

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

**Tony Benn  
on where  
now for  
the left?**

See page 5



# A sick and crazy system

Socialism is in trouble, they've all been telling us recently — the Thatcherites and their SDP understudies, the press and the TV, Labour's right wing and soft left.

Socialism, they say, is a dead dogma, an outmoded product of a grim past which the world — or at least the advanced, mainly white, world of Europe, the USA and Japan — has happily put behind it.

In Britain Thatcher has been celebrating her triumph in the General Election with an organised pillaging of the public economy, selling off shares in a government-organised orgy of plunder.

Thatcher says she is creating 'people's capitalism', drawing millions of ordinary people into the capitalist betting shop in stocks and shares. Millions more would learn to love and worship and trust the great god to whose worship Mrs Thatcher has in the last eight years sacrificed the jobs of millions, and the very lives of unknown tens of thousands — the capitalist market.

In America and Britain, Germany and Japan, the ruling classes — old money and new, yuppies and their richer elders and betters — have been dancing a triumphant jig around their people-eating idol, the god of lucre, Mammon.

## Dropped

But now the floor has dropped away from under their triumphant feet. The series of stock-exchange crashes which began on Wall Street, New York, on 19 October, have been on a far larger scale than the notorious Wall Street crash of October 1929.

The 1929 crash led within a couple of years to a paralysing world-wide economic slump. Millions were thrown out of work. Countries were pitted against their trade rivals. They built high tariff walls to keep out the goods of their competitors.

Weaker capitalist powers, like Germany, which had been defeated in the World War of 1914-18, saw their economies collapse. Out of that collapse

Turn to page 2



Madness in the market, famine in Africa



**Stock market crash is only the start**

WOMAN'S  
EYE

## Paris chic

By Lynn Ferguson

FOR THOSE of us whose giros won't stretch to a Jean-Paul Gaultier ensemble, getting het up about the Paris fashion shows probably seems as relevant as debating what colour to have your jacuzzi.

Clearly we were wrong. A great ideological debate has flared up around this year's collections. I suppose we should have a look at it.

For the latest news, girls, is that the hemlines are up. Reach for the Immac, get those thighs into shape and fit for public display!

The fashion editors are going wild. It's not surprising, really. Slick professional women aren't going to be particularly keen on walking about looking like a cross between Violet Elizabeth Bolt and the fairy on the top of the Christmas tree.

Even Michael Parkinson has entered the fray — but his main worry is the effect of those expanses of leg on his blood pressure.

But seriously, folks, what does it all mean? Is the haute couture vogue for frilly minis, stilettos and corsets some sort of fashion backlash against the independent woman?

I think not. The idea that there is an effective move to reduce women back into toys for the boys strikes me as way off beam. Has it occurred to those right-on fashion editors that a woman might put on a short skirt and lipstick and damn what anyone else thinks? Clearly not.

Who wants to be drab and dreary in a drab and dreary world? Dressing up is fun, and wandering around in ankle-length black skirts like some Edwardian granny is downright boring after a while. Come to that, have you ever tried to run in one?

Attitudes to women — and especially women's attitudes to themselves — have changed immensely over the past 30 or so years. Women now make up 42 per cent of the waged workforce, and this is growing all the time. And despite all the hullabaloo about a return to Victorian values, women still have a lot more confidence and freedom sexually than ever before.

No doubt some men do feel threatened by women's independence, and would prefer pretty little dolls that do as they're told. But if women do want to dress in a 'feminine' way, it is, I think, more a sign of confidence, a feeling that we don't have to dress down to be taken seriously.

Ultimately, of course, to you and me it does mean very little. I'm certainly not going to be walking around Tesco's in a mini-crinoline, bra, and not much else. I think it looks stupid.

But the basic themes of the Paris collections do filter through to the high street chains in a watered-down form. If women want to wear them, that's fine by me. I've got my mini already, and I'm going to wear it. And sod the Immac!

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## Towards two states?

By Simon Pottinger

"Simultaneous recognition of Israel and the PLO" was called for in a resolution passed by International Socialist Youth at a recent conference in Brussels.

Very significantly, both Young Mapam (youth section of the Israeli United Workers' Party) and the General Union of Palestinian Students voted for the resolution.

Mapam, until a few years ago the junior partner in the Israeli Labour coalition, but now in opposition, has

never accepted PLO recognition before. GUPS, affiliated to the PLO, has previously opposed formal recognition of Israel.

Neither Young Mapam nor GUPS share the general political approach of Socialist Organiser. But joint action and genuine 'mutual recogni-

tion' (as opposed to the unilateral recognition by the PLO of Israel often advocated by pro-Israelis) is an important step forward.

The motion was proposed by the Swedish Young Socialists and amended by the British National Organisation of Labour Students.

DHSS

## Child benefit under threat

By Jim Denham

**TORY ATTACKS** on the unemployed, the sick, youth and women are being stepped up by new Social Services secretary John Moore.

Child benefit, now paid to seven million women, is to be frozen and may be abolished next year. 'Additional requirements' paid to sick and elderly claimants for heating and other needs are to be abolished from next April and replaced by loans from a 'Social Fund' with a fixed budget for each year. If you ask for a loan after the year's budget has been exhausted, tough luck.

'Single payments' for special needs like cookers, beds and other essential items for social security claimants will also be replaced by 'Social Fund' loans from April.

Social security payments are to be withdrawn altogether for under-18s who do not go on a Youth Training Scheme. Up until now, YTS has been formally voluntary, although there has been some compulsion. Now the Tories will introduce compulsion openly in their drive towards US-style 'workfare' for all the unemployed.

The one piece of good news is that the government has been forced to concede the failure of their most important 'workfare' initiative so far, the Job Training Scheme. Opposition from local authorities, employers and the TUC, combined with trainees voting with their feet, has forced the Manpower Services Commission and the government to admit defeat. They now plan to scrap JTS quietly.

But even this victory could prove to be short-lived and merely the prelude to a further attack. In place of JTS the Tories are rumoured to be planning a 'New Community Programme', paying 'benefit-plus'.

The present Community Programme scheme — for part-time workers, paid a union-agreed rate for the job — will be abolished, and replaced by a scheme using full-time workers paid benefit rates plus £5 for under-25s and £15 for over-25s. This would be an important step towards 'workfare' for all the unemployed, and must be resisted with as much vigour as JTS.

Crash

## Sick, crazy system

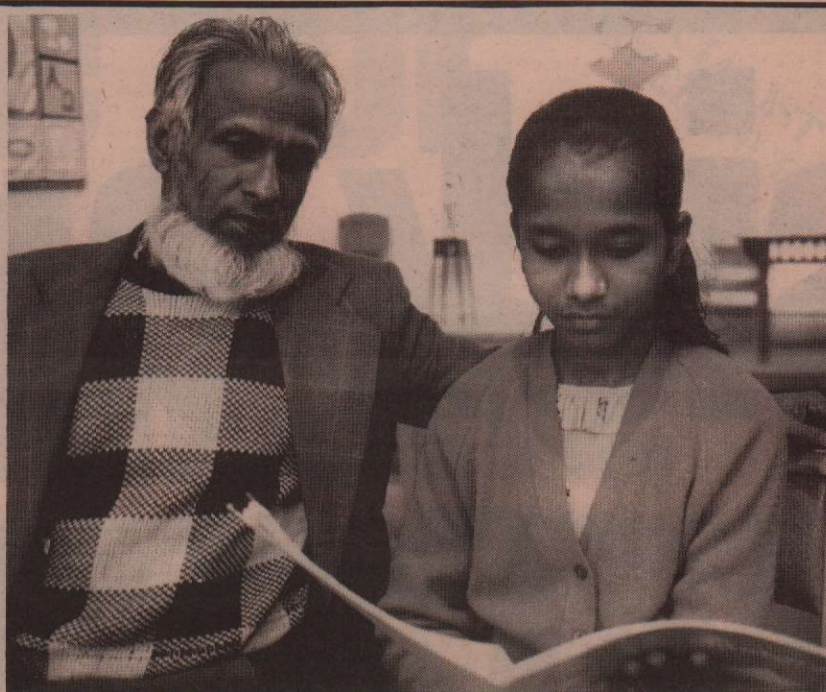
From front page

— because the Stalinists and Social Democrats misled the German working class — came Hitler's seizure of power in January 1933. The trade wars and the rise of fascism set the world on course for World War 2.

Will the world-wide stock market crash of October 1987 have the same sort of consequences? Will it become a great turning point in modern history?

The various governments are trying to avoid letting the stock market crash trigger a crippling recession in production. They want to avoid any lapse back towards the protectionism and economic nationalism which they have been working their way out of for over 40 years. But they may not be able to control events.

So far we have seen the stock markets spinning spectacularly out of control. World financial markets have grown at an astonishing pace in the 1980s. If they go out of control, ruthless beggar-your-neighbour trade wars are indeed on the agenda.



**The Home Office wants to deport Salema Miah to Bangladesh, separating her from her family in England. They refuse to believe that Mr Miah is really her father, and immigration officials have suggested that**

**residents of the village where Salema used to live should be interrogated. Salema is now in sanctuary in a Manchester church. Photo: Paul Herrmann, Profile.**

Brazil

## Brazilian tragedy

**Two people are now buried in concrete and lead in a Brazilian cemetery following what has been described as the West's worst-ever nuclear disaster. Probably thousands of people in the town of Goiania have been contaminated by a blue glitter-like radioactive dust called caesium.**

The caesium was stolen from an abandoned, privately-owned clinic by

a group of teenagers who thought that the radiation therapy machine they had taken contained nothing more sinister than lead. They sold it to a scrap metal dealer who, finding the pretty substance delightful, gave it to his friends as presents.

They did not know that it was lethal.

So far only two are dead, but many more are dying. And even the dead bodies are causing a crisis. Lead and concrete may not prove enough to prevent the habitual digging up and reuse of graves in Brazilian cemeteries. These bodies are themselves radioactive. Local people have protested against the burials.

The accident, probably as bad as Chernobyl in its long-term effects, highlights the appallingly low levels of safety in the Brazilian nuclear energy industry.

Directors of the clinic have been arrested; National Nuclear Commission officials may face charges. But any action taken will only scratch the surface. Facts about the extent of the disaster are not known, and are unlikely to be, because the nuclear industry is run by the National Security Council.

Goiania is not just a great personal tragedy. It is a terrible warning. Even with tighter controls, radioactive nuclear energy will be extremely dangerous. It might be possible to develop effective safety; but we would need a society with different priorities.

Brazil is not Britain, and perhaps there is greater security here. But in Britain, as in Brazil, all things are essentially ordered according to the laws of the market. The people of Goiania were particularly vulnerable because they are poor: they are regarded by their rulers as too unimportant to warrant serious protection.

USSR

## Raid on peace camp

**Between 30 and 31 July a youth peace camp near Riga, the capital of the Latvian SSR, was raided by members of the militia.**

Several days before the raid a 'delegation' consisting of the chief of the militia along with 15 young 'druzhyniki' (vigilantes) on Java motorcycles swept into the camp.

Without revealing their own identities, they proceeded to round up the peace campaigners, and demanded to see their documents. They took down the particulars of everybody who was present and then began tearing down the tents. They then announced that the camp was situated too close to the border and that it would have to be moved. (Translator's note: Latvia does not border any foreign country). About 50 people were detained.

Consequently, the camp moved to a new area called Liost. However, on 30 July at 6 am the militia appeared again. This time they arrived in 11 vehicles including an ambulance and several doctors who specialise in drug addiction. Also present were Colonel Vaznis, the deputy procurator and the chief of the local commission in charge of teenagers. One man in plain clothes seemed to be in command.

Everybody was ordered to step inside the ambulance, where their eyes and veins were examined by two doctors. In this way under the pretext of looking for drug users, a Christian belonging to the Orthodox Church — Sergei Klubov, the leader of the camp, Evgenii Smolnikov, T. Khotenko, Y. Grigorenko and G. Indukova were detained. A. Tabakova's handbag was confiscated because it contained "many interesting things" (a geiger counter and several books).

Photographs were taken of all the camp members after which they were driven to Riga, where they were again subjected to a medical inspection. They were ordered to strip.

Following this they were driven to the regional militia headquarters in Gorky Street, and ordered to sign documents stating that they had violated the peace. The majority did not sign.

Meanwhile, at the camp all their belongings such as tents, utensils and tools were confiscated. The participants were ordered to leave Latvian territory within 24 hours.

On 31 July V. Ziuzyn and E. Kashnykova, both members of the peace camp, were detained by the militia. During questioning they were told that "there would be no more peace camps and that if they did begin to appear again, they would be brutally dispersed." They also announced that a journalist had been appointed to write several articles on this subject. As they were being escorted out of the militia headquarters a member of the militia said: "We'll teach you the meaning of glasnost".

(August 1987. Samizdat account).

# Open letter to Arthur Scargill

Dear Arthur,

The Socialist Conference in Chesterfield last weekend was addressed by a representative from the official Soviet Peace Committee. Many delegates rightly felt that a representative of a regime which incarcerates workers in mental institutions for attempting to organise independent trade unions and which has brutally suppressed — directly or through its agents like Jaruzelski — workers' uprisings in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, had no place at a socialist conference.

These comrades showed which side they are on by drowning out the speaker with shouts of 'Solidarnosc'. You, by leading the standing ovation for the speech, placed yourself firmly

## Lynn Ferguson calls for solidarity with workers in the Easter bloc

on the side of the Stalinist dictators who oppress the working class in the USSR and Eastern Europe. You have a short memory, Arthur Scargill.

In 1984-5 you led the heroic struggle of the British miners against the Thatcher government. Remember that the Polish "socialists" sent scab coal to help Thatcher beat you down?

You said then at a public meeting that you "owed Lech Walesa an apology" for not having supported Solidarnosc, the Polish workers' movement banned by the state in 1981. Did you ever make that apology? You should have, Arthur. But you haven't changed your mind on Solidarnosc, have you?

You are still against the Polish workers' movement. You still see those who do to the Polish workers what Pinochet does to the Chilean workers as the representatives of socialism.

Tens of thousands of British workers learned deep class truths during the great strike you led. What a pity, Arthur, that you have yet to learn the class truth expressed in Jaruzelski's scab united front with Thatcher against the British miners.

Lech Walesa leads the movement of Polish workers fighting for the right to form a trade union independent of the state.

In fact, Arthur, you and Lech Walesa — who sometimes sounds as if he thinks the West is a workers' paradise — have much in common.

You share the same way of looking at the world — the view which says 'My enemy's enemy is my friend'.

In Poland that leads Lech Walesa to take as good coin the claims of Western capitalist leaders to be all for free trade unions. He looks to the capitalist system for an alternative to the vile Stalinist dictatorship which enslaves the Polish people.

You, comrade Scargill, look to the Eastern bloc and take at face value the claims of these regimes to be socialist.

But what kind of socialism is it that denies the workers the right even to form their own independent organisations? What kind of socialism is it that puts down workers' action to win these rights with tanks and bullets.

Socialist Organiser's masthead states that we are for 'Workers' liberty — East and West' That means we side with workers' struggles wherever they may be. For working class socialists, independent workers' organisation must be central.

We have a duty as elementary as not crossing a picket line to side with our brothers and sisters in the East against the police-state bureaucracies. Stop letting them down, Arthur!

# Wapping: the TUC must fight!

By Carol Hall, SOGAT News International striker, in personal capacity

There is still a lot of talk in the media about the workforce at Murdoch's plant at Wapping — those who stole the 5,500 print-workers' jobs.

They work behind heavy, remote-controlled gates, surrounded by spiked metal railings and barbed wire.

At first they adhered to the EET-PU. But even these workers found the EETPU too wretched a union for their needs. Now they want some union other than the EETPU to represent them.

The discontent of the workforce was first brought to our attention by a Mr Seaman who leaked a document to the Guardian which clearly showed that the bulk of the workers wished to discuss with other unions the possibility of joining up with them.

These other unions would, of course, include SOGAT and the NGA, whose members had been locked out of Wapping and fought a bitter, determined battle for 13 long months until their union leadership capitulated and left them in the lurch.

There is food for thought here. The company treated the workforce very well when they were scabbing. But once the strike was defeated it

was back to business as usual, back to the hire and fire syndrome. The scabs had done their job too well. Now they are on the receiving end. What did they expect? Were they not warned?

The situation now is this: the TUC have instructed that no union should recruit at Wapping while the TUC hold an investigation. The electricians under Hammond are investigating themselves, supposedly to establish whether an EETPU official, Scanlon, continued to recruit for Murdoch before, during and after the strike.

The investigation is a fraud. Everyone knows that Rice, the national officer, negotiated some form of agreement which is still waiting to be signed.

Dean and Dubbins, the leaders of the NGA and SOGAT, are now making big approaches to the workers. 'Join us', they are about to say. The TUC are being used as the go-between. But you can rest assured of one thing, that Murdoch won't let any union into the place unless special guarantees are given him — like legally binding agreements, no-strike clauses, no closed shop, total flexibility of labour, management's total 'right to manage', etc.

The only unions Murdoch will let in will be unions which agree that he has the right to tell them: "Do as you're told or you are out".

Let us be clear on it. The likes of Brenda Dean and the crafty Dubbins will find no problem with accepting such terms. How do I know? I know that during the dispute they offered media-lord Murdoch just that. Or as near as damn it.

The TUC need to be told plain, in short printers' language: "stop shilly-shallying. Let the print unions get on with the job of fighting for the right to organise within the Wapping plant."

We can work on the recent vote of the employees at Wapping, only 140 of whom want to stay with Murdoch's chosen company union, the EETPU. The time is now right for the London branches to launch a massive recruitment campaign outside and inside Wapping, using whatever means are available to get proper trade unionism back into News International.

Far too much is at stake to wait on Murdoch. The rest of the workers in the industry are taking a hiding through fear of the other proprietors doing the same as Murdoch did to us when he moved to Wapping. Confidence must be rebuilt.

The harsh facts must be spelt out to the courageous men and women who fought so long and hard against Murdoch — that the industry cannot survive unless it has trade union



Women march on Murdoch's Wapping plant, August 1986. Photo: Andrew Wiard; Report.

organisation. Nothing would give me more pleasure than to see our sons and daughters walking up that ramp into Fortress Wapping as bona fide SOGAT and NGA members.

It can be done. It only needs the will and the foresight.

This task we must not let go by, for Hammond's corrupt style of business unionism must be defeated. Only true workers' democracy can do that, and that is the real issue.

If that can be achieved, the blood, pain and hardship experienced outside the Wapping plant will have been worthwhile.

However, a fly in the ointment is the amalgamation negotiations taking place at present between the two print unions. Both are straining to come out in front in the discussions. The needs of the members will, of course, come a long way down the leaders' priority list.

That is why — against the

backcloth of Wapping — the often-repeated Dubbins rumour that Dean met with Murdoch in the States just before the sell-out and was given certain assurances needs to be borne

firmly in mind by all activists. What assurances? That the plant would be normalised in a year.

No company unionism under any guise! Be aware!



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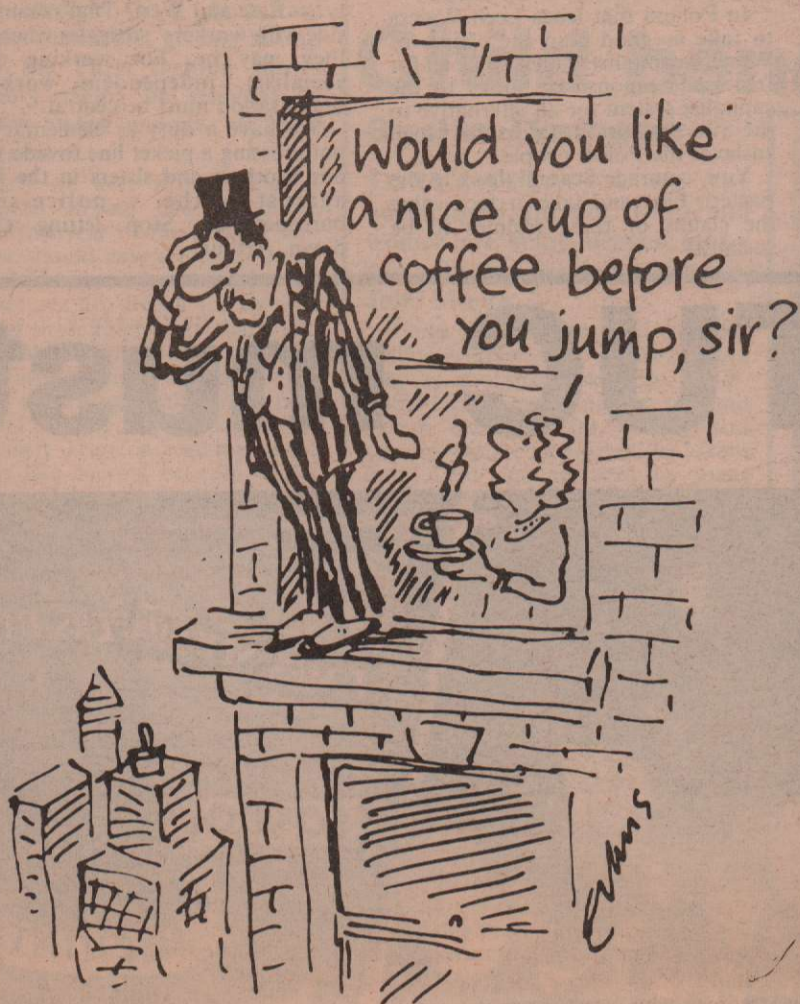
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# GRAFFITI



## Building accidents

Accidents in the construction industry have increased by about 45 per cent in the past five years. According to a leading official in the official Health and Safety Executive, "Complacency, lack of concern, ig-

norance and sheer bloody-mindedness are preventing improvements in the construction industry". But the Health and Safety Executive is being starved of resources by the Tory government.

So far this year there have been 3,761 serious injuries to construction workers — a big increase on the 2,234 in the whole of last year. 90 workers have been killed, as against 109 in the whole of last year.

## Reagan's racists

'Confirming with faint denial' would describe the US government's response to allegations by a former Reagan-Cabinet member that administration officials made crude racist and sexist jokes among themselves. "It was not something that permeated the White House culture" was the furthest a press officer would go in denial.

Former education secretary Terrel Bell says that officials would refer to Martin Luther King as Martin Lucifer Coon, describe Arabs as 'sand niggers', and jok-

ingly call sex-equality legislation 'the Lesbian Bill of Rights'.

The State Department's senior black official has recently resigned, saying that white colleagues ignored him and carried on discussions as if he were not there.



## Ballots

According to a survey done by the Engineering Employers' Federation in the south-east, there are still more strikes without ballots than

with them.

The survey found 30 strikes without ballots since January 1986, and 24 with. When workers had balloted, they had got an average 70% in favour of strike action over the past three years.

## Disabled attacked

Disabled people could be up to £50 a week worse off under new social security regulations from next April, according to disabled pressure groups.

They have published calculations for a sample case — a single mother receiving invalid care allowance

who has two children, one under 11 and one over 11 who is disabled. If she claims in March 1988 she will be entitled to a total of £118.45 a week in various benefits. If she claims in April 1988, she will stand to get only £81.15.

The employers' federation has also reported on ballots held under Tory law on closed shops. Workers in 30 companies covered by the federation had held such ballots, and they had voted in favour of keeping closed shops by an average margin of nine to one.



# The awkward ten per cent

**John Bloxam and Martin Thomas report on last weekend's Socialist Conference in Chesterfield**

On the day that the Chesterfield Conference opened, last Saturday 24 October, the Financial Times published a special economic survey predicting a loss of faith in free-market ideas.

With the stock market crash, capitalism could hardly have provided a better backdrop for this gathering of the left. Some 2000 people attended, hoping to see socialists rearm for the fight against a Thatcherism which now suddenly looks more shaky.

In a closing speech, Jeremy Corbyn MP asked us to "concentrate on the 90 per cent that unites everyone in this room rather than 10 per cent which divides us". Sadly, if Jeremy Corbyn's figures are right, it's a very important and awkward ten per cent — and the conference proved it.

The opening session of the conference gave dramatic evidence. John Burrows, from the chair, suddenly announced that we would have a speaker from the official Soviet Peace Committee. A large part of the conference — by no means just the Socialist Workers' Party, as some reports had it — exploded in protest, heckling and chanting 'Solidarnosc, Solidarnosc'. After the man from the Kremlin had sat down, Arthur Scargill tried to lead a standing ovation, while the rest of us continued the chants of protest.

In one summing-up speech Kevin Davey of the Socialist Society — which had sponsored the conference, together with the Conference of Socialist Economists and the Campaign Group of Labour MPs — attempted to define the "90 per cent" that united us all. We all wanted unilateral nuclear disarmament and non-alignment. We all thought planning was better than the market. And we all wanted to extend democracy.

But evidently some wanted 'non-alignment' only if it was an euphemism for alignment with the Kremlin. Some wanted planning of the USSR's sort. And some identified democracy with the police states in the Eastern bloc. These are no mean differences.

The argument continued in the 'theme conference' on 'democracy', where John Griffith argued from the platform that socialism is not about individual rights. Instead it is about collective rights.

In fact collective rights, like the right to form independent trade unions and to strike, are empty without individual rights for rebels and dissidents like Vladimir Klebanov in the USSR or the Tolpuddle Martyrs in 19th century Britain. But, ironically, Griffith was backed up by the SWP, who argued demagogically that any defence of individual rights must be a defence of the right to scab.

Even if we had all agreed on what socialism is, who will make socialism? Is the liberation of the working class to be achieved only by the workers themselves, or will it be legislated by socialist parliamentarians, or somehow engineered by a coalition of diverse green, gay, feminist and black movements?

There was no unity on that, either. The local government workshop voted unanimously to back workers fighting cuts in jobs and services, but some speakers, like John Peck of the Communist Party, condemned this vote. The Socialist Workers' Party, who were present in large numbers, argued rightly for socialists to turn to working-class industrial struggles,

## THE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

but coupled that with telling the great majority of the conference, who were members of the Labour Party, that they should leave it.

Turn to the working class and turn away from the organised political labour movement! The SWP's appeal makes no sense unless we suppose that socialism is somehow going to be won by a force outside and beyond the workers' movement that exists and has developed up to now. Eric Heffer argued forcefully that the place for all socialists today must be within the Labour Party.

The large numbers at the conference, and the broadness of its agenda, made it difficult to advance constructive debate on the disputed issues. Each speaker just put their own angle, without responding to other speakers.

So, for example, in the 'theme conference' and workshop on the economy, no-one said anything about Robin Murray's long opening speech on the decline of mass-production industries and the economic policies tried by the Greater London Council.

Alan Freeman from *Socialist Action* suggested that the cornerstone of a socialist economic programme should be barter-trade deals between Britain and the USSR and Third World states. Another speaker suggested that we should find an alternative to capitalism by returning to an economy based on barter. Anthropology has shown us that barter economies need not be backward, and women and poor people today could offer a lot of experience of using barter...

Yet another argued that socialist economic policy must be based on Britain quitting the EEC, because only Britain has socialists. France, Germany, Italy, Greece and all the other countries of the EEC have none, as the record of their Socialist Parties shows. Then someone spoke on the Iran-Iraq war. John Ross from *Socialist Action* said that the current crash is so momentous that it is impossible to describe it without sounding mad... None of the speeches related to any other.

We cannot skip all the disputes and arguments. The labour movement needs clarity and coherence. As long as it blunders along and muddles through, the forces of inertia will always have the upper hand. That is one of the main lessons of the last eight years.

In 1979 there was a powerful left in the Labour Party. It never clarified its ideas of what socialism is and how we will get it. Many Marxists who could have helped clarification sat in wilful self-isolation outside the Labour Party. The result, today, is that the left is dispersed and lacking in confidence.

Appeals for a vague left consensus will not help that. The irreplaceable task for serious activists is to build a coherent, clear-headed Marxist tendency in the labour movement.

Broad left coalitions and gatherings can still be useful. Unity in struggle, of the sort achieved in the miners' support committees, is vital. Confrontation of ideas is useful.

But many Labour activists will have come away from Chesterfield feeling that the next conference — tentatively scheduled for May next year — needs to have more structure and framework. The minimum common basis is probably an agreement to orientate to the labour movement — industrial struggles, the unions, and the Labour Party.

Socialist writers and speakers from outside the Labour Party can be brought in on particular issues, but there needs to be at least some common framework to make substantial unity in action and sustained debate possible.

# Re-establishing the left as a powerful force

P R E S S  
G A N G

## Murdoch ruined!

By Jim Denham

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now. Rupert Murdoch personally lost £487 million on 'Black Monday'. According to his own Sunday Times, Murdoch was actually the number one British-based loser, way ahead of such competition as Robert Holmes A Court (£240m), Alan Sugar (£100m), David Sainsbury (£49m) and Richard Branson (a mere £25m).

Meanwhile the Sunday Times described Sir James Goldsmith as being "in sparkling form" and "looking more astute than ever having spent the last year or so selling a large chunk of his investment, estimated at over \$1.5 billion". Goldsmith is now apparently sitting on "piles of cash" waiting to take advantage of "interesting opportunities as more heavily leveraged players nurse gigantic losses."

Auberon Waugh in the Sunday Telegraph expressed his heartfelt sympathy for Murdoch with almost as much sincerity as I have, but was less impressed by Sir James's miraculous powers of foresight: "The man who took most of his money out of Britain at the beginning of the Thatcher boom and put it into France at the beginning of the Mitterrand slump plainly knows things about money which the rest of us can only begin to guess at."

But why is Murdoch using one of his own organs to paint a picture of himself as a broken man, all but ruined, nursing gigantic losses while others like wily old Sir James wait to cash in? Could it be that the Digger is trying to change his image and whip up a bit of public sympathy in the run up to his bid for the Financial Times? Interestingly the other big loser the Sunday Times makes some play of is Murdoch's friend Robert Holmes A Court who many predict will buy the Times in the unlikely event of the Monopolies Commission objecting to the Digger's FT grab.

## The New Jokes Index

The papers have been full of fairly predictable cartoons and jokes about Porsches, Filofaxes, Stock Brokers jumping out of windows, etc.

Tuesday's Telegraph came up with "the latest" City gag: Cue: What's the difference between a Stock Broker and a pigeon? Answer: A pigeon can still put a deposit on a Porsche.

The next day's Independent counter-attacked by pointing out that this was not new at all, but dated from 1973's relatively minor Wall Street crash, when the vehicle in question was a Mercedes.

The Daily Mail offered: Q: How do you attract a Stock Broker's attention? Answer: Go into a restaurant and shout "Waiter!"

Not terribly funny, perhaps, (well, no-one laughed when I tried it out in a pub in Chesterfield), but at least I understood it. I did not understand the Financial Times's joke, at the end of their "Plain Man's Guide to the Crash". And I point out in advance that the sexism, etc., is theirs, not mine.

Q: Is the Stock Market worthy of rational discussion? Answer: When Albert Einstein went through the pearly gate he asked the first man he met what his IQ was. On being told 210, Einstein agreed they should work together to develop his theory of relativity.

The second person's IQ was 160 and they agreed to have discussions about music and the arts. He then asked the third man the same question. "80" came the reply.

"Well" said Einstein, "we could always talk about the outlook for the Stock Market".

I offer any reader who can explain this joke to me the prize of 250 shares in BP.

By Tony Benn MP

I would like to thank you for coming, because it would not have been a conference without all the people who have come from all over the country and from abroad, and I think it has made this a most significant conference.

And if we meet again in Chesterfield in May, which is what comrades are discussing, so much the better, because we will try and make it better and iron out some of the differences.

Can I try to sum up very briefly what we have been doing over the last 24 hours or so. We didn't come as sectarians to undermine the confidence of people in their own organisations. We came to learn, to be more effective where we are ourselves.

We didn't come to settle old scores and to denounce individuals, and least of all to find new heroes who will give us socialism from on top, because as socialists we know that cannot be done.

And we didn't come to set up a new party, but to discover common ground, and I doubt whether anybody on reflection would really believe that we would add an awful lot to what we have done today if we told you we were going to have a new national executive, a new general secretary and a new disciplinary code to see nobody stepped out of line in a new socialist party.

What we have been doing is to re-establish the radical left as a powerful force in British politics, and I think you will agree it is long overdue that that task should be undertaken.

If as an old-hand I can comment on some of the on-going arguments, may I advise people not to dwell too long on the theoretical differences between reform and revolution.

My complaint about the Labour Party is that it hasn't been a reforming party, and you think that one out. The reforms have not been as dominant in the Party as they should have been, and I doubt myself if we added all the reforms we wanted to make in the structure of our society, as well as in economic and social policy, that anybody would be able to distinguish it from a revolution.

You cannot actually — let me say it so plainly and clearly — you cannot meet the needs of our class in our time by trying to use the institutions set up by another class at another period.

I have been in Parliament 37 years next month for my sins, and I find it very funny that anybody should get up from another group and say 'Tony Benn seems to think that we will bring about socialism with the help of the Sergeant of Arms, Erskine May, Hansard and the Speaker in a wig'. You have to be there to know how the real force is outside.

Mrs Thatcher has long understood the balance between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forces. If capitalism in Britain depended on Mrs Thatcher, Cecil Parkinson and 400 Tory MPs it would be over by lunchtime on Tuesday.

It depends on the media, on the civil service, on the military, on Peter Wright, it depends sometimes on the BBC. We have got to recognise that we need a strong movement outside Parliament to give strength to get in to Parliament to change the law and then to support a Labour government when it is there against the enormous forces that will be thrown against it when we win office to be sure that we also win power.

So I do not think some of those arguments are necessarily worth pursuing.

After the miners' strike, in the



Corbyn, Maynard, Benn, Miliband and Wainwright. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

town of Chesterfield we sat down to decide what we were about. We spent about four months working out our aims and objectives. We did a draft, sent it to every ward, every trade union branch; we had two general council meetings, and in the end we produced the Chesterfield Declaration.

We decided we needed a manifesto of demands. We said we are a working class party, representing people with a broad range of opinions in the town. We believe that conscience is above the law — we had a lot of argument about that. We believe in collectivism; we believe in internationalism; we believe that everyone is entitled to useful work, a home, school, education and dignity when they are old, and peace.

And the reason we did it that way was — if I knock on the door of a home in Chesterfield and say 'vote Tony Benn, he will solve your problems', they don't believe it, and then I don't believe it, because it isn't true. The Chesterfield Labour Party is going to fight for these things whether the Tories are in power, or Labour is in power, or there is a hung parliament.

The other thing we learned is that if you are going to do it you have got to do it now. The bishops used to say 'if the rich are kind and the poor are patient, you'll be alright when you're dead'; the socialists said 'we want it before we're dead'. And we have got a new version now: 'if only you don't rock the boat, it will be alright when Neil Kinnock is at no. 10 Downing Street'; and we want it now.

Of all the lessons we learned about Greenham Common — they did not wait for the authorisation from the Archbishop of Canterbury to go to Greenham Common. If the miners

had written to Len Murray for permission to go on strike, they would still be waiting for a letter addressed on Lords notepaper telling them to think again.

We have got to do it now. Things change when we do things, not when we talk about them. This is the heart of the whole case for founding a campaigning socialist movement.

This is why things have changed in South Africa. It is not that the ANC held a conference and decided they would call for racial equality, it was because they organised. And when the Greenham Common women and the miners and the printers started doing things then the whole political situation began shifting.

## THE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

Now I think as a Party we don't use our intellectuals properly — and I say this without being one. The intellectuals are a resource to the movement and one of the resources we have got to bring into this movement is the brilliant capacity of somebody like Ralph Miliband, who wants to be with us. We need those resources.

And also we have got to do it ourselves. We had a lot of discussion among the organisers over the weekend about what do we tell people will follow this conference, what about this organisation. Forming a network among socialists is absolutely right. I have less doubt about this following the miners' strike, because I took political asylum in Chesterfield

just before the miners' strike.

When the miners' strike began what was revealed within 24 hours was an enormous capacity to organise that the people themselves didn't know they had. There were women who made speeches from the platform that, if they had been taped and typed up would have ranked among the greatest socialist orations in our history.

When you asked them, they said they voted for Mrs Thatcher in 1983!

The miners, the miners' wives, the networks — they didn't wait for instructions from Head Office, they twinned with other areas, the Welsh miners with the Oxford Trades Council, people from here with those in London, the Kent miners with London. The network is what we want to clear the blocked channels that prevent us from communicating with each other.

Because every struggle is the same struggle. The South African struggle, where the coal comes with blood on it, is the same struggle as the miners' struggle for jobs.

Every struggle — including the struggle to see that people don't die from hypothermia because they haven't enough fuel to keep them warm in the winter.

The task of socialists is not to tell people what to do, but to be close enough to them in struggle to know what they are up against and provide some support.

The reason the government are there and appear to be so strong is not just that people voted for them, but that the working class in Britain has for much too long acquiesced in a society that is grossly unfair to the majority and greatly benefits the minority.

Socialists have got to analyse the power of MI5, the banks, the civil service. You have to do that, and at the same time add that little postscript from Mao Tse Tung: 'they're all paper tigers'.

They do not dig the coal, or run the railways, or look after old people, or staff the offices. It is only because people acquiesce in it that it continues.

And if, here at Chesterfield, we have given enough hope to make people ask themselves: 'for how much longer are we going to acquiesce in it?', if we have done that, we may have released a force in British politics that could change things much quicker than many of us believe.



Socialism is about struggle. Photo: Andrew Wiard. Report

## Eye-witness report from Poland

# Solidarnosc lives in the underground

A visit to Poland is like a visit to a Kafka novel. As a tourist one is referred from one counter to another, one office to another — at a rate above and beyond what can be accounted for by language differences.

Each worker in the travel offices seemed to have a very narrowly defined job, performed with minimal collaboration and even less enthusiasm, but loads of paper work with carbon paper and rubber stamps.

It sprang to our minds that managers enforced this rigid division of labour, because any cooperation among the workers would too easily translate into a challenge to the manager's authority.

We re-read the interview with Kowalewski in Workers' Liberty no. 7, and found that he particularly commented on the atomisation of the working class imposed by the regime, and the inability to modernise technologically.

Domestic labour is particularly arduous — partly because of the technological backwardness and the rigid division of labour. Apart from reasonably cheap but poor quality cafeterias, there is no sign at all of the

**Johanna Rowland recently returned from a visit to Poland. She paints a picture of the chaos of bureaucratic mis-rule and of the seething resentment of the Polish working class**

socialisation of housework.

We saw not a single laundromat, let alone any other sort of office or centre for the taking over of domestic duties. This wasn't because every home was equipped with a washing machine. Appliances, even the few available, are enormously expensive. An ordinary fridge costs about two months' worth of average wages, about three times as much as it might cost in Britain or Australia.

Shortages of basic necessities also make domestic work very time consuming. Meat is not only rationed, but the poor quality of most meat, and shortages even as against rationing, mean that women queue to get either slightly better quality meat, or any meat at all.

Toilet paper and coffee were two items that were extremely difficult to

obtain, and which people spent hours searching for. The availability of items seemed to be arbitrary, coffee shops with no milk, fruit stalls with no lemons, bars with no beer — but every now and again you'd see a place with these things.

Food variety is very limited, fruits and green vegetables in particular. Yet Poland has a large agricultural sector and a climate and land which could support a wider variety of produce.

Shortages were obviously not confined to immediate consumer items. We saw hundreds of nearly completed houses, with windows and doors missing. Some of these houses had laundry hanging in them, hay and farm implements stored in them and doors and windows boarded up. Others had no rooves on them.

This couldn't have been "planned". We couldn't help wondering how many thousands of such dwellings existed in Poland.

Housing is very poor. Very often whole working class families live in a one room flat — not one bed-room, one room.

Standards of living are also affected by the state of the environment. We were told that the river and water supply in Krakow is so polluted that it contains a fungus which produces flu symptoms.

Water supply failed at different times of the day. The population of Krakow had expanded beyond the capacity of the supply system. Another failure of planning.

The air of Poland is the most polluted air we have seen. One of Solidarnosc's achievements was the closure of an aluminium smelter near Krakow because its pollution was so hazardous. Despite Chernobyl, nuclear power plants are under construction in Poland. The first are due to operate from 1990.

Inflation was rampant. The officially stated rate is 30%. The prices in our guide book, of items such as food and transport (less than a year old) had doubled, suggesting a real figure closer to 100%.

Everyone in Poland seemed to

want US dollars or some other capitalist currency. Men approached us in the streets, and women when we visited homes, offering to sell us zlotys for one third of the official rate. The value of Polish production seemed to be falling.

This wasn't because of the typical capitalist crisis of over-production, but because of shortages at all levels of production; waste due to failed planning; demoralisation of workers and poor quality work; and bureaucratic hoarding.

The desire for US dollars is so strong that there must be a substantial black market where these dollars are exchanged for goods and presumably many imports. It is certainly possible to import outside the official government channels — the marijuana we smelled on the street in Warsaw probably wasn't legally provided!

### Graffiti

All over Poland we saw signs of Solidarnosc. There was blanked out graffiti. In Gdansk, outside the Lenin shipyard, the memorial to the workers killed in 1970 still stands.

The other main place the visitor to Poland can see evidence of Solidarnosc is in the churches — photographs, memorials to the dead, small Solidarnosc flags are to be found in many churches.

The churches are like fortresses against the state. When the Pope visited, huge Solidarnosc banners, several metres long, were brought out. At the Solidarnosc church of Saint Brigida in Gdansk, once a week a national mass is held. We attended one, and saw a packed congregation raising hands in the Solidarnosc salute and responding enthusiastically to the obviously political speech of the priest, criticising Gorbachev and the government and referring to Solidarnosc.

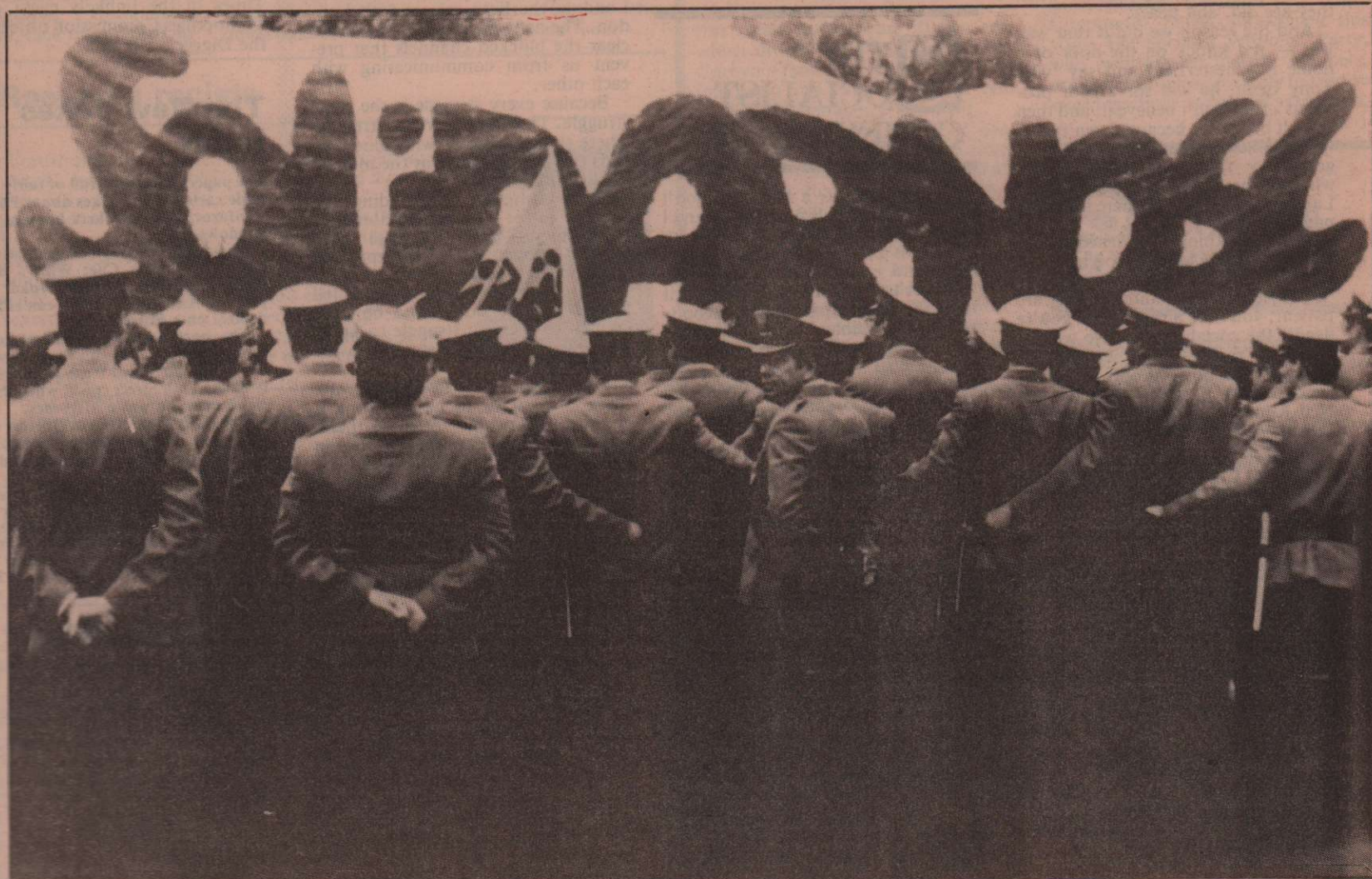
When communion was given, a noticeable number of people stepped back and didn't take it. This seemed to confirm a claim we heard, that even atheists go to church in Poland, to show that they are with the people.

The influence of the Church is enormous — there are so many churches in Poland, and masses and prayers are constantly being conducted.

The role of the church is two-sided. It is a refuge and source of solace and hope for help from a deity in a life of repression and deprivation. It is also a safe place to gather to keep alive the symbols and some of the ideas of a very material fight against the bureaucracy.

On both counts, the power of the church is the result of the Polish government driving Poles to the church.

Polish nationalism and anti-USSR feeling is an intrinsic component of Polish anti-Stalinism. titles of illegal opposition journals indicate this — Annetes meaning both appendix and



Solidarnosc is far from dead



GDANSK 26. XII 1980

The Gdansk monument to those workers shot in the strikes of 1970

annexation in the territorial sense and bowie meaning camp, as in prison camp. Solidarnosc also lives in the underground. It has some limited but real strength in the biggest enterprises, Huta Lenina in Krakow, Gdansk Shipyards, Ursus in Wiersacie and Dolmel in Wroclaw. As we were unable to enter any of these enterprises or speak to anyone from them, we do not know how openly or effectively Solidarnosc exists there. From each one though, a number of Solidarnosc supporters this year filed applications to establish Solidarnosc as the legal representative of workers there. These applications have been refused at every level of Polish law. Nevertheless, the Polish government is still far from imposing an air-tight totalitarian regime of the old

Stalinist sort. There are huge numbers of police and militiamen on the streets — outnumbered only by nuns! — but they are unarmed, and not as intimidating as the similarly large police presence (much of it armed) on the streets of Paris.

### Sympathies

Although the regime has managed to stop Solidarnosc existing legally, individual Poles spoke freely to us about their Solidarnosc sympathies. Shortly after leaving Poland, we read of Jaruzelski's intention to reform Poland in line with what Gorbachev says he is doing in the USSR. His announcement is indicative of how close to the precipice of crisis and upheaval Poland is. The bureaucrats cannot entirely in-

sulate themselves from the shocking conditions they have created. Furthermore, the Polish working class has rebelled before against food shortages and price rises. How he will get away with price rises remains to be seen. But the reform's main aim is to increase productivity. This can not be done without allowing more freedom and flexibility in the workplace and such freedom and flexibility would immediately allow workers an opportunity to challenge authority and the authority's reflex will then be repressive. The present crushing of the Polish people's initiative and spirit is a crime, which is saddening. But the evidence that Solidarnosc is alive and its experience is fresh in the minds of Poles, suggests that the bureaucracy will be challenged again.

# All power to the soviets!

## Friday 13 October

By 283 votes to one, with 23 abstentions, the soldiers' section of the Petrograd Soviet approves the establishment of the Military-Revolutionary Committee, and also adopts a resolution calling for a boycott of bourgeois newspapers. According to figures released by the Ministry of Labour two million workers are now organised in trade unions, a quarter of them in Petrograd alone.

The Central Executive Committee of Soviets publishes the proposed agenda for the second all-Russian congress of soviets. The Executive Committee of the all-Russian Soviet of peasant deputies passes a resolution opposing transfer of power to the soviets. The Provisional Government establishes a special commission "for the restoration of the due order" in the Donets Basin.

The Zhizdra garrison stages an anti-war demonstration under the slogans "Down with War, Down with the Provisional Government!" and "All power to the soviets!"

Meetings of the Tushino-Guchkovsky, Ivanovo-Vosnesensk, Bryansk and Jamara Soviets pass resolutions advocating soviet power.

## Saturday 14 October

The Central Executive Committee of soviets adopts a Menshevik resolution opposing any armed uprising against the Provisional Government. The Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet recalls its delegates from the Pre-Parliament. On the Northern front soldiers in the 201st, 202nd and 204th regiments of the 51st Infantry division refuse to obey orders, and soldiers in the 732nd regiment fraternise with the Germans.

A provincial congress of soviets in Ryazan, at which the majority of delegates are Bolsheviks, calls for an immediate end to the war and transfer of power to the soviets. In elections for the praesidium of the Minsk Soviet Executive Committee, Bolsheviks win all seats. The Kiev provincial commissioner appeals for the despatch of troops to put down peasant unrest. The Kramatorsky Soviet calls for all power to the soviets. A miners' conference in the Donets Basin votes overwhelmingly in favour of transfer of power to the soviets. The Ufa Soviet votes in favour of soviet power.

Detachments of Red Guards are formed in Jamara. The Tiflis Soviet votes down a Bolshevik resolution advocating soviet power, and adopts an alternative conciliatory resolution by 115 votes to 82.

## Sunday 15 October

A joint meeting of the Petrograd Council of Trade Unions and representatives of the All-Russian Council of Trade Unions and the Central Council of Factory Committees adopts a resolution advocating transfer of power to the soviets. 8,000 soldiers demonstrate in Yurev in a demonstration called by the local soviet, under the slogans "All power to the soviets!" and "Long Live International Revolution!"

In Moscow Bolshevik youth organisations stage an anti-war demonstration. A regional conference of soviets, held in Gus-Khrustalny, adopts a resolution advocating soviet power. A provincial conference of soviets, held in Novgorod, votes down a Bolshevik resolution in favour of soviet power. In fresh elections for places on the Tver Soviet, Bolsheviks win two-thirds of the votes. A meeting of the Kaluga garrison votes unanimously in favour of the establishment of the power of the revolutionary proletariat and labouring peasantry.

In Ryazan soldiers in the 78th Reserve Infantry regiment demonstrate under the slogan "Peace and Fraternity of All Peoples!" Bolsheviks win 13 of the 15 seats in elections for the Nikolayevsk Soviet Executive Committee. A district congress of soviets, held in Saratov, adopts a Bolshevik resolution advocating soviet power.

## Monday 16 October

The Petrograd Soviet adopts resolutions in support of the creation of the Military-Revolutionary Committee, and declaring that only soviet power can solve the catastrophic food situation. Soldiers in the 541st and 542nd regiments on the Northern front refuse to take up fresh positions unless they receive warm clothing

# 1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

and more rations.

In Revel workers and soldiers demonstrate in memory of those killed in the 1905 Revolution under the slogans "Down with the Provisional Government!" and "All power to the soviets!" In Vladimir a provincial congress of soviets condemns the Provisional Government and those parties who support it as traitors to the cause of revolution. The Rostov Soviet sacks the local garrison commander for refusing to act in line with the Soviet's decisions. The garrison commander in Saransk flees the town after soldiers in the 101st and 234th Reserve infantry regiments riot.

Soldiers in the 35th army corps on the Western front fraternise with the Germans. The Tver and Vyshny Volochek soviets, the Yaroslavl Soviet Executive Committee, the Gorodok district soviet, the Lugansk regional soviet, and the all-Siberian congress of soviets being held in Irkutsk pass resolutions advocating transfer of power to the soviets.

## Tuesday 17 October

The first issue of Worker and Soldier (organ of the Petrograd Soviet) appears, declaring its goal to be the struggle for soviet power. The first all-Russian conference of factory committees opens in Petrograd, at which the majority of delegates are Bolsheviks; it adopts a Bolshevik resolution on Soviet power.

The Central Executive Committee of Soviets postpones the opening of the second all-Russian Congress of Soviets from 20 to 25 October. The Provisional Government orders a strengthening of troop dispositions in Petrograd. Bolsheviks win the Estonian regional soviet Executive Committee elections. By 384 votes to 297 a joint meeting of the Moscow soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies adopts a Bolshevik resolution on strengthening the organisation of workers', soldiers' and peasant soviets. The Presnensky regional soviet (Moscow) and a provincial congress of soviets in Tver pass resolutions supporting soviet power.

Counter-revolutionary troops arrive in Kaluga with orders to dissolve the soviet, disband revolutionary regiments, and secure the despatch of soldiers to the front. Red Guards are organised in Kremenchug. The Sevastopol Soviet adopts a Social-Revolutionary resolution in favour of power remaining in the hands of the Provisional Government.

## Wednesday 18 October

The Petrograd Soviet elects delegates to the all-Russian congress of soviets on the basis of proportional representation: five Bolsheviks, two Social-Revolutionaries, and one Menshevik. A delegate meeting of regiments of the Petrograd garrison discusses support for an armed uprising; members of the Central Executive Committee of soviets declare the meeting unconstitutional and walk out. The Vyborg region Red Guards agree to carry out searches and arrests only at the instruction of the Petrograd Soviet. A series of regimental meetings throughout Petrograd agree to take orders from the Petrograd soviet only.

The Kovrov Soviet calls for open struggle against the Provisional Government. The Kaluga Soviet Executive Committee demands the withdrawal of counter-revolutionary troops from the town and requisitions weapons and ammunition for its defence. Soldiers demonstrate in Zhizdra under the slogan "All power to the soviets!"

Troops are sent to the Baluisky district by the provincial governor to crush peasant unrest. Soldiers in the 234th regiment in Saransk run riot; soldiers in the 101st regiment desert en masse. Soldiers in Tashkent refuse to surrender their weapons unless instructed to do so by the Tashkent Soviet; they are arrested after bombardment of their barracks.

Turn to page 8

# The left, Iran and the Gulf war

An issue of increasing importance for socialists is our attitude towards various relatively powerful 'Third World' regimes. The Gulf War has been a case in point since it started in September 1980. From the beginning, all too many socialists rushed to 'defend Iran' — usually on the spurious grounds that Iraq was fighting a 'proxy war' for imperialism.

The Iranian revolution was still fresh in our minds — an immense popular insurrection that had toppled the Shah in February 1979. Most socialists were slow to face up to what the revolution produced, including, in retrospect, Socialist Organiser, although we were more measured than most.

Most of the left, if not all, have since sobered up to the realities of Khomeini barbarism. But as the US has become more and more embroiled, plenty of erstwhile devotees of the Islamic Republic have breathed an anti-imperialist sigh of relief. Now it's all change to 'defend Iran' again.

Socialist Action, whose editorial board includes a vociferous minority who have remained infatuated with the "revolutionary potential" of Islamic fundamentalism through thick and thin, intoned: "The US in-

By Clive Bradley

tervention in the Gulf is aimed at dealing blows against Iran...In these circumstances socialists must defend Iran against imperialist attack."

"Workers Power" declared: "In the continuing conflict between Iran and the imperialist navies we stand unequivocally for the defence of Iran." And if Iraq should 'again' start fighting a "proxy war" for the US, "the defence of Iran" in a more general sense "would, once again, be placed on the agenda." (October issue).

What is missing from these ringing declarations is any real understanding either of the character of the present war, or of the current 'phase of history'.

For sure the US and its allies want to tame a troublesome enemy. But their enemy is not our friend. The Khomeini regime continues to be a bitter enemy of the workers and the poor — and of the oppressed nationalities of Iran such as the Kurds.

So far, nothing has happened to change the essential character of the war. It remains the same Gulf war it was a year ago — or 7 years ago — although with more direct US involvement.

If the US made a serious attempt to

conquer Iran — or at least to invade Iran, overthrow the government and install a puppet regime — we would be obliged to 'defend Iran'. But that has not happened; and it is extremely unlikely that it will happen.

Iran is a regional big power, a sub-imperialism. Its national rights are not at stake. What US imperialism is attacking is not Iran, not the Iranian people, but the Iranian regime.

Socialist Worker has tried to be a bit more balanced, maintaining its criticisms of Khomeini. Yet it too has declared, "As Americans have become more deeply committed to the Iraqi side in the war, socialists have had to alter the emphasis of their arguments." (October 24). In other words, tone down the harsh words against Iran, lest they play into imperialism's hands.

## Enemy

SW have gone further than that. "Socialists will be happy if Iran gives the Americans a bloody nose," they declared on September 12. "Every struggle for liberation from Nicaragua to Palestine will see its enemy weakened."

Every struggle? Including the struggle of the workers and oppressed of Iran? Or do they no longer count? For the fact is that an Iranian

victory will be very bad news for those who Khomeini oppresses.

Socialist Worker has for many years considered itself politically distinct from "orthodox Trotskyism" with its obsession for 'anti-imperialism'. A recent analysis of the Iranian revolution published by SW, in the book 'Revolutionary Rehearsals', gives eloquent warning to the pitfalls of any 'anti-imperialism' that isn't genuinely socialist. Yet when it comes down to it, SW can collapse into the same framework as the most 'orthodox' of 'Trotskyists' — a framework that divides the world into two, imperialism and the rest, and draws political conclusions accordingly.

Significantly, Socialist Worker commented on September 12 that "The Iranian left's failure to understand that its main enemy is at home led it into fatal support for the mullahs at the outbreak of the war. Yet they themselves had a pro-Iran position for a period after the start of the war."

To relate to the world of the 1980s, socialists have to break out of that primitive framework. We have to oppose imperialism and defend the interests of the workers and oppressed nationalities and peoples of the Third World independently of reactionary 'anti-imperialist' governments like Khomeini's.

# 1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

## All power to the soviets!

From page 7

Thursday 19 October

The Central Executive Committee declares the previous day's meeting of Petrograd garrison representatives unconstitutional and convenes a new meeting; a majority of delegates declares the meeting unconstitutional as it has not been called by the military section of the Petrograd Soviet. Kerensky and the commander-in-chief discuss contingency plans in the event of an armed uprising.

The Moscow regional soviet Executive Committee advocates the arming of workers and poor peasants by Red Guards and an immediate transfer of power to the soviets. The Smolensk Soviet calls for all power to the Soviets. More Cossak troops arrive in Kaluga, attack a meeting of the soviet, and arrest its members.

A meeting of the 1st Grenadier Corps on the Western front resolves to begin fraternisation with the Germans. In the Rostovo-Nakhichevansky Soviet Executive Committee elections Bolsheviks win 16 of the 30 seats. A meeting of the 17th Orenburg Cossak regiment refuses to obey orders to move from the Syr-Daryinsky region to Tashkent to crush unrest there.

Friday 20 October

The first meeting of the Military-Revolutionary Committee is held in Petrograd and declares that no weapons may be removed from arsenals without its permission. The Minister of War reports to the Pre-Parliament of shortages of food, shoes, and warm clothing on all fronts in the war. The commander of the Petrograd military district issues orders to increase the numbers of troops stationed at strategic buildings in Petrograd.

In Vorouchi soldiers in the 174th regiment arrest their commander for refusing to obey the orders of the regimental committee, and take over the station and telegraph office. The Sushchensko-Marinsky regional soviet (Moscow) resolves to organise Red Guards. The Archangelsk Soviet Executive Committee votes down a resolution to set up Red Guards. Bolsheviks win 8 of the 13 seats in the Byshny-Volochek Soviet Executive Committee elections.

A meeting of the 47th Infantry regiment on the Rumanian front calls for soviet power. By 126 votes to 16, with 11 abstentions, the Samara Soviet adopts a Bolshevik resolution on soviet power.

Saturday 21 October

The Petrograd Soviet issues an appeal to Cossak troops not to allow themselves to be used by the enemies of the people to attack workers and soldiers. The commander of the Petrograd Military District refuses to obey the orders of the Military Revolutionary Committee. By an overwhelming majority a meeting of delegates of the Petrograd garrison votes to take orders from the Military Revolutionary Committee, not the Petrograd military district commander.

Bread rationing in Petrograd is reduced from three-quarters to half a pound per rations coupon. A meeting of the Moscow provincial soviet resolves not to obey any orders of the Provisional Government of an undemocratic character.

The Shuya Soviet declares that only seizure of power by the soviets can end the food crisis. A general strike begins in Ivanono-Voznesensk, pickets are armed, and factories are taken over by the workers. The Vladivostok Soviet publishes a statement that it has assumed full power and that failure to obey the soviet will be regarded as a counter-revolutionary act.

Meetings of the Egorevsk Soviet, Rezhitsa Soviet, Mariupol Soviet, Atkarsk garrison, and Far East regional congress of trade unions pass resolutions in favour of soviet power.

Continued on page 10

## Solidarity with workers in the Eastern bloc!

Meetings to argue the case for the 7 November Solidarity Conference

Wednesday 28

October: 7.45,

Wallasey Unemployed Centre.

Thursday 29

October: 1pm,

Liverpool University Student Union.

5pm, Manchester University Student Union.

8pm, Stockport

(phone 061-429 8101 for venue)

Friday 30 October:

dinnertime, Salford

University Student Union.

7.30, Millstone pub,

Central Manchester.

Wednesday 4

November: 7.30,

Station pub,

Camberwell, South

London.

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**1.30 to 3.00**



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Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built

in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

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# Medium without message

**Belinda Weaver reviews "Full Metal Jacket"**

Stanley Kubrick has masses of movie technique, but he hasn't got anything to say. His latest film, 'Full Metal Jacket', is just a lengthy rendering of the old saying 'Life's a bitch, and then you die', set in Vietnam to give 'meaning' to the despair and nihilism.

In this world, everything is tainted. The Marines have volunteered to fight for idealistic reasons, but that gets battered out of them at training camp. They're trained to kill, nothing more. The Marine, like the Mountie, must get his man.

Vietnam just offers disillusionment. The South Vietnamese don't seem to want the US there; they're not grateful. Comrades in arms get killed. And everyone back home thinks the war is unwinnable.

Kubrick condemns the Vietnam war. But the film is not an indictment of US imperialism. It is a long whinge about the nastiness of war.

Kubrick knows how to use a camera, so it all looks beautiful. Some of the scenes have a lot of power, so they cover for the ones that are just a mess or that don't add up.

The film has its moments that go way over the top, too. At training camp, one of the recruits snaps under the strain. But he's a stock character psycho, showing more white-of-eye than even Jack Nicholson in Kubrick's earlier 'The Shining'. The whole training camp sequence is just a bore. Clint Eastwood uttered the same insults in 'Heartbreak Ridge', and we've seen Marines climbing ropes and crawling along the ground in about ten thousand other films.

The scenes are just there to show how the Marine is formed. He's treated like vermin; he's broken down so that he can be built up again as an efficient killing machine. But since only the whacko puts any energy into the killing instinct, it all falls a little flat.

When the Marines are finally in combat, they seem to be losing off rounds of ammunition out of sheer terror, rather than from any implacable killer instinct.



The real Vietnam

The film follows the career of Private Joker. He becomes a correspondent for 'Stars and Stripes', the forces' newspaper. But he wants to report on real combat, so he ends up in the firing line after all. Joker is a stand-in for Kubrick. He's the voice of the artist. He gets to do a few voice-overs and make a few cracks to show he's fully aware of all the ironies of life, war and the human condition.

He wears a peace badge on his lapel, which contrasts strangely with the 'Born to Kill' stencilled on his helmet. He explains to a superior officer that it's there to express the duality of man, the Jungian idea. Joker is not a plausible character.

The part is pretty unplayable, so you can't blame the actor too much. Kubrick piles so much on Joker that he just collapses.

In one of the final scenes, Joker is all tensed up over whether or not to kill a Vietnamese sniper who is

wounded and dying slowly and in great pain. To complicate matters, the sniper is a teenage girl. The most humane thing he can do is kill.

Joker screws up his face to convey all the layers of meaning here. And then? We cut to a large group of Marines all marching along together singing the theme from the Mousketeers, while Joker muses that it's great to be alive. Presumably, dispensing death gives life a certain savour.

## Vietnamese

What can we make of all this? In the film we don't see the NLF and the only South Vietnamese we see are pimps, whores and thieves. They don't get any sympathetic handling.

The Marines grumble all the time about how unwelcome they feel. But when you see the Marines lumbering along, with their masses of equipment, they look utterly alien. No

wonder the Vietnamese called them the 'elephants'.

Kubrick got all caught up in the ironies of Vietnam, and it clouded his vision. He's tried to produce the definitive version of the roll'n'roll war. But just showing Marines in uniform while Nancy Sinatra sings on the soundtrack can't do the trick.

When Joker is interviewed and asked why he enlisted, he smiles for the camera, and replies, 'I wanted to see exotic countries. I wanted to see Vietnam, the pearl of Asia. I wanted to meet people of an ancient culture — and kill them'. He's grinning.

And that's all you get. Kubrick does convey the derangement of war. We see men with the 'thousand-yard stare', the eyes of men who have been in battle too long. But there's no message. There are all the pyrotechnics and thrills Kubrick can muster up, but the technique substitutes for a message rather than serving one.



## Workers' Liberty

Much of Workers' Liberty 8, which is out now, is given over to analysis of the current situation in South Africa.

Bob Fine, co-author of a forthcoming book on South African workers' movements, contributes a fascinating and informative article on the history of the South African miners. Anne Mack and Mark Dupont look at the problems facing the left in South Africa, and a South African socialist talks about the need for an independent workers' party and the obstacles to building it.

Workers' Liberty also reprints a stirring poem celebrating the foundation of the trade union federation COSATU.

This issue of Workers' Liberty continues the trend set in earlier issues of focussing critically on events in the Stalinist states, with a piece discussing Gorbachev's policies of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika', in the context of Khrushchev's 'thaw' of the 1950s.

The theme is continued with an extract from 'Rendez-nous nos usines' (Give us back our factories), the book by a former leader of the left wing in Solidarity, Zbigniew Kowalewski.

Belinda Weaver asks 'What's wrong with the movies?' and argues that the film industry's scramble for bigger profits leads to declining standards and less choice in the sort of films on offer.

There are also articles on child abuse, fascism in France, the situation in South Korea and much more. Get your copy now!

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## The People's Flag

Last Monday (26 October) saw the start of a documentary series on Channel 4. It traces the history of the British labour movement this century.

Its viewpoint is that of Marxism.

The first episode covered World War One, the General Strike and the betrayals of the leaders of the Labour Party who scuttled the 1929-31 Labour Government and went over to the Tories.

They helped to set up a so-called National Government — really a Tory government with Labour renegade Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister for the first four years. It ruled all through the Depression of the 1930s, a government of brutal, unprincipled men, the Thatcherites of their time.

Watch the re...

# Materialism and miracles

Science and religion have often been considered antagonists (though many scientists would dispute this). Historically, this has been because science has limited the claims of religion by providing materialist explanations for supposed miraculous occurrences.

As Marxist scientist, JBS Haldane once said:

*"Religion is still parasitic in the interstices (gaps) of our knowledge which have not yet been filled. Like bed-bugs in the cracks of walls and furniture, miracles lurk in the lacunae of science".* This has given rise to the idea of the "god of the gaps".

These gaps may have been reduced a tiny bit by the discovery (and patenting) of a simple method for making paintings and statues weep. A Californian physicist, Shawn Carlson, was "inspired" by the reluctance of the Greek Orthodox Church of St. Nicholas in Chicago to allow scientists to examine a picture of the Virgin Mary that began weeping continuously.

Carlson uses salt crystals for his tears, demonstrating his "miracle" to the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion with the aid of a reproduction Mona Lisa.



Carlson will not reveal his technique as he plans to market weeping icons as a novelty (he has suggested a Tammy Faye Bakker doll with running mascara). However, he claims the method is simple enough to have been used for centuries of miracles.

\*\*\*\*\*

The response of some religious people, including many scientists, is to accept that reality obeys scientific laws but that the laws themselves are defined by a god.

One fashionable "theory" is that the universe is ruled by some "anthropic" principle. This holds that conscious life has only been able to evolve because the fundamental physical constants (the speed of light, the values of the gravitational and other forces etc) have the values that they have. It is then further alleged that they have these values because a god made them so.

If true, this still leaves unanswered the questions of the nature of such a god and of its intentions — benevolent, malevolent or neutral.

When asked to speculate on the mind of God as evidenced by "His" creation, Huxley is supposed to have replied that God must have an inordinate fondness for beetles, having created more species of them than any other living thing.

Another fashionable direction for some theoretical physicists has been to draw parallels between the nature of reality as revealed by relativity and quantum theories and certain Eastern philosophies. Links have been suggested between the Eight-fold Way of Tao and the eight types of fundamental particle while Buddhism and Hinduism have been claimed as the forerunners of the "New Physics". There is a preoccupation with number (the two classes of particle, the three or four fundamental forces, the six types of quark etc) which seems to hark back to an ancient mystical fascination with number (the Christian trinity, the pentagram, the six pointed Star of David, Plato's religion of perfect shapes, etc).

Other physicists have shown a distressing willingness to believe in paranormal forces, including the ludicrous spoon-benders. In one well-known case, spoon-bending children were studied in the laboratory. Claiming to be unable to do it while being watched, they were left alone and, lo and behold, the spoons bent! This convinced one eminent physicist

but, in a repeat performance, hidden cameras revealed the children to be bending the spoons in the normal manner.

Yet other eminent physicists believe there is something unique about consciousness, particularly human, that places it outside of the realm of physical laws and allows it to modify them. One recently wrote of his theory that, even though radioactive particles break down at random, it is possible for human thought to affect when a particular particle breaks down.

But how can this be? Radioactive decay involves the weak and strong forces whereas thought involves the electro-magnetic force — and not very much of it. The sort of energies needed to artificially break down a particle are only found in massive particle accelerators (such as CERN in Switzerland). If the microscopic quantities of energy in the human brain were to affect radioactive decay, then quantum theory, one of the best tested scientific theories ever, would have to be completely wrong.

I suppose this illustrates the marvellous ability of the human mind to believe all sorts of impossible things before breakfast. After all, there are even religious people who support Marxism, even though Marxism would categorise religion as a typical 'false consciousness'.

# 1917

YEAR OF REVOLUTION

From page 8

Sunday 22 October

Meetings are held throughout Petrograd on the occasion of the 'Day of the Petrograd Soviet' and pass resolutions calling for soviet power. The Petrograd Soviet appeals to the Petrograd garrison to defend the revolution under the leadership of the Military-Revolutionary Committee. A resolution of the Petrograd military garrison committee is published, declaring the garrison's support for the Military Revolutionary Committee and the Petrograd Soviet.

The soldiers' section of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets passes a resolution opposing soviet power. A joint meeting of the Estonian regional soviet and the Revel Soviet sets up a Military-Revolutionary Committee. Bread rations in Moscow are cut from three-quarters to half a pound per coupon. The Bryansk Soviet Executive Committee bans the disbanding of any regiments in the town until after the election of a Constituent Assembly.

Soldiers in the 3rd Rifles division demonstrate on the Rumanian front with placards declaring "Down with war!" Demonstrations are held in Tsaritsyn and Zlatoust demanding "All power to the soviets!"

Monday 23 October

The Petrograd Soviet passes resolutions approving the activities of the Military Revolutionary Committee and the Red Guards. The Obukhovskiy regional soviet (Petrograd) bans the removal of weapons or missile shells from the local arsenal without the approval of the Military Revolutionary Committee. The Central Committee of the Baltic Fleet orders the crew of the Aurora to ignore orders to withdraw their cruiser from Petrograd.

Kerensky and other ministers of the Provisional Government meet to discuss tactics against the Military Revolutionary Committee. Soldiers in the 85th, 86th, and 88th regiments on the Western front refuse to obey orders and demand an immediate end to the war. The Moscow Soviets' Executive Committees, meeting together, demand immediate release of all imprisoned members of the Kaluga Soviet and restoration of the Soviet.

Workers and soldiers support a demonstration called by the Presnenskiy regional soviet (Moscow) under the slogan "Long live the power of workers and soldiers!" Workers and soldiers demonstrate in Shuya in support of a local textile workers' strike. The Tashkent tramway-workers' union resolves to take over the tramway network in the town.

Tuesday 24 October

By order of the Provisional Government the Petrograd newspapers 'Workers' Path' and 'Soldier' are shut down; the Military Revolutionary Committee overrules the order and printing is resumed under the protection of troops despatched by it. Junkers seize bridges across the River Neva in Petrograd, but by evening Red Guards have opened up the bridges again.

Revolutionary sailors and troops occupy telegraph offices in Petrograd and drive off attempts by Junkers to take them over. Telephone lines are restored to the Military-Revolutionary Committee after they are cut off by order of the Provisional Government. The Military Revolutionary Committee orders the arrest of all officers who refuse to obey its orders.

A joint meeting of the Central Executive Committee of Soviets and the Executive Committee of the all-Russian peasant soviet opposes an armed uprising against the government. The commander of the Petrograd military district orders all troops to remain confined to barracks, and declares any soldier appearing on the street with his weapon to be guilty of armed mutiny. A meeting of the Pre-Parliament declares its opposition to an armed uprising.

A Military-Revolutionary Committee is set up in Yurev. Soldiers in Smolensk take over the local arsenal and transport away all its weapons. Soldiers in Vinnitsa demonstrate in opposition to orders to leave the town and resolve to disobey the order. The Revel Military Revolutionary Committee orders the takeover of local telephone exchanges, post offices, telegraph agencies and railways. Martial law is imposed on Kazan after clashes between revolutionary and counter-revolutionary troops.

# Why the crash happened

**Martin Thomas starts a series of articles on the background and prospects of 1987's Great Crash**

**Why does capitalism need the Stock Exchange?**

The Stock Exchange is useful for capitalism because it creates *capital* out of scattered sums of money.

Take 200 people who each have savings of £5,000. None of them individually is a capitalist. £5,000 won't buy a factory and machinery and pay wages.

But if you can bring the 200 sums of £5,000 each together, you have £1 million. And that *is* capital: enough to launch a factory and hire a workforce.

The stock market works a sort of magic for capitalism. A company which sells 200 shares of £5,000 each comes away with £1 million cash to spend on building, equipment, and labour costs. Scattered cash is transformed into capital. And wealth is apparently doubled. The 200 shareholders still have £5,000 each, only in the form of share certificates rather than cash.

The stock market can also *double capital*. If a millionaire buys £1 million worth of shares in a company, then the single capital of £1 million turns into two. The millionaire has £1 million in shares, on which he will get dividends. The company has £1 million in cash — or the buildings, equipment, and labour it buys with the cash, from which it will get profits.

So the stock market makes capitalism more elastic. Share-dealing in the City does not divert resources from productive investment; on the contrary it increases the resources available for productive investment.

If capitalism makes sense, then the stock market makes sense. If the stock market is sick and crazy, it is because capitalism is sick and crazy.

**Why do share prices go up and down?**

A share is a piece of paper which gives its owner a right to part of the profits in a company. That part of the profits is called the shareholder's *dividend*.

As profits go up and down, so dividends go up and down and, logically, share prices go up and down.

But there is more to it than that. Nobody buys shares just for the dividends. If you had £100 worth of shares in Britain in the last year, you would only get about £2.50 in dividends.

But if you bought £100 worth of shares a year ago, and sold them just before share prices collapsed last



week, you would come out with about £150 — a tidy gain indeed. That's why people buy shares — because they think the price will go up.

There is a good reason to expect share prices to go up in the long term. If a company makes profits and reinvests most of them rather than paying them out in dividends, then its capital grows. It becomes worth more. And, correspondingly, a share in it becomes worth more. If the company is taken over, the buyer will pay more for shares.

So share prices can be expected to rise in line with the wealth of companies. When people make money from share-dealing, in the last analysis that money comes from the labour of the workers employed by the company, the labour which builds up the wealth of the company.

But the 50% gain on shares does not mean that British companies have made 50% profits over the last year. In the short or medium term, share prices can move way ahead of any stable relation to profits, or slump far behind it. As long as you think you can sell a share for £110 next week, it makes sense to pay £100 for it this week; as long as you think it will be at £90 next week, it makes sense to sell it at £100 this week. You need not worry about the long term.

Speculation — 'the rape of the greedy by the very greedy' — pushes shares even higher when they are going up, and even lower when they are going down.

**Why did share prices crash?**

Everyone knew that share prices had risen far above any long-term relation to profits. Everyone knew that they would go down some day. But everyone wanted to stay in the game

until the last moment.

The bubble burst, in the end, because of worries about the US trade deficit, US government policy on the exchange rate of the dollar, and the Gulf war. It could have been any one of a dozen other things. But once the bubble burst, lots of people wanted to sell as soon as they could. You can make just as much money by selling now at £100 and buying later at £90 as you can by buying now at £100 and selling later at £110.

All the newspapers' City pages advise investors to hold on and wait. So why doesn't everyone do just that, and thus stop the slump?

One reason is that it makes sense to sell even at a low price just as long as you think prices will fall further. The other is that lots of shareholders have to sell whether they like it or not. They borrowed cash to buy shares in the first place, they need cash to pay their debts, and they need it *now*.

**How does a stock market crash lead into a slump in output, jobs and income?**

Because capitalism is an unplanned system, when it expands it tends to over-expand. Each producer strains to catch a bigger share of the expanding market and to be first with new products and methods. Businesses producing machinery and equipment gear up to meet the resulting demand.

Sooner or later production begins to outrun consumption. Companies cut back on new investment. Demand for machinery and equipment slumps. Businesses in that sector lay off workers or even go bust. That, in turn, reduces consumer demand further. The economy spirals down into a slump.

The credit system — of which the

stock market is basically part — helps rapid expansion. Companies which really can't afford new ventures can borrow money on the strength of their future profits. Capital is doubled and trebled. But when credit becomes overstretched, it can suddenly dwindle. And that's usually what sets off a slump.

When the stock market crashes, that cuts back business expansion in one direct way. Companies become much less able to raise money for new ventures by issuing new shares.

The indirect effects, however, are more important. Selling shares is only one way for companies to raise cash. Another way is to borrow from banks. Or they can sell bonds — pieces of paper on which they promise to pay *interest* rather than *dividends*.

It is easier to raise large sums of money quickly by borrowing or selling bonds than by selling shares. It is also more risky. If a company sells £1 million worth of shares, then that £1 million is the company's, safe and sound. If the company can't pay dividends and the share price falls, that does not subtract a penny from the company's £1 million. It is just the shareholders' bad luck.

If a company borrows £1 million from a bank, or sells £1 million worth of bonds, then it will have to repay that £1 million at some fixed date. It will also have to make fixed interest payments at dates fixed in advance. If the venture for which it borrowed the £1 million fails, it is in trouble.

Because of this, companies are restricted in how much they can raise in loans and bond sales. They need to have share capital to back up their borrowing and convince lenders that their money is safe.

Now that billions have been wiped off companies' share capital, billions have also been wiped off the amount they can raise in loans and bond sales.

Credit is tighter, so investment falls. Worse: when credit becomes tight, and people start demanding cash on the nail, dozens of risky ventures collapse — ranging from those which were bold but sound enterprises in the days of easy credit to downright swindles and embezzlement. The bigger and brasher the previous boom, the more such risky ventures there have been, and the bigger the collapse.

Thus the stock market crash can lead to a slump in real, material business investment. It can also lead to a slump in consumer demand. People who last week had £10,000 worth of shares now have only £8,000 or less. They are £2,000 worse off. So they spend less; and the stock market crash feeds into a slump in demand and output by another route.



# UCW: Fight for shorter week

By Pete Keenlyside,  
Manchester  
Amalgamated Branch,  
UCW

Members of the Union of Communications Workers (UCW) are voting on whether to strike for a shorter working week.

A 'no' vote will mean shelving the demand for three hours off the working week for another 20 years, and it will open us up to all sorts of other attacks from the Post Office management. New productivity deals, a new discipline code much harsher than the existing one, and doing away with unsocial hours payment, are just a few of the things they have got up their sleeves.

It is vital we get an overwhelming 'yes' vote. A large 'yes' vote will show the Post Office we mean business. It will also make it harder for our Executive to sell us out.

They did not want a strike ballot. It was forced on them by Annual Conference. By and large, they have followed the Conference decisions so far; but they won't for ever.

If it does come to a fight with the Post

Office, it could be long and dirty. The management is now stuffed full of cut-throat graduates who know nothing about delivering letters but lots about balance sheets and targets. They would probably welcome the chance to take on the union.

And behind the management stands the Tory government. With days lost through strikes at their lowest since the 1940s, a strike by postal staff could prove a real challenge to Tory rule. We would face the full blast of propaganda from the press backed up by the shields and truncheons of Maggie's boot-boys bringing the scabs in.

We will be threatened with the ending of the letters monopoly, with privatisation, the sack, and anything else they can think of.

But despite all of that we can still win. We are coming up to the busiest period for the Post Office. The management surely can't hire enough scabs to shift the 44 million items a day we handle, never mind teach them how to operate the vast array of new machines that have been brought in.

And although firms like TNT, Federal Express and Securicor could and would try to take over the delivery of mail in some large cities, the chaos this would cause would probably only make the situation worse.

In the end, whether we win or not will depend on two factors. First, the degree of control the rank and file have over the conduct of the strike. Most of us don't trust the Executive because of past experiences.

They see the ballot for strike action merely as a bargaining lever with management. The leaflets they have put out so far have been pretty low-key, stressing their willingness to go to arbitration and saying that an all-out strike is unlikely.

Our general secretary, Alan Tuffin, has told us we must be disciplined and do as we are told. That is all very well, but most of us have played the Grand Old Duke of York game before.

## Planning

Whilst we expect our Executive to give a lead, any decisions taken on the conduct of the strike must be based on the views of a fully informed and involved membership. Local branches must start planning now the strike committees and information sheets that can bring this about.

The second factor that will decide if we win or not will be the support we get from the rest of the labour movement. We need that support. We will need the TUC to back up pickets and make sure that union members working for TNT and Securicor

do not do our work.

We don't need another Wapping, with the spineless TUC leaders watching passively as union members' jobs go down the river, stolen by other so-called trade unions.

We will need the support of the Labour Party to counter the propaganda of the Tories, and to use the Constituency Labour Parties to build up support throughout the country.

Spare us the lectures on violence, comrade Kinnock, and if you could manage to find a picket line before the 11th month this time we would be very grateful.

Postal workers have up until now avoided the defeats suffered by many other sections of our class. Over the last couple of years there have been dozens of local disputes up and down the country, most of them successful.

Win this dispute, and we won't just have put one over on our own management. We will have beaten the Tories and destroyed the myth amongst some of our more faint-hearted, share-owning comrades, that the Tories are invincible.

Assuming a 'yes' vote in the ballot, the result of which will be out on 17 November, this is a fight we cannot afford to lose. The job of Socialist Organisation supporters, and all other socialists in the movement is to make sure we don't.

## SSiN

### Our AGM

The annual general meeting of Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN) was a big success.

Over 110 students spent a day discussing our campaigning strategy for NOLS and NUS.

The workshop on Poland heard that SSiN now has an agreement with the Solidarnosc-linked student group — the NZS — and that SSiN will be regularly reprinting articles from the NZS papers.

A motion calling for NOLS to launch a solidarity campaign with the NZS will go to the NOLS NC this week.

Discussing NATO and the need for unilateral nuclear disarmament, another workshop decided to circulate a model motion in an attempt to hold the NOLS NC to a firm line and prevent them going along with the fudging of the Party leadership.

At lunch-time a fringe meeting on the Palestine-Israel conflict, addressed by Socialist Organisation editor John O'Mahony, was attended by over 90 people who discussed the two states position and the forthcoming debate at NUS Christmas conference.

The AGM decided to organise regional SSiN meetings in the run-up to NUS conference and to hold meetings on the Middle East in as many colleges as possible.

A new steering committee was elected which will have its first meeting on 7 November.

A group of big right-wing student unions in higher education (IIE) are leading a revolt against the present structure of the National Union of Students, with the main aim of reducing their affiliation fee levels.

They are pushing for this to be discussed as part of the debate going on at the moment about changes to NUS. Most dangerously, some of them are threatening to leave NUS if they fail.

And strangely enough, what they propose is very similar to what is being touted about by the Democratic Left/Communist Party leadership on the National Executive.

There would be just one national conference each year (instead of two, as now). Most of the decisions would be made at a regional level, (geographically, the regions would be essentially the same as they are now). The regional conferences would decide affiliation levels, and would fund the National Union and the areas.

The NEC would change to six sabbaticals only, plus the sabbatical for each region. There would be no part-timers.

The implications are extremely worrying. Firstly, the removal of 15 part-time Executive members would obviously mean a lot less nationally co-ordinated work could be done. It threatens to smash up the national union — and after all, even at the moment, it fails to do anything like all it is supposed to do!

Removing one of the national conferences seriously undermines the democracy of the union. In particular the Report and Plan stage, where NEC members are held to account for what they have or haven't done, would only be done at a regional level. The regional meetings would consist mostly of HE union sabbaticals, so that rank and file control of the union would be badly threatened.

The financial proposals could lead to some very odd things. For example, you could get the ridiculous situation by which one region chooses to fund the centre, or its areas, twice as much as another region, and is therefore spending twice as much for the same service.

Significantly, the plan is backed solely by the HE unions, with no awareness whatsoever of the needs of the Further Education sector. Both this plan and the original National Executive document "Organising for Change" (planned to be presented at last Christmas Conference but dropped like a hot potato), take no account of increased potential from FE union development.

The increased funding of FEs on a mass scale must be a priority. Why don't they mention that this would mean more money for NUS in affiliation fees?

It can never be wrong to think about ways of improving our structures (although of course it's possible that it avoids the real question — and that it is possible to run good campaigns with the structure we have). But the new proposals don't do this at all. They are badly thought out and could only possibly favour a few of the bigger unions at the expense of the vast majority. And it threatens to destroy the unions for good — something which can only benefit the Tory government.

If you want to improve NUS, improve the FE funding level and run some campaigns.

Contact SSiN (Socialist Students in NOLS) at 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15.

## VAUXHALL

# The pay deal is central

3500 car workers from Vauxhall's Luton plant were still on indefinite strike on Tuesday morning, 27th. They shut the plant down on 16 October following a two-to-one vote to strike over a bonus dispute.

Since the summer, and without negotiation, management had paid out bonuses based partly on a 'notional' production figure from the neighbouring van plant, which was separated off as a joint General Motors/Izusu venture in August. This change in bonus calculation has cheated Luton workers of £10 a week each, they say. The Luton workers are out until the bosses negotiate proper bonus payments.

Officials from the Vauxhall unions, in particular the TGWU and AEU, have made attempts to settle the dispute and are due to meet Vauxhall management against today (Tuesday

## MILE END

### Saved again

Mile End casualty department has yet again been saved.

At last week's meeting of the District Health Authority, members voted against the closure of the casualty and the children's ward.

Outside the meeting 250 people had marched to protest at the plans. However the full implications of the Management Team's proposals in terms of cuts have yet to be identified.

The cuts will involve:  
\*£50,000 savings in cuts;  
\*a Cost Improvement Programme;  
\*£550,000 management measures, already implemented.

At the meeting this was not further specified, although assurances that this would not involve cuts in patient care are hard to believe.

At next month's meeting cuts worth a further £900,000 will be discussed.

27th). The bosses, so far, have maintained a hard line, insisting the strike is called off before a deal on the bonus payments.

They have also suspended negotiations on the national pay deal for 11,000 Vauxhall workers until the Luton dispute is settled.

The national pay deal is the key. The current two-year deal ran out on 9 September. The unions have demanded

an annual deal, 10% across the board, paternity leave and a reduction in the working week, but the bosses have offered only a take-it-or-leave-it package with not much money and major changes in working conditions. Their opening bid was a three-year deal, with 4% annual rises for the first two years, and much greater flexibility from both skilled and line workers. Vauxhall's proposals not

only threaten existing conditions, but also job losses and union organisation.

The present Luton dispute, provoked in the plant with the weakest organisation, is clearly an attempt by Vauxhall bosses to disrupt the national negotiations. If they can defeat Luton on the bonus issue it will then be very difficult for Vauxhall workers nationally to take on the bosses on the pay deal.

## MINES

# OUR RIGHT TO READ PAPERS

The harassment of paper sellers at the Ollerton and Bevercotes Miners' Welfare continues!

Last Sunday the management committee sent their representatives along to ensure that members kept any papers in their pockets. Of course several people refused and sat round reading the paper in the main welfare.

On Saturday the Socialist Worker paper seller was suspended from the Welfare for six months. Mick McGinty, the Notts NUM vice-president and victimised Ollerton miner, has to go before the committee tonight (Monday) for allegedly taking in copies of the Yorkshire Miner to the Welfare!

We shall be there again next Sunday. At the moment things are very quiet nationally. I do not think there will be any movement on the overtime ban until the NUM National Executive Committee meets again. I hope there will be a strong lobby of that meeting.

The other proposals carried at this year's NUM Conference — like a day of industrial action and lobby of Parliament in solidarity with the victimised miners — have been shelved.

There have been some developments nearer to home. Last week British Coal announced it was transferring the new Asfordby super-pit in Leicestershire to the Nottinghamshire Area to allow the UDM to be the recognised union. The 1400 strong pit is due to start producing in the

## WHETTON'S WEEK



early 1990s, and the UDM have agreed a six-day week.

As a matter of fact the Notts NUM was asking for the Asfordby pit to be included in our Area before the strike because of its geographical proximity. Obviously in the new situation with the UDM, the British

Coal is quite happy to go along with that. But we will also be asking for recruitment at that pit.

At Bevercotes there has been an issue over holidays. The dates are chosen by the UDM, but there has also been a discussion about what to do with rest days and so on.

A ballot was organised at the pit, but only for the 'recognised unions', so the NUM did not have a say in it. We were not allowed to take part in the ballot.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

## ENGINEER

# Jordan's sell-out

By Jim Denham

The Executive of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (CSEU) meets on 5 November to decide on the final deal resulting from three years of secret negotiations with the Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF).

At the centre of the deal drawn up by EEF bosses and AEU leaders Bill Jordan and Gavin Laird is the proposal for an "enabling agreement" involving the phased introduction of a 37½ hour week by 1991, to be "self-financing" as a result of

"total flexibility" in working practices, the ending of the guaranteed working week and the introduction of single-union (i.e. no strike) deals that would consolidate the AEU's position as the major engineering union at the expense of smaller craft unions.

The other CSEU unions (apart from the EETPU, which has predictably supported the AEU all along the line) are all opposed to the deal: TASS and the ASTMS opposed Jordan's manoeuvres right from the start (though they did little to warn or mobilise their members) and more recently the GMB and TGWU have voted to reject.

The rank and file of the AEU have demonstrated their opposition with a flood of resolutions from District Committees and shop stewards' committees ever since details of the deal began to leak out towards the end of last year.

Under this pressure even the right wing dominated AEU National Committee voted to reject many of the central features of the package, but did not accept the Broad Left's proposal to end negotiations. The AEU Broad Left (organised around the journal 'Engineering Gazette') has organised some successful lobbies of the CSEU but has backed away from the right's challenge to go for a ballot of the membership on the question of a national strike for a 35 hour week with no strings.

Such a national strike was successful in securing a 39 hour week in 1979 even under the right wing and incompetent 'leadership' of the late Terry Duffy! The Broad Left's credibility has now been further undermined by Communist Party 'hero' Jimmy Airlie's championing of the AEU's single union deal with Ford over their proposed Dundee plant.

The AEU rank and file must mobilise in force for 5 November, demanding rejection of Jordan's sell-out and a campaign for national action for a 35 hour week without strings. And if it is to retain any credibility, the Broad Left and the 'Engineering Gazette' must repudiate Airlie's sell-out as well.

\*Lobby the CSEU on 5 November.

# STAND BY UNILATERALISM!

From back page

unilateral nuclear disarmament have always trotted out when what they really mean is they support continued existence of nuclear weapons, we will be told we must shut up if we want Labour to win the next election.

So, with very little difficulty, except from the left, the Labour Party will go from opposition to Cruise and Trident, the removal of all nuclear weapons and bases in the lifetime of the next Labour government and opposition to nuclear strategies, to a position that is very little different to Thatcher's.

The only thing the Labour leaders forget is that if you want to have a Tory policy, you vote Tory. The voters didn't vote Labour last time when the policy on getting rid of all nuclear weapons was overshadowed by a commitment to more conventional arms than the Tories' defence commitment.

But we have never fought a campaign on a clear policy to get rid of nuclear weapons.

At the last election, Kinnock even threw away our commitment to remove Cruise so that it should not stand in the way of

the arms talks. The voters will not vote for a Party that fudges around now this way, now the other way.

If we go on giving in to the idea of Great Britain, armed to the teeth, which we used in all our campaign material last time, we will have nothing to offer that remotely looks like an alternative to Thatcher.

We will carry on losing every election until all our credibility, as the Party able to take on governmental power, will be lost. From the rump of a Party, nothing could be built. We must not let our Party go down this road. We have a just cause to fight.

Our policy of socialist change is under attack. Of all radical policies the commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament was one we fought for as a Party united against the leadership. We tried to tie them down, to give them no chance to fudge the policy.

After the famous Callaghan attack, we voted at the following conference in 1983, that Polaris would be dismantled. We must have the same courage now to stop the leaders tearing down our hopes for the future.

For the policy of ending our participation in the nuclear arms race is the most

important commitment we have ever made.

We said that we would stand up for a nuclear-free world whatever the super-powers did. If they get rid of a small fraction of the nuclear weapons in the world, we would welcome that step and use it to tell the people that at last the super-powers are following our lead.

If we find that the talks break down, we are proved right to have made our unilateral stand. We do not tie our unilateral action to any other action, we do not demand, as Joan Ruddock stated in the Conference, that the Soviets match our unilateral action.

We do not stand unilateral nuclear disarmament on its head — that would be dishonest. If you are really on the other side, say so, don't pretend to be still with us.

Conference may have thought that the Composite 34, the unilateral composite, was there to balance the fudging of the rest. Unfortunately, we know that nothing will stop the leadership from breaking with the commitments of that resolution.

But we can use it to help us mount a campaign in the CLPs and in the unions. We must not let them win.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

**Stand by unilateral nuclear disarmament**

**JOY HURCOMBE, Chair, Labour CND**

The Labour Party leadership used the occasion of the debate at Labour Party conference in Brighton to overturn Party policy on unilateral nuclear disarmament. By allowing contradictions in Composites 30 and 34 to be glossed over, they gave themselves the opportunity to pretend that the planned changes in policy that will follow in the next few months have the backing of the Labour Party in the country as a whole.

They will pick the parts they want, they will invent the rest and they will throw away the commitments that the Party has fought for over many years.

This they will do in the name of the Conference because in two resolutions the delegates supported the idea of a policy review.

In Composite 30, delegates even allowed themselves to vote for a working party to review the timetable and negotiating strategy through which the next Labour government will advance our non-nuclear policy within NATO!

**Delegates may not have realised how important this resolution was to the labour leadership.**

Composite 30 looked harmless enough with its opening line reaffirming Labour's non-nuclear defence policy. In reality it gives the leadership a free hand to tone down all our commitments to unilateral abandonment of nuclear weapons and in particular, it ties us forever to the demands of NATO, a nuclear alliance.

Note the importance of the word 'timetable'. A 'timetable' can be used to make sure that things do not happen in the foreseeable future. We will be told that the long-term aim is nuclear disarmament. But we should look at the new factors in the international scene.

With the possibility of agreement to remove Cruise (an intermediate nuclear weapon) by super-power negotiations, we will be told that we should really stop going on about 'unilateral actions'. And, we will be told that by the time we fight the next general election, Trident will be here and, if it is here, we might as well use it to 'bargain with'.

If we say that sounds just like multilateral disarmament, the sort of arguments that enemies of

**Turn to page 11**



Joy Hurcombe

# Organise for socialism!

**THE SOCIALIST CONFERENCE**

**By Eric Heffer MP**

There is no doubt that since Mrs Thatcher came to power, socialism in this country has been on the defensive. It is also true that since we had the election of the 'dream ticket' in the Labour Party, socialism has been on the defensive in the Labour Party also.

Therefore, in fighting the present capitalist government which is dedicated to getting rid of socialism, in fighting against Thatcher and the system she represents we must also at the same time fight the revisionists in our own ranks.

Some people would say, of course. "There he is, one of the old dinosaurs who believes in the tablets of stone handed down from the mountain". I don't know whether I am a dinosaur. I don't know whether I believe in the tablets of stone. All I know is that when I was a lad I learnt from my father and my family that to fight for the working class meant in the long run to fight for socialism and to build a socialist country.

We hear a lot of talk that the working class is dead. Is it? All I've got to say is that a lot of those people who say that don't live where I live. The working class isn't dead, though certainly it's changed.

And some people who are working class — those who have white collars, who are professional workers — have never understood that they are working class, but they ought to understand that they are working class. They don't own the means of production, distribution and exchange, do they? They are employed by other



Listening to the debate. Photo: Peter Walsh, Profile.

people, and help to make profits for them.

And something else. Every time we have this sort of situation developing in the movement we get voices saying the working class is dead, finished. So, they say, is the class struggle. We have to go in new directions.

Comrades, do understand a little about history in our movement. I appeal to the young comrades — don't ignore, learn from it. You don't have to carry on in exactly the same way as we did in the past; but you must understand it.

There was a man called Bernstein in Germany who said it had all changed, that we will never go back to the capitalist crisis of the type that Marx talked about. Bernstein was wrong; Kautsky was wrong; Labour's own Anthony Crosland was wrong. And Bryan Gould is wrong.

Comrades, we have a job to do. Our job is to renew our faith and our organisation in socialism. Our forefathers who built this movement didn't pluck it out of the air, they worked bloody hard to create it. They didn't think socialism would be given to them from on high. They build the movement to work for socialism.

They created the trade union movement. They created the Labour Party. They created other organisations. And what they did we have to do again because socialism is here at this conference and was there at the Labour Party conference. But we

have to *organise* to fight for socialism.

To all the comrades who say we ought to be in other political parties than the Labour Party. It's a fair point, a good, serious argument. But as long as the working class — because they are the engine of change in our society — as long as they are in the Labour Party, affiliated to it through the trade unions — then I say don't let's argue about a new party. Socialists must be in the Labour Party.

Fight with us within the Party. Fight against the present disciplinary regime that is developing, the expulsions that are taking place. I heard one comrade talk about Birmingham. Well, I'll tell you, the Liverpool District Labour Party has been suspended for two years. It's a disgrace and you in the Party have got to do something about it.

Comrades, let's go from this conference renewed in our faith, with our socialist beliefs, our hopes, our aspirations.

We must go from this conference determined to rebuild our movement. We must work as our forefathers did, and our mothers, to bring about a transformation of society.

Let us get rid of capitalism and build a genuine classless society. That's our goal; let's go out and win it.

**Eric Heffer was speaking at the Socialist Conference on 24-25 October.**

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