept that support for anti-sexist and anti-racist policies deeply hurt Labour's electoral chances. Here **JANE WELLS** argues that leftwing anti-sexist and anti-racist policies were not the fundamental reason for Labour's defeat, and that it would be tactically and morally disastrous for Labour supporters to drop these issues.

## Ditching the dispossessed

THESE DAYS people in the Labour Party nod wisely when you say that Labour lost the election because it was too interested in its own inward-looking obsessions, and in 'gesture politics'. The right answer to the kind of poll-peering and soul-searching signalled by questions about political 'obsessions' and 'gestures' is that it is our alleged obsession with equal opportunities, with anti-racist, and anti-sexist policies, that our 'gestures' on lesbian and gay rights and, though to a lesser extent, our 'tokenistic' support for people with disabilities is the problem. In short, our concern with all those issues that interest us

From the left, Campaign group member Brian Sedgemore has weighed in. Promoting interest in the economy at the expense of concern for 'minority rights', he blamed Livingstone, and (most ironically) Kinnock too for doing just the opposite. More perceptive political commentators might think that Kinnock(ism) has failed 'spectacularly' on both counts. And of course, supporters of the *Militant* can continue to argue as they always have, and likely always will, that the unity of the working class is emphatically not built by building support among it for the demands of its most oppressed sections.

much of the left) is on the defensive on these issues.

While the major pressure on Labour's equality policies in the coming years will be the struggles of women, black people and lesbians and gays, and the demands which they raise in the class struggle, the ability of the labour movement as a whole to respond to these demands and advance them politically is crucial.

DURING THE MINERS' strike great political divides seemed to have been travelled, certainly at a rank and file level; with women



— but of course don't affect the electorate — much less the working class, lost us the election. Out there, people are only interested in getting their council house repaired or sold off.

The consensus on this is surprisingly broad.

On the right, the most outspoken exponent, along with Gavin Laird of the AEU, is Joe Ashton MP. Before the election he was joining in Fleet Street's chorus of condemnation of the London Labour Party's interest in equal rights for lesbians and gay men, in particular. Since Labour lost the election he has turned his hand to pursuing the class struggle in parliament — by setting up a social club in the House for the 'working class' members (white, male manual workers preferred).

Predictably, the managers and the realigners in the party leadership (Whitty, Sawyer, Hewitt), have been quick to pin the blame too — if a little more carefully, by identifying the presentation, if not the policies explicitly, as the problem.

Out in the party ranks, activists once galvanised to support for radical policies by the positive developments during the miners' strike, and in local government (particularly during Livingstone's leadership of the GLC) are rethinking and realigning themselves. The defeat of those struggles, followed by another devastating election defeat for the Labour Party, has left many constituency and trade union activists utterly demoralised. The 'London effect', formerly a shadowy possibility (and possibly an invention of the media and the polls), is now perceived as a real and major problem.

The question — 'did our support for minority rights lose us the election?', or even, 'are minority rights causes inherently unpopular with the majority?', is basic, controversial and urgent. The Tories and their media allies are increasing their attacks on black people in particular (encouraged by the successful high-profile racist element to their election campaign) and on lesbians and gay men, while the Labour Party (including

against pit closures, lesbians and gays support the miners groups and the black delegations to the mining communities forging links that shortly before would have seemed impossible. The developments sent shockwaves throughout the NUM, the political landscape there at least seemed to shift and all sorts of possibilities open up. But in a period of political retreat, and when the focus is moved from a section of politically advanced workers in struggle to the working class as a whole (and with all the changes that Thatcherism has wrought in it), the task is all the more difficult, and the opportunities more limited.

Activists, fresh from an election defeat where they were told on too many doorsteps by voters that Labour seems to care about everybody but them and that black lesbians get to the top of the council housing list, are fast concluding, with the encouragement of the press and the party managers, that the best thing to do with 'unpopular' policies is to ditch them — at least until the 'bread and

better' issues can be tackled, presented properly and (in local government) 'basic' services delivered.

There are others in the movement — mainly those people who wouldn't support progressive measures on equal opportunities anyway — who go further. Dropping our commitments on equal opportunities and anti-racism is not simply argued as a damage limitation measure: it is elevated to the point where it is seen as a *solution* to the party's ills, almost as if it was the one thing holding Labour back in June.

Two main issues, closely connected, are central to the debate: the facts about the extent of support for, or opposition to, particular policies; and the political arguments about priorities, and how to build support for Labour.

As far as the facts are concerned, they're notoriously difficult to establish and notoriously easy to bend. Labour did badly in London, with only a 1.6% swing in its favour (compared to 4% nationally), but then again not as badly as it did in the south east as a



the Labour vote — despite the outrageously racist campaigns waged against them.

Whether such results can be taken as an indication of positive support for, or even toleration of progressive stands on policies is debatable. But they do fly in the face of the emerging consensus that 'Labour can't win without modifying its policies'. Labour *can* 'afford' to be identified with the oppressed minorities. The more interesting question is can it afford *not* to be?

On a simple electoral level Labour did badly because it failed to win the core — statistically speaking — and politically key, sections of the working class. Women voters were targeted much more successfully by the Alliance. 14% of skilled workers have been lost to the Tories since 1974, and 13% of trade unionists to the Tories or the Alliance over the same period. Less black people voted Labour than ever before. Without retaining, or rebuilding its black support, Labour stands to lose its ever-more patchy base in London as gentrification and other demographical changes erode its traditional support there.

The fallacy of the argument that it was Labour's obsession with the oppressed which lost Labour the election has been shown by all the serious research on the motives of the electors. It was on far more general policy questions that people made their basic voting decisions. But if Labour did lose some votes because of commitment to the rights of the

### 'Can Labour afford *not* to be identified with the oppressed?'

oppressed, which is possible in London, the policies and responses of the party leadership and the right wing bear a lot of the responsibility.

Before the GLC and Met counties were abolished in 1985, left Labour authorities were in general highly popular. Indeed the scope of community mobilisation over issues like ratecapping showed it. But after abolition in 1985, the right wing media raised their campaign against the 'loony left' in local authorities to a new pitch of hysteria. Anti-racist and anti-sexist policies of course figured prominently in this anti-'loony left' crusade.

The Kinnock leadership, however, instead of confronting this right wing hysterical nonsense, to a large degree went along with it, and utilised it as an opportunity to attack left 'extremists' in local government. Kinnock's famous 1985 conference speech attacking *Militant's* role in Liverpool was symbolic of the whole process. Moreover, the witch hunt inside the party against the left only encouraged the press in its attack on the left in local government, especially its policies on women, black people, lesbians and gay men.

The party leadership helped to construct the mythology of anti-sexist and anti-racist policies as 'loony' and extremist. Much of the media campaign was based on simple lies — for example the famous one that Haringey council had banned the singing of 'Baa, baa black sheep' in schools. But the lies and

hysteria hardly met with robust opposition from the Labour leadership. Instead of attacking the press hysteria, Kinnock attacked its victims.

But of course there is a much deeper fallacy revealed in the argument that people have gone 'too far' in anti-racist and anti-sexist policies — a fallacy revealed very openly by Joe Ashton's sick joke about setting up a 'working class' caucus in parliament. Joe Ashton's caucus would of course be entirely male, white, heterosexual, with an average age of over 50. If Joe Ashton thinks that's what the working class looks like, then he is even more ignorant and narrow-minded than it seems at first sight! Joe Ashton and his ilk mischievously and indelicately counterpose the interests of the most oppressed to those of the 'working class' in a way which neither corresponds to social reality and is profoundly divisive.

From the point of view of socialist morality the Ashton type of argument is bankrupt. Even if defending the most oppressed did cost some votes: it would still be correct to do it. Defending civil rights in the United States in the 1960s undoubtedly cost votes among poor white racist bigots. But few in the Democratic Party, a capitalist party at that, dared to raise the objection that supporting civil rights in the southern United States cost the votes of poor whites. That people should in the Labour Party raise the objection that anti-racist and anti-sexist policies have lost votes, shows a deep-seated political opportunism.

There are of course backward sectors of the working class who can be whipped up behind reactionary policies. Many of these working class people vote Tory anyway. But you can see in some inner-city areas, sections of the white working class whose environment and living standards have declined, opposing anti-racist and anti-sexist policies. These are the kind of people who provide some of the base of SDP support in a constituency like Islington South, or some of the base of support for the Liberals in Liverpool.

Often these sectors include many people who used to vote Labour but have become disillusioned with Labour in government, and the inability of successive Labour governments and right wing local Labour councils to solve any of their problems.

But despite the problem of white workers opposed to anti-racist and anti-sexist policies, you cannot create the basis for future working class unity by capitulating to their views and ditching the oppressed. You can only create that basis by standing up to right wing media witch hunts and by fighting your corner. The Kinnock leadership, of course, have done the opposite.

It is also necessary to make anti-racist and anti-sexist policies a component part of an overall socialist policy aimed at raising working class living standards all round, a policy capable of showing in practice that the interests of the most oppressed are not in any fundamental sense counterposed to those of the mass of the working class. Kinnock and the right wing have not only failed to do this, but are opposed to it.

whole. And a number of left candidates got good results — particularly Jeremy Corbyn, whose Islington North constituency is part of the socialist republic of loony left Islington, where he increased his majority by 10%. Also encouraging was the result of Chris Smith, the only out gay MP, who was returned in the southern half of the same borough, more than doubling his slim 1983 majority of 363. Among Labour's worst results in London — not surprisingly — were constituencies where local (Labour!) councils had imposed massive rate rises, — as in Ealing and Waltham Forest.

And support for Labour in Manchester, where the city council has a much publicised lesbian and gay unit with high profile policies, increased by between 1.5 and 5.9%. Manchester is now completely Tory-free with five Labour MPs representing the city. Four black MPs — all black sections supporters — were also elected, with in most cases minimal swings recorded against Labour in their constituencies or increases to



Denis Doran/Reflex

**Neil Kinnock — wouldn't you like to dent his shield?**

In the March/April issue of *International* (a predecessor of *Socialist Outlook*), **DAVY JONES** reviewed eight years of local government under the Tories and asked the question, 'Is there a future for town hall socialism?' Now, he says, the answer is almost certainly — 'not for much longer'.

## Local government: the crunch



**Southwark council leader, Anne Matthews, and Lambeth council leader Linda Bellos, demonstrate the benefits of a united Labour campaign — against homeless people with this squat-proof door**

THATCHER MADE it clear on election night that one of her few regrets of the first eight years was her failure to adequately 'deal with' Labour councils and local government spending. The Tories are now committed to a far reaching programme to radically restructure local government and remove any possibility of Labour authorities implementing progressive measures. In this term of office

(and the next, which they anticipate) they plan a qualitatively greater series of attacks on local government than the past eight years' financial squeeze.

Economically, these attacks will lead to a major redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich, from the working class to the capitalists — notably through the extension of privatisation, the reactionary poll tax, and the continuing cuts

in local authority spending. Socially, the measures will break up working class communities in the inner cities by splitting up council housing estates, raising rents in the inner cities, weakening the local government trade unions, and drastically cutting services to those most in need.

The Tories aim to deepen the divisions in the working class ideologically



and economically, winning support for individualistic notions of 'freedom' and 'choice' and fanning opposition to equal opportunity policies. Their crowning political goal is to force the relatively popular Labour local authorities to thoroughly discredit themselves in the eyes of the working class by being the agency for carrying through this barrage of reactionary attacks.

Unfortunately it seems that many of the local Labour leaders are only too willing to oblige. The end of an era is beginning — the era when local Labour councils were seen as being different from the old style Labour or Tory councils; committed in varying degrees to progressive policies; expansion of services, and equal opportunities; the embryo of a political alternative to the Tories and to traditional labourism, however inadequate from a Marxist viewpoint. If the next round of the Tory onslaught on local government is not rebuffed the era of 'town hall socialism' will be over.

### 'the role of the local government unions will be vital'

Even before many of the planned Tory structural changes to local government are introduced, many Labour-controlled boroughs are facing immediate financial crises in the latter half of this financial year or for the next year. Many Labour authorities 'miraculously' survived the past eight Tory years by resort to creative accountancy. These measures have now been all but stopped by the government. The Labour councils are now paying the price in more ways than one. First, they face the collapse of leaseback deals with the City which were crucial in balancing this year's books, and the need in the next few years to begin the massive repayments on 'deferred purchase' deals whose income has balanced the books in the last few years.

Second, and just as importantly, they face the 'crying wolf syndrome' — their workforces and local communities have heard the apparently empty threats of huge job losses and service cuts in past years, yet the councils have always somehow muddled through due to creative accountancy. They are simply not believed any more.

The most publicised case of an immediate post-election financial crisis is Camden. In one whirlwind month the council moved from a public commitment on 1 July of its entire ruling La-

bour group to no cuts in jobs and services to the implementation of a vacancy freeze; termination of all temporary contracts, compulsory redeployment of staff, and the sacking of those committee chairs committed to a 'no cuts' policy, by 31 July! The immediacy and scope of these attacks has at least alerted the workforce, community groups and service users in Camden that this time the council isn't crying wolf.

Other Labour authorities in London, Manchester, Oxford and elsewhere around the country are locked in dispute



Carlos Guzmán/Reflex

over how to meet huge financial shortfalls in next year's budgets, with no Labour government to hail them out and

### '"caring cuts" the new watchwords of those Labour councils which have capitulated'

no more creative accountancy 'miracles' on hand. At least ten Labour boroughs in London face deficits next year of £30 million or more (£60m in the case of Camden and more than £100m in Manchester). The projected deficits in future years are completely uncontrollable —

Islington, for example, faces projected deficit, based on no growth, of more than £110m for 1990/91, which is more than its entire current annual expenditure. Efficiency exercises, creative accounting or tinkering at the edges of these deficits are meaningless. Only huge cuts in jobs and services will bridge these projected 'gaps'.

As the councils brace themselves for these cuts, the government are following up with other devastating attacks:

- privatisation of whole areas of council services.
- ending contract compliance methods of local councils.
- outlawing any form of political campaigning by elected councils.
- encouraging tenants to opt out of council estates, and massively raising council house rents.
- breaking up the Inner London Education Authority, and reintroducing selection by the back door by allowing schools to opt out of local education authority control.

### 'the Tories aim to break up Labour's base in the inner cities'

- setting up more unaccountable urban development corporations (UDCs) to take away power from elected local authorities.
- and, finally, a massive redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich by the almost medieval poll tax/community charge.

To successfully resist this daunting programme of structural change to local government would need a mighty, united movement of all those threatened by these Tory proposals — tenants, community organisations, service users, and crucially, the council workforce. Instead the Labour councils' response to their immediate financial crises does precisely the opposite — pitting tenants against council workers; voluntary organisations against other service users, and one section of council workers against another.

THE MOST COHERENT explanation of the new strategy of the Labour councils came from Margaret Hodge, Islington council leader, in a paper to the Association of London Authorities just after the election. Previously she and other 'soft left' council leaders had accepted the 'dented shield' strategy — better to stay in office and prevent cuts in jobs and services by any method (raising rates, creative accounting, and so on) than to

risk confrontation with the government. After Labour's election defeat there is no pretence of a commitment to no cuts; rather jobs and services are to be 'defended' by being . . . cut! By a humane Labour council, rather than a Tory one.

Hodge explained that there were three options: defiance, 'which has been tried, failed and discredited'; resignation, which irresponsibly leaves the way open for the Tories to do the cutting; or 'staying in office and using all our resources and imagination'. And to be more precise, this latter meant that 'services must take precedence over trade union interests or even jobs'. Surprise, surprise, Margaret Hodge opted for the third course of action.

This line is a recipe for complete disaster for Labour in local government. It is already leading and will increasingly lead to Labour councils implementing terrible cuts in jobs and services, which in turn will undermine any capacity for united resistance to the next round of Tory attacks. Having done the Tories' dirty work for them they will fall victim to the Tories' social engineering in the inner cities and their own new unpopularity, and be discarded at the polls.

The Labour and union leaderships have no great sympathy for the Hodges/Blunketts and other former local government 'lefts'. However hard they try to present themselves as 'born again new realists' they are deeply distrusted by the labour bureaucracy, who will be only too happy to see them discredited and discarded. Even in the local government unions little more than token opposition to the Tories can be expected from the union hierarchy. Already in London regional bureaucrats are playing an extremely divisive role — TGWU officials advising stewards in Brent to defend their own jobs by cutting 'micky mouse NALGO jobs', and NUPL officials in Greenwich putting forward a named series of NALGO posts to be cut in order to defend their own jobs.

NOR IS IT just the 'soft left' who have ideologically collapsed into overtly reactionary and divisive policies on local government. Former 'hard left' figures such as Bernie Grant, Graham Stringer and Linda Bellos have all gone down the 'humane cuts' road. In Haringey, Bernie Grant MP, now in the Campaign group, led the Labour right wing into voting with the Tories to defeat the Labour group's motion opposing cuts in jobs and services proposed by the new council leader, Steve King.

In Manchester Graham Stringer led the Labour group into proposing a huge

cuts package involving 4,000 voluntary redundancies. And in Lambeth, Linda Bellos introduced a cuts budget for the 1987/88 financial year, and has voted against no cuts motions in Labour group discussions in next year's budget. More surprising has been the behaviour of supporters of *Socialist Action* in Manchester, Lambeth and Islington — refus-



**Newham refuse collectors — how secure are their jobs?**

ing to vote for a 'no cuts' motion in the Manchester district party debate on the council's financial crisis, and in the two London boroughs characterising motions calling for no cuts in jobs and services as 'divisive'.

But there is growing opposition to the suicidal line of the council and union leaderships, primarily from within the unions, but also within the Labour groups themselves. In Haringey, the group has been split exactly down the middle all summer over how to respond to the crisis, with 20 councillors supporting a 'no cuts' stance. In Camden, nine councillors opposed the drastic measures introduced by the council, supported NALGO's resistance, and were sacked from their group positions. In Lambeth, eight councillors opposed the 1987/88 cuts budget and eleven are now committed to opposing next year's cuts budget. The existence of a minority council opposition against the cuts has had an important effect in stimulating and supporting the key resistance of the council's own workforce, and in legitimising opposition within the community as a whole.

Within the unions at local level, especially NALGO, the response has been quite encouraging with a number of NALGO branches, and joint union committees in Brent, Islington and Lambeth

and the important London Bridge organisation of shop stewards taking a principled stance of unity of all those fighting the Tory attacks. Local community and council workforce-based committees against the cuts have been established in a number of London boroughs. *Labour Briefing* supporters have played a central role in building and leading the opposition in Camden, Lambeth, Haringey, Brent and other London boroughs, both in the unions and in the council chamber.

The alternative, in Labour-controlled boroughs, to Hodge's 'kind cuts and capitulation' is 'defiance', which has never been seriously attempted except by Liverpool and Lambeth. It succeeded one year for Liverpool in extracting more government cash. In the second year councillors were surcharged (though they have not yet personally suffered the financial effects due to labour movement collections) but jobs and services were protected just as well, if not better, than by the 'creative accountants'.

Defiance may seem unrealistic or dangerously uncertain, but the alternative is absolutely certain to lead to huge cuts in services and jobs. Defiance means a strategy of maximising, locally and nationally, the broadest united opposition of all those facing Tory attacks — council workers, tenants, the voluntary sector, community groups, and service users — into a campaign of mass action to force the government to back down, on some or all of its proposals, and to grant more money.

Such a strategy relies not on individual councillors but on mass involvement. It entails a united campaign of mobilisation to establish the real social needs of the borough/city and the demand for the council to expand jobs and services through a (deficit) budget to meet those needs, funded by extra government cash and/or the cancellation of the huge debt repayment charges which councils pay each year. Links can be made with other groups involved in similar and related struggles against the Tories, especially teachers and parents defending education. Demands must be raised for the defence and extension of local democracy and accountability with the expansion of community, service users' and council workers' control of those services.

Building strong links with the community is vital for council workers to sense the support they need to take the industrial action which will undoubtedly prove necessary to stop the Tory attacks. Patient explanation and consistent propaganda on the extent of the council's

financial crises and the scope of the Tories' planned attacks on local government will be needed to persuade council workers that such a response is needed. Many local councils are cynically introducing their financial cuts piecemeal, and with great stress on their continuing commitment to 'defending jobs and services', while their three year financial plans will in fact decimate them, in order to lull their staff into a false sense of security and to neutralise any effective mass opposition.

At each stage the workforce unions will have to carefully select the tactics to respond to the councils' attacks and to maximise the unity and strength of their opposition. Regional and national initiatives will be crucial for demonstrating the depth of opposition to the financial cutbacks. It may only be a minority in each borough or city, but regionally and nationally that aggregate of minorities could be a powerful force. The planned London conference against the cuts, initially proposed by *Briefing* and called by London Bridge and Camden NALGO is a good example of the initiatives needed.

One thing is absolutely clear as we face the next wave of Tory attacks on local government: the role of the local government unions will be central in defeating them. In most boroughs will either be Tory councils where the main attack will come through privatisation of local government services, or Labour authorities applying, in one way or another, the Tory cuts. It is likely that only a tiny minority of Labour councils will actually have a majority for defiance. Even where a Labour council decides on defiance, as the experience of Liverpool shows, this cannot proceed without the continued support of, and co-ordination with, the local government unions.

It has to be said, however, that despite some promising signs at local level, nationally none of the local government unions have anything like a strategy which can defeat the Tory attack. As we pointed out above, in some places NUPE and TGWU officials are trying to defend their members' jobs at the expense of NALGO workers. But even NALGO nationally, despite an acute awareness of the potentially disastrous effects of local government privatisation on its half-million local government membership, refuses to adopt a national policy of strike action. Instead it proposes 'publicity' and 'winning public support' in opposition to government policy — fine in itself but not a policy capable of winning anything. If the new Tory attack on local

government is to be repelled, opposition to the line of the union leadership has to be built up in co-ordination with local struggles and campaigns.

Breaking the resistance of the public sector unions to their plans to slash public spending is a key plank of the Tories' strategy. Organising the fight-

back in local government will therefore be a central issue for the whole labour movement over the next few years. It will provide a key test for all currents on the left of their seriousness about building a class struggle current in the labour movement. Failure in the struggle will bring 'town hall socialism' to an end.

## Camden — a test case

Camden's Labour council agreed a package of cuts at the beginning of July in an attempt to bridge a budget deficit of £11 million. There was no consultation with Labour parties, the workforce, or the wider community. The Labour group was elected on a manifesto commitment to 'maintain services and jobs and to fight for local democracy'. The council has now begun to attack the basis of its support in the borough. A freeze on all vacancies means the loss of over 900 jobs, and the contracts of some 300 temporary staff will not be renewed. Workers have already been sacked as a result. Overtime has been cut, and both repairs and modernisation to council housing have been severely restricted.

The council leadership have presented this package as a stalling operation until consultation can be arranged. With a shortfall of £40 million next financial year, and anger over the initial cuts, any 'consultation' will simply be a smokescreen. The machinery for dismantling council and voluntary sector services is already in place, with managers being asked to prepare budgets for 5, 20, and 40 per cent cuts. Early retirement and voluntary redundancy schemes are now in preparation, with compulsory redundancies likely before the end of the year.

Tony Dykes, leader of the council, has gone as far as stating publicly that part of the blame for this financial crisis lies with the council. The soft left have cobbled together an accountant's strategy, and are under pressure from a coalition of old and new right wingers (the latter organised as the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and advertising themselves as Camden Tribune).

This group is enthusiastically calling for further cuts as insurance against the district auditor.

Nine *Labour Briefing* councillors have consistently opposed cuts in jobs and services. They have been removed from committee positions on the basis of standing orders, despite inaction against those right wingers who engaged in amicable discussions with the district auditor in the spring. Camden NALGO, the building workers

union CGATE, and ASTMS (representing workers in Camden funded organisations) have all voted overwhelmingly not to co-operate with cuts. NUPE, however, has opted for a sweetheart deal with the council that is not on offer. Even this rare success for the leadership is now in doubt, with home help shop stewards now opposing their branch leadership as the consequences of the vacancy freeze start to hurt clients.

Workers in NALGO are facing threats of lockout, pay docking, and (spiriously) personal surcharge. Despite the council's expressed desire to protect frontline services, the homeless persons unit remains closed (due to lack of staff), other sections in housing and social services departments are operating a reduced service, and branch libraries are threatened with closure. Provision for under-fives is on the point of collapse. Plans have already been formulated to sell off parts of the council's housing stock and other assets.

The voluntary sector, providing many services to the most disadvantaged and oppressed sections of the community, is overwhelmingly opposed to the council's plans. Camden *Labour Briefing* has initiated a borough-wide campaign against this and subsequent rounds of cuts. Leadership and right wing councillors have received a hostile reception when attempting to explain to workplace meetings and community groups why their funding, service or job is going to go, and refuse to debate with the nine councillors opposed to the abandonment of the manifesto.

Right wing councillors are going straight to the press with allegations of *Labour Briefing* 'freemasonry' (sic) in the town hall, and accusing the now deposed chair of the gay and lesbian committee of queue-jumping the housing list. In the first case, officers in the gay and lesbian unit were threatened with disciplinary action. The second allegation undermined council policy on sexual harassment, the councillor concerned having suffered abuse and threats because of her sexuality. Clearly, a witch hunt is underway, with anti-lesbianism a feature of it.

**BARBARA GREEN** suggests that the result of the NEC-sponsored 'review' of women in the Labour Party is not without its dangers.

THERE IS only one word to describe the past twelve months for women in the Labour Party — *dismal*. We have been subjected to macho Neil strutting across our tv-screens always accompanied by Glensys — the woman we should all strive to be like. We have our conferences cancelled, postponed or just forgotten about. At last year's party conference we got a promise of a women's ministry to fight for the interests of women. Well, Jo Richardson has been allowed into the shadow cabinet, as minister for women's rights — unfortunately she is the only woman in the cabinet.

Also at last year's party conference the lads decided we women organised in the Labour Party needed shaking up. Did they propose a joint campaign with the unions to organise and defend women part-time workers? Did they propose we set up a campaign with black women's organisations to oppose racist and sexist immigration laws? Did they ask us to work with Irish women to oppose strip searching? No, they proposed to review the organisation and conference of Labour women. Discussion in every women's section, trade union branch and CLP were promised. Not exactly the kind of the thing that would grab the attention of women in struggle you might think — you'd be right, especially in an election year. In so far as the discussion has happened, it has frustrated and demoralised women.

Women in the Labour Party and the unions *do* want to discuss changes to encourage more trade union women to be active in the women's organisations, but we also want to encourage more black women, more lesbians, more Irish women — women in all fields of struggle — to be organised as women in the Labour Party. To achieve this we need an active, open, interesting and powerful organisation, where we have discussions and make decisions on our own terms, not those of the NEC and male-dominated union leaderships.

The story of who supported the review and why is a complex and sordid one. NUPE were keen, a section of the Labour women's action committee (LWAC) leadership were extremely keen, and of course the national executive committee thought it a good idea too!

Sections of NUPE and LWAC are interested in getting Labour Party conference to agree that the women's conference elect the women's places on the NEC. But for this to be worthwhile for

certain trade union leaderships, the composition of the women's conference would have to be altered, in order to give themselves more power.

The proposal from LWAC is that the trade unions and socialist societies have a 50 per cent bloc and women from the CLPs have the other 50 per cent. If the number of delegates within the bloc for the unions is tied to the number of women members in each union, then some unions, like NUPE, COHSE and GMB would get proportionally more than the AEU, EFTPL, and so forth. This would make the election of right wing women to the NEC less likely.

While this change should be supported, it is not a panacea — in the way that a section of the LWAC leadership believes. At the same time as putting forward this method of increasing the trade union vote, LWAC is also proposing to decrease the number of delegates from the CLPs. It argues this on the basis of 'rationalising' and making the women's conference more 'respectable'. This is a stab in the back to women in the CLPs to placate certain trade union leaders. We should not ignore the NEC's role in the review. They also want to change the women's conference. Kinnoch's 'party fit to govern' does not include bolshy feminists having a say in policy making.

It remains unclear at the time of writing what will happen at party conference on this question. The consultation that was supposed to have taken place has not happened. The national labour women's committee produced a document to facilitate discussion and was supposed to have held a conference on 12 September to assess the results of the consultation and make recommendations to the NEC. This was cancelled because somebody somewhere decided to reorganise the postponed national conference of Labour women originally scheduled for last May and now reorganised for November. No doubt some convenient excuse will be thought up to cancel that as well!

The net result of having the review forced upon us has been negative. The LWAC leaders have busied themselves wheeling and dealing with anyone prepared to talk to them. National and regional women's committees have had their activity thwarted. We need a women's organisation that is powerful and representative. We will only achieve this through struggle and action, not through constitutional games and deals with the union leaderships.

THE SEXUAL abuse of children, like all other forms of rape, is not essentially about sexual desire or frustration. It is about the abuse of power by a father-figure (a father or any man who has the position of power enjoyed by a father). The position of children, and especially girls, in the family is one of powerlessness. These power structures exist in 'normal' families which are not abusive as well as ones which are, and as long as father-figures have this power the possibility of child sexual abuse will remain. The problem of powerlessness is not reversed by the medical establishment and social services when they 'deal with' child sexual abuse; in fact they compound the problem.

The existence of the family allows sexual abuse to happen and to remain secret. Sexual abuse is particularly damaging because it happens in the family. The fact that the father-figure has total access puts the child in constant fear. Because the child is assumed to be protected by the father-figure, other people are disbelieving when the abuse is disclosed; and because the child wants to be protected and loved by him the abuse is a long-lasting betrayal of trust.

The male-dominated family is necessary to the ruling class and is defended by it. The existence of the family relieves the state of the responsibility for the reproduction of the labour force and for the initial socialisation of children into bourgeois ideas. The power structures within the nuclear family divide men from women and adults from children, and also restrict women and children in their ability to fight.

With the increase in reported child sexual abuse cases, the inherent dangers for children of living in families could become apparent to more people. How does the ruling class smooth out the contradictions between defending the family and being seen to care for children, and actually turn the growing awareness of child sexual abuse to its advantage?

The solution has been to invent the myth that sexual abuse only happens in 'dysfunctional' families — when the 'normal' family structure has broken down. Another ploy has been to give the impression, through panic headlines and articles using words like 'mushrooming' and 'epidemic', that the actual incidence of child sexual abuse is increasing, even though there is no way of knowing this. Both these ideas mean that the ruling class can blame child sexual abuse on the 'breakdown of the family' — the increase in the number of 'dysfunctional families'. We know that sexual abuse happens in families of all classes but because the social services intervene mainly in working class and black families, child sexual abuse cases are discovered in these families and they are labelled 'dysfunctional'.

Part of the uproar about Cleveland has been that because some of the children are referred to social services by CPS the accused father-figures are middle class. This is a threat to the myth of the dysfunctional family. Middle class father-figures are more able to attack the agents of the state, in this case social services departments.



# Child sexual abuse • what policy for socialists ?

James Gardiner

**Dr Marietta Higgs on her way in to Middlesborough town hall**

In recent months there has been a storm of publicity surrounding the response of doctors and social workers to the sexual abuse of children. In Cleveland right wing Labour MP Stuart Bell has waged a witch hunt against social workers who, despite all the limitations of their approach, at least have tried to intervene and disclose cases of child sexual abuse.

Different socialist journals have developed different approaches to this question. Here, **DANI AHRENS** and **JUDITH PATON** initiate a discussion by arguing that socialists must concentrate on demands which empower children to defend them both against sexual abuse by adults and the arbitrary diktats of statutory agencies.

The question of whether to defend the family against the state or vice versa can only be answered by answering the question of how to defend the child in each case. What this really means is empowering children to defend themselves.

While we defend those, like Dr Marietta Higgs and the Cleveland social services department, who emphasise the need to act quickly when sexual abuse of a child has been disclosed or discovered, it is important to point out the many ways in which the care system and the medical establishment fail

children. It is by no means certain that being taken into care means being removed from danger. One thing that is certain is that the experience is not an empowering one.

For the victims of sexual abuse, power is something which is always denied, by the family, doctors, hospitals, social workers, charitable agencies, the police, courts, and the care system. Because 'dealing with' child sexual abuse is centred on convicting the abuser, examinations intended to provide evidence for prosecution, rather than to heal the child, are carried out unnecessarily; children are subjected to harsh interviews which are taped or video-recorded without their

knowledge; and once the case reaches court, the burden is placed on the child to prove that they are innocent of lying.

The practice of family therapy as an alternative to removing the child from home forces children into contact with their abuser, and therefore places them in danger of repeated abuse and punishment for their disclosure. Family therapy silences the child, because a lot of what the child wants to say is about the rest of the family. It is only a feasible option to use family therapy if you believe that the abusive family is a dysfunctional family which must be rebuilt.

Although being taken into care removes the child from the power of the abuser, it replaces one position of powerlessness by another. The administration of the homes is all-powerful in deciding who the children can see, where they can go, and how much money they can have, for example. Living in a crowded dormitory continues the lack of privacy which is experienced by victims of sexual abuse. The fact that the whole system is under-resourced compounds these problems. The common feature of all these things is that the child has no control over what happens. Another example of this is Esther Rantzen's 'Childline' which reports cases to the social services or the NSPCC without the child requesting that they do so.

The increasing awareness of the scale of the problem, and the growing realisation of the terrible effect it has had on the lives of millions of people, mean that socialists must do more than point out the shortcomings of the family. The fundamental demand that socialists must make is for the right of children to make choices at every stage. The choice of whether to go into care must be made a real and empowering option. This means more resources must be put into the care system, to make it habitable for abused children. Any decision to prosecute must be made by the child, and the procedure must be made as painless as possible, with the child being in control of the legal decisions made, and with the burden of proof put on the father-figure. This would make it easier to remove the father-figure from the family, in order that the child could safely go home. These measures are aimed at restoring to children the power which has been denied to them.

Child sexual abuse has existed as long as the family has existed. It takes place in families of all social classes and in times of prosperity as well as depression. It is not poverty, the 'breakdown of the family', or simply patriarchy which causes child sexual abuse, but the fact that the family is used by the ruling class to limit people's ability to fight. Empowering children would destroy the power structure of the nuclear family in capitalist society. Unlike radical feminists, we believe that a challenge to the family is a challenge to capitalism, not only to patriarchy, because of the dependence of the ruling class on the nuclear family structure.

*We invite readers to contribute to this discussion. Please keep articles to 500 words and submit by 12 October for publication in our next issue.*

Wall Street  
Banquet,  
1928,  
Ministry of  
Education



## ROGER SPENCER

DIEGO RIVERA was the best known of the artists who dominated the mural movement which flourished in Mexico between the two world wars.

That mural painting was to become Mexico's peculiar contribution to the achievements of modern art was the result of the particular cultural, social and political history of Mexico. The cataclysmic events of the Mexican revolution between 1910 and 1920 were the impetus for the mural movement.

In many ways the Mexican revolution was not one but two revolutions — one successful, one frustrated. On the one hand it resulted in the overthrow of the ramshackle oligarchy of landowners lead by Porfirio Diaz and its replacement by a modernizing capitalist state and ruling class.

On the other hand, this transition of political power from what in one sense was one wing of the ruling class to another was not achieved, as in other Latin American countries, without the eruption onto the political stage of the armed and organised struggle of the mass of the Mexican population, predominantly the peasantry, in pursuit of its own independent aspirations.

In the aftermath of the revolution the mural



Our Bread, 1928, Ministry of Education

## Mexican murals

movement of Rivera, Siqueiros, Orozco and others was born. The mural provided the radical and revolutionary artists of the time, with the opportunity to develop forms of public art which sought to articulate the experiences and aspirations of the masses following the revolution to a still largely illiterate public. For the new state it gave the chance to show that its radicalism was still alive, if not in its policies at least in the art that it sponsored.

Rivera was the artistic and political leading light of this movement. In 1922 he was a founding member of the Mexican Communist Party

and in 1923 together with others formed an artists' trade union, whose manifesto proclaimed 'Art must no longer be the expression of individual satisfaction... but should become a fighting educative art for all'.

In fact, in the twenties, the political bureau of the Mexican Communist Party contained a majority of painters!

In a series of commissions from various institutions of the state throughout the twenties and thirties, Rivera developed his mastery of mural composition combining the lessons of his years of study of European painting, from Renaissance frescoes to



Cubism with an understanding of Mexican history, recent, colonial and pre-Columbian together with the indigenous and popular art forms.

In the murals he painted Rivera constructed powerful and poetic narratives of the everyday life of the mass of workers and peasants, their experiences of the revolution and his aspirations for a socialist future and, latterly, vivid panoramas of national history.

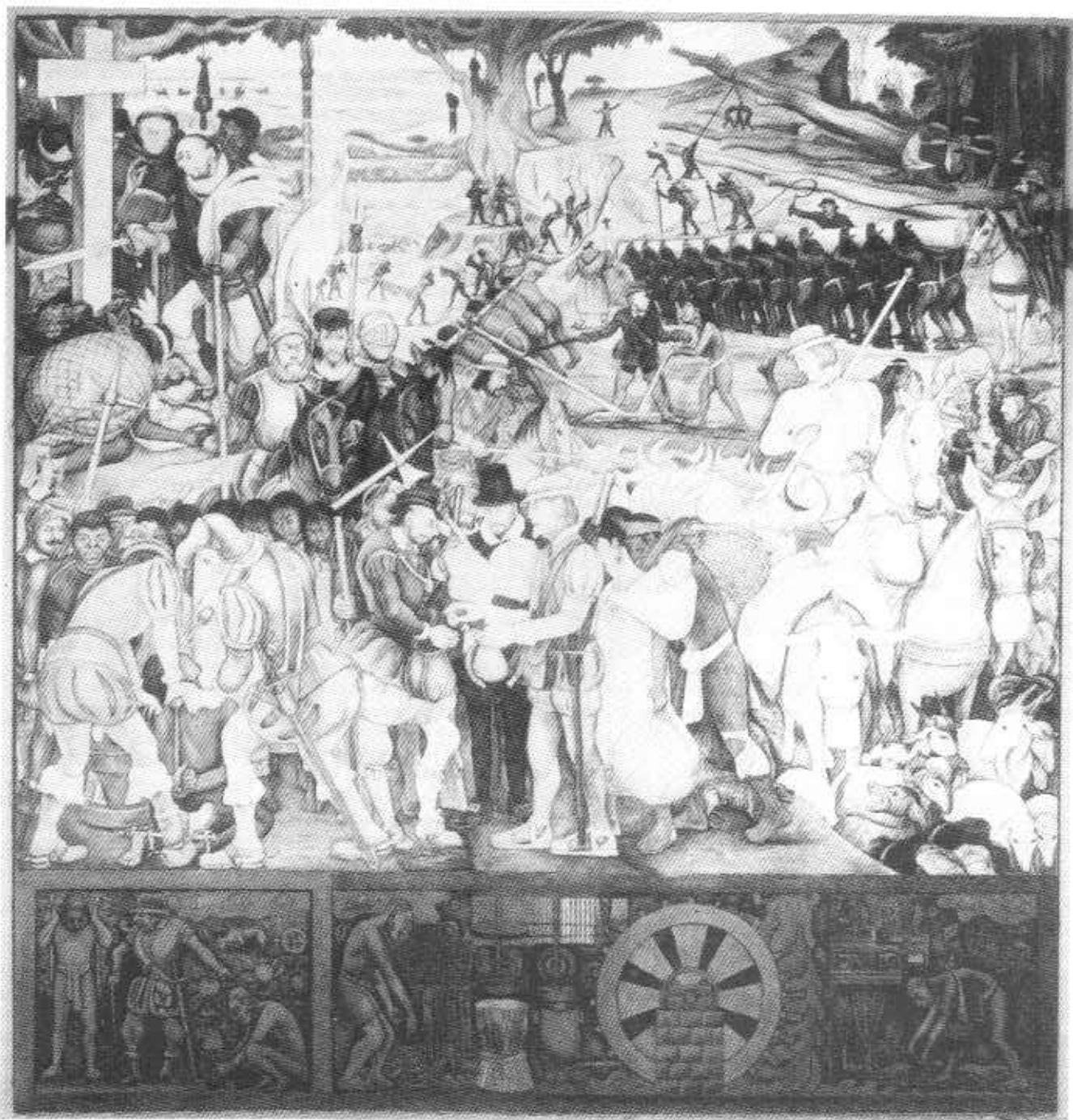
In the thirties he worked on commissions in the United States, most famously on one from John D Rockefeller: 'Man at the crossroads' which was destroyed when Rockefeller discovered that it contained a huge portrait of Lenin.

Rivera was expelled from the Mexican CP for his support of Trotsky and in fact it was at his prompting that Trotsky was allowed to seek refuge in Mexico in 1937, living for the first two years in Rivera's 'Blue House'. Two years later he broke from Trotsky.

Always a politically restless and undisciplined militant, Rivera finally ended up back in the CP with his erstwhile colleague and Trotsky's would-be assassin, Siqueiros.

Rivera's artistic work was prodigious. The commissions he received comprised not just one or two murals, but often hundreds of paintings in a

# REVIEWS



**The burning of Judases, 1924, Ministry of Education**

single building; each commission conceived as an ideological and artistic whole. It is almost impossible to properly appreciate the full power of Rivera's art without seeing it in situ in Mexico City and elsewhere. But not everybody can afford such artistic safaris. The forthcoming exhibition of

fullscale colour reproductions to take place at the Hayward gallery in London provides an opportunity to see the work of a great revolutionary artist.

Journeyman Press are to be congratulated in publishing one of the first books devoted to Rivera in English. In an inexpensive format Desmond Rochfort's book\* provides a

guide to all Rivera's major mural cycles in the context of of the artist's personal biography as well as the political developments of Mexico's recent past. With its full colour reproductions which show the murals in their architectural setting, it is an invaluable aid in unravelling Rivera's

sometimes rather obscure (to the non-Mexican) symbolism and the narrative techniques he employed in the different mural cycles. It is a book to buy.

\* To be published on October 29 by Journeyman Press, £9.95. The exhibition at the Hayward gallery starts on the same day.

# Welcome re-issues

DAVID GRANT

*Ernst Friedrich War Against War* Journeyman. £6.95  
*Asia Briggs Marx in London — an illustrated guide* Journeyman. £2.95

TWO WELCOME re-publications from *Journeyman* should be added to everyone's bookshelves — and not only to support the efforts of a radical publisher to keep alive works that would otherwise go out of print.

*War Against War* first published in 1924 by the anarchist pacifist Ernst Friedrich is a gruelling photographic/political commentary upon the carnage of the first world war. It is also an internationalist call to oppose war from an activist who participated in the many youth organisations that flourished in Germany in the revolutionary period following the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Yet more than this it is an analysis of the system of capitalist exploitation that focusses specific attention upon the psychological conditioning of people which results in acceptance of war in the name of 'honour', 'democracy', 'father/motherland'. Its message is as valid today as it was in the inter-war period when Friedrich was imprisoned for 'high-treason', his book along with his 'Anti-war' museum later being suppressed by the nazis.

The photographic images together with the biting irony of the commentary amass damning evidence against those responsible for war. The culprits never for one instant escape the accusing finger Friedrich points at them. The depiction of mass slaughter builds with an effect that is similar to a film, the black and white photographs piling upon each other like so many of the dead and smashed bodies they have captured on film.

Those in the labour movement who (correctly) denounce the potential use of nuclear weapons and yet



'To die like a hero' from Friedrich's 'War against war'

(mistakenly/hypocritically?) campaign for a massive build up of conventional weaponry would do well to study this

book. In an age when military experts talk of 'surgical strikes' and 'low-intensity operations' it is a reminder and a warning about the reality of twentieth century mass murder.

The second book is in a much lighter vein. *Marx in London — an illustrated guide* takes us through the trials and tribulations of the Marx family's long period of exile in London. With maps and photographs we go for a tour of the pubs Karl and his comrades met and rank in. We meet up with the Italian, German and French exiles who came together to form the 'International Working Men's Association' in 1864, go for a Sunday outing to Hampstead

Heath, learn of the tragedies that befell most of Marx and Jenny Von Westphalen's children, and, of course, visit the famous desk in the British museum and the cemetery in Highgate. Don't expect any great political insights into his work or an in-depth analysis of Victorian London! After all, this is a reprint of a BBC pamphlet that was released to mark the screening of a short programme about Marx, broadcast in 1982. As Thatcher and Tebbit push ahead to eliminate socialism from our television screens and bookshelves, it is to *Journeyman's* credit that they are keeping this little book alive. Nice one!

## Marxism analysed

MICHAEL LOWY

*Ernest Mandel, The place of Marxism in history. Notebooks for Study and Research, Number 1, 1986.*

THIS NEW SERIES of brochures published by the Amsterdam-based International Institute for Research and Education is inaugurated by a remarkable text from Ernest Mandel. Rejecting the abstract, academic and positivistic view of Marxism as a 'pure science' unconnected to the social movement, he sets out to apply the materialist interpretation of history to Marxism itself: in other words, to situate it in its general historical context and dialectical relation — at once integration, critique and supersession — with the social sciences of his time, with utopian socialism and with the workers movement.

In 30 clear, precise and coherent pages, Mandel presents the genesis of Marxism, its fundamental features, the personal itinerary of Marx and Engels, and the reception of their ideas in the world.

The place of Marxism in history must be understood at two levels: as the conscious expression of the real movement for self-emanicipation of workers in the capitalist system, Marxism is a modern phenomenon; but it is also the heir and executor of thousands of years of emancipatory efforts by toiling humanity, the continuation of an old tradition of dreams and fights by poor people, the exploited and the oppressed.

One of the main contributions of this brochure is its critique of the linear, economistic and mechanistic interpretations of Marxism — to which it counterposes a truly dialectical conception of the contradictions of historical progress. Along with the spread of the capitalist mode of production — particularly in colonised countries — came the ambiguities of the social and economic progress embodied in bourgeois society. 'The violent, disruptive, destructive and inhuman impact of capitalism on pre-capitalist societies in the Americas, Asia and Africa was far worse than its impact on pre-capitalist societies in western, southern, central and eastern Europe. Marx and

Engels were too rigorous scientists and too passionate humanists not to notice this, to be indignant about it and to revolt against these abominable crimes.'

It was precisely a linear view of progress which was the main weakness of second international Marxism. The supersession of capitalism by socialism was more or less inevitable, as a result of economic evolution, and these Marxists paid only scant attention to the decisive importance of political initiative. Often this implied downplaying and even disparaging of direct action by the masses, a theme which remained confined to anarcho-syndicalist circles until 1905 (when the international current represented by Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky emerged).

This concise work of Mandel is not only an exceptionally valuable educational tool — as an initiation to Marxism from a committed and activist standpoint — but also an original contribution that enriches and renews the debate on the place of Marxism in history.





## Cleaner fish

DIANA PATON

*Zoë Fairbairns Closing Methuen*  
£10.95.

*CLOSING* follows four women from varying backgrounds — traditional working class, traditional bourgeois, one self-made career woman and a feminist, over several months. While at the start of the novel they seem rather hand-picked (even including a Thatcher character, complete with shop-keeping parents), by the end of the book Fairbairns has created four real people, all of whom we are interested in and care about.

These women meet on a women's sales training course (START, selling... women!) all aiming at material success of various types for different reasons. The question Fairbairns poses within the

book is whether women can succeed in a man's world; and if they can, at what cost?

None of them finds the success she wants. The feminist magazine Teresa Beale is struggling to save from bankruptcy is taken over. It is transformed into 'the magazine for the woman who knows that the battle is over and she has won'. 'New Atlanta' tries to prove its slogan by showing a host of token women who have 'made it' — within the existing system — including, of course, Thatcher herself. However, *Closing* shows the fallacy of this idea — even the bourgeois 'feminist/feminine' woman at whom the magazine is aimed faces great hostility at work. She cannot proceed further than a certain point on the career ladder.

Fairbairns argues that women can only succeed by becoming 'cleaner-fish'. The metaphor refers to a mythical

breed of fish which are allowed safely in and out of sharks' mouths, to clean the sharks' teeth. If women do not act like this towards men, but try and compete on equal terms, they are crushed — as happens to Daphne Barclay. A woman who 'sees only two kinds of people: customers and competitors'.

Fairbairns' analysis is fine as far as it goes, but it ignores the differences in the options open to women of different classes. All the women in *Closing* achieve limited success in business. The problems facing them are very similar — hostility and patronising attitudes from male colleagues. These problems are faced individually; there is little recognition of the importance of the *collective* struggle of women over issues such as equal pay. That sort of question does not arise, because Fairbairns' characters are not involved in situations

where these struggles are likely to occur. The questions of class action and solidarity are not really taken up.

Fairbairns believes that women are at a disadvantage because we live in a man's world, rather than a male-dominated capitalist world. Thus all women's interests are seen as the same. The idea that feminist projects would be more successful if they learnt bourgeois techniques is presented as acceptable, as long as the techniques are taught by a woman.

Zoë Fairbairns' books have become more expensive since she moved from *Virago* to the mainstream *Methuen*, and £10.95 will be prohibitive to many. Still, I found *Closing* an enjoyable and very well written book. I would recommend it as holiday reading for socialists and feminists — such a shame the holidays seem such a distant memory now!

# Tolpuddle muddied

## JEAN RILEY

IF YOU WANT to know the full story of the Tolpuddle martyrs and their importance in the history of the British trade unionism then don't expect to find out from this film by Scots director Bill Douglas. As someone who knows not much more than the bare bones of their story, I was left in exactly the same state of ignorance when I left the cinema.

For instance, the audience is told little of the political context of the events surrounding the six farm labourers from Dorset; or the effect their case had on the infant trade union movement in Britain at the time; or indeed, the role the events at Tolpuddle played in the growth of the non-conformist and Chartist movements in

the nineteenth century. A short sequence at the beginning of the film of farm workers (mainly women) being attacked by soldiers for smashing farm equipment and burning hayricks and one brief reference to Ned Ludd were the only clues we were given that anything else was going on at the time.

Clearly, it is not Douglas's aim to educate his audience on the historical details of the period. Instead, the film concentrates on the religious influences on Loveless and the other 'martyrs'. All were methodists apart from one of the six who, as it happened, wasn't a trade unionist either and who was only arrested because he took the place of his brother when the police came for them.

Methodism and ideas of

brotherly love were the driving forces behind these men who had no intention of breaking any laws or using violence of any kind. Indeed, when they were arrested the six submitted totally and one policeman was able to chain them together and lead them away without any resistance.

Even the union which George Loveless set up — a branch of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers — had quasi-religious initiation rites which made new members seem more like budding masons than potential trade unionists. The irony of this is that the six were actually charged and deported for 'administering illegal oaths'.

One element of the story which was touched on but which could have been

developed to great effect was the role of the women who appeared to have played some part in the London-Dorchester Committee which was set up to campaign for the six and to look after their wives and families — shades of women against pit closures and the miners' support groups.

The film is very long — three hours — and contains some very quirky cinematic devices, but it is not at all tedious and is very beautiful to look at, especially the scenes set in Australia. In fact, apart from the brutality suffered by some of the martyrs, the six seemed better off living in the sunshine in Botany Bay than the poor sods left up to their knees in mud back in Tolpuddle which throughout the film managed to live up well to the latter half of its name.

## A clash of festivals

## GORDAN MORGAN

THE ATTEMPT to change Glasgow's image has recently scored some notable successes. From 'no mean city' and gangs of the 1930s and 1960s to 'Glasgow's miles better', from 'red Clydeside' to 'garden festival '88' and 'European city of culture '89'.

The accolade 'city of culture' was won against competition which included Edinburgh, Scotland's capital and traditional cultural centre as well as host to its own major festival. The people of Glasgow's response to these changes of image is bemusement. Glasgow is still at the bottom of most European scales for multiple deprivation — lung cancer, infant mortality, unemployment, housing and so forth. Yet the city centre has been transformed. Billions are being invested in city centre housing, office blocks and wine bars; theatre, concerts and opera play to packed houses; a new opera house is being built, four and five-star hotels and conference centres are continually being planned and built.

In many ways Glasgow is a city of two parts — the city centre is being made fit for

institutions, traders, yuppies, dinkies and tourists — the peripheral housing estates are left to sraginate with decaying housing, massive unemployment, poverty and drugs.

However, the transformation is incomplete: there is still substantial cultural identification between the estates and the centre. It was to maintain this and strengthen the potential for political response that 'Mayfest' was born.

Mayfest started five years ago largely at the instigation of the trades council and the Labour Party. It grew out of frustration that Mayday was increasingly being 'secularised' and made irrelevant to the community and that therefore a political and cultural initiative was required. It drew on the fact that community and political theatre companies and folk and rock groups continued to spring up around the city. It also drew on the desire for a rival festival to Edinburgh.

In some ways these objectives have been achieved. There is still a political theme to Mayfest. It started this year after the Mayday march with a special concert with Dick Gaughan and songs by

Hamish Henderson — it ended a fortnight later with a special concert in aid of Nicaragua to an audience of 2000 with Ben Elton, Alternative Cabaret and Wildcat. Throughout the Festival there were political events — from the celebration of the Glasgow weavers strike, to political theatre, songs and cabaret. Although there were many non-political events and shows also, the theme remained clear.

Mayfest audiences were mainly drawn from Glasgow and surrounding areas, yet there was a distinct shortage of people from the peripheral schemes. The cost of travel and tickets to a city centre venue is more than the unemployed can regularly afford even with concessions for the unwaged. Fortunately, this year more 'community events' were organised in 46 tenant, unemployed and community centres throughout the city. Yet few of the main festival acts performed in neighbourhood locations, a notable exception being Wildcat who played to acclaim in at least 17 locations courtesy of NALGO sponsorship.

The clash between a 'traditional' festival and a

'working class' festival was apparent in media complaints about the lack of performances by Scottish Opera, BBC Symphony, Scottish National Orchestra and other musical groups resident in Glasgow who would have been approached to play in a traditional festival.

Glasgow's international jazz festival, on the other hand, was firmly in the 'traditional' mode. Many of Glasgow's pubs and clubs have regular jazz nights, and these and others extended the range of acts performing. However, the only locations where the likes of Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie and Sarah Vaughan could be heard were traditional theatres with subsidised but still expensive tickets, again in the city centre. Community events were not a central theme.

Glasgow's festivals are very successful — being well-attended and in helping to alter Glasgow's image. Much more work is needed to involve the community, however, if they are to be a vehicle for 'cultural change'. Trade union involvement and sponsorship of this type of initiative is essential to achieve that end.

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