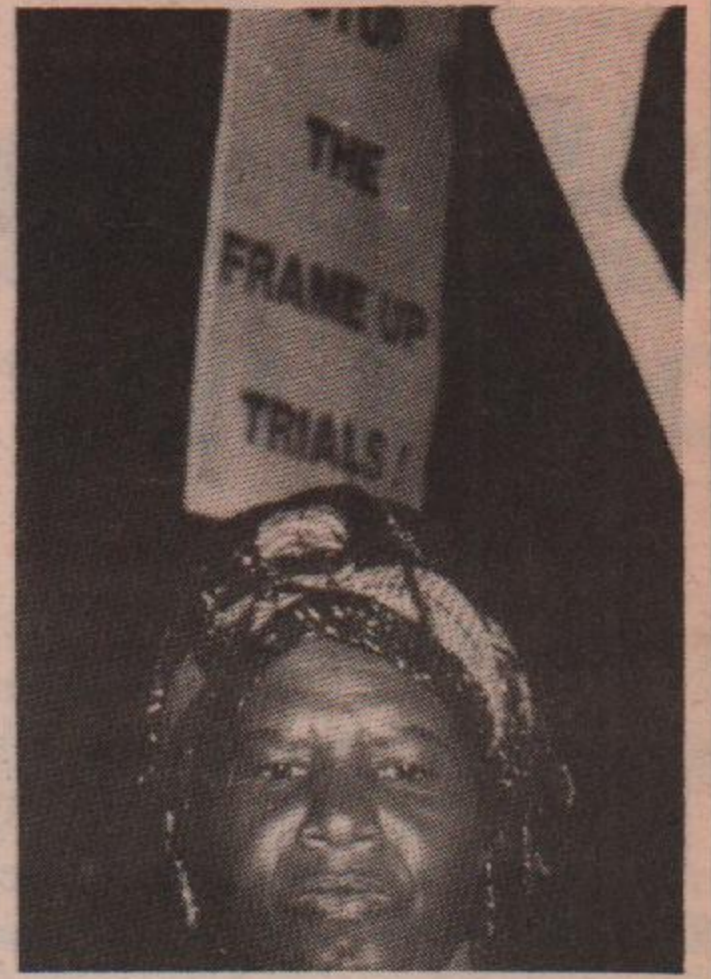


SOCIALIST ORGANISER

INSIDE:

The Tories and Civil Liberties



turn to centre pages

7 steps to beat the Tories



Profiteering kills!

By Colin Foster

It's not just bad luck. The grim death toll from disasters must be blamed on the bosses' increasingly aggressive drive to cut costs and skimp on safety.

Safety regulations can't stop earthquakes and droughts. No-one can create one hundred per cent guarantees against breakdowns and accidents.

But the growing death count is not just the result of a few spectacular tragedies. Look at the growing number of small, unpublicised disasters.

For decades, air travel became steadily safer as technology improv-

ed. Since the late '70s the trend has reversed. Air travel has become more dangerous. 1988 was the worst year ever for air deaths.

Why? Because air travel has been drastically 'deregulated' — thrown open to cut-throat competition — in the 1980s. 1988 passed without hundreds being killed in a mid-air collision, but as the pressure on air traffic control increases that collision will happen sooner or later.

British industry was also becoming safer until the 1980s. Then between 1981 and 1987 the rate of fatal and major accidents rose forty per cent. Why? Competition has been sharper, profit-making more unrestrained. The Tory Government has scrapped many safety regulations and cut back on factory inspectors; all that is part of the 'socialism' which Mrs Thatcher

wants to kill.

The streets are more dangerous. In New York City nearly 2000 people were murdered last year. In proportion to population, the death rate from murder in New York is now four times as high as the death rate from the smouldering war in Northern Ireland over the last 20 years.

New York, and the other big cities of the US, are models of the sort of dog-eat-dog society the Tories want to create in Britain. Profit-making is unrestrained, welfare provision is minimal, thousands of jobless people have no choice but crime or starvation. No wonder rates of violent crime are rising in Britain, too.

After centuries of decrease, in-

Turn to page 2

Labour is lagging in the polls. Neil Kinnock blames the left. But if Labour's leaders would start fighting the Tories, instead of sniping at their own rank and file, then we could rout Thatcher!

1. Can't Pay, Won't Pay the Poll Tax. Let Neil Kinnock declare now that he won't pay the poll tax! Let Labour launch a campaign for local authorities and trade unions to refuse to cooperate with this Tory tax.

Let Labour organise support now for the thousands of people in Scotland planning to refuse to pay the tax from this April, and the unions plan strikes to stop non-payers' poll tax being docked from their wages.

Margaret and Dennis Thatcher will save £33 a week when poll tax replaces rates on their house in Dulwich. The average person in Labour Camden will lose over £6 a week. The poll tax robs the poor to pay the rich. It also threatens democracy: many people will stay off electoral registers, and forfeit the right to vote, in order to avoid poll tax.

In December Labour's national Executive agreed to organise a Day of Action against the poll tax. Now executive member David Blunkett reports that this decision is being sabotaged by 'senior echelons' in the Party.

2. Fight for a decent Health Service! Last year a majority even of Tory voters supported the striking nurses — but Labour's leaders equivocated.

The strikes won some more

money for wages and for the health Service. But it is not enough, and nurses have had to strike again against attempts to cheat them through unfair regrading.

Now the Tories are about to publish their plans for bringing more 'market principles' into the NHS. Around ninety per cent of people disagree with the Tory Government on the NHS, and think the NHS should have more resources even if that means tax rises.

Neil Kinnock will not even promise to restore Tory cuts. Labour should start campaigning vigorously for decent health care as a basic right for all.

3. Fight for real jobs and real training! The jobless figures have come down — largely because the Tories have fiddled the statistics, forced hundreds of thousands into the cheap-labour 'Youth Training Scheme' or the work-for-the-dole 'Employment Training', and intimidated some 90,000 others into dropping their claims for benefit.

Investment in public projects; work-sharing without loss of pay; and guaranteed training places, leading to recognised qualifications — that's the programme that could create employment for all.

Yet Labour's leaders have shelved even their miserable promise to reduce unemployment to one million within five years. TUC leaders, with Neil Kinnock's open encouragement, have publicly torn up the TUC Congress decision to campaign against 'Employment Training'.

Turn to page 3

US hands off Libya!

By Gerry Bates

The US government is talking as if it is going to bomb Libya once again, as it did 2½ years ago. The excuse for this latest piece of big power bullying is that Libya may have built a poison gas plant.

The USA is the greatest nuclear power in the world. It has stockpiled enough atomic weapons to destroy humanity many times over. They also have chemical weapons and chemical weapon factories. So why is the USA making such a fuss about the supposed chemical warfare plant in Libya? The short answer is that they want to appear to do something about those they say helped blow the 'Lockerbie' plane out of the sky. But there is more to it.

Poison gas was used extensively by both sides during the Great War (1914-18). Then it was outlawed by international agreement. It was not used in World War Two (1939-45) — except on the Jews and gypsies in Hitler's death camps.

In fact all the warring powers had kept stockpiles of poison gas and would have used it if they calculated that it would give them a decisive advantage. Among the contingency plans in the files of the British War Cabinet was a plan to stop a German conquest of Ireland by making large parts of the island uninhabitable — for the natives as well as the expected invaders.

Nevertheless, the fact that the ban on gas held during the last world war seemed to vindicate those who believed that inter-imperialist agreements could, despite everything, slowly advance the level of civilisation, even within the general barbarism of total war.

But there was no agreed ban on nuclear weapons, and when the USA developed the first atomic bomb two Japanese cities — Hiroshima and Nagasaki — were immediately, without any warning to the civilian population, bombed out of existence.

Poison gas made a major comeback during the 1980s in the savage and prolonged Iran-Iraq war. Iraq used it widely, and Iran used it too. All the major governments have, admitted or secret, chemical and germ warfare plants. So have many of the smaller powers.

It is difficult to imagine any modern government which could not put together the means to create poison gas or preparation for germ warfare. These come cheaper and more easily than nuclear bombs. They could be the poor countries' cheap means of waging devastating war.

That is why the negotiations at the current Paris Conference on chemical warfare will probably not be able to reach any agreement on a comprehensive ban. Countries like Iraq insist on any such ban being linked to control of nuclear weapons. In the Middle East the only country with nuclear weapons is Israel...

It is easy enough for Iraq and similar middle-ranking powers to point out the downright hypocrisy of the nuclear great powers' attempt to deprive them of chemical weapons. The USA's attempt to harass and bully Libya must be denounced by socialists, alike for its arrogance and its hypocrisy.

However, the world will not be a better place if murdering governments like Iraq's or Iran's or Libya's have either nuclear or chemical weapons — and any "anti-imperialist" who tells you otherwise is a fool.

Profiteering kills

From page 1

fant mortality is rising again in Britain. Increased poverty and a cash-starved Health Service are taking their toll. Professor Peter Townsend recently found that in the five poorest wards in the city of Manchester, 1,445 more people die each year than would be predicted by average national death rates.

"My findings show that poverty kills", commented Professor Townsend. "That is not a political or social comment, but a scientific fact."

The trends are undeniable. And in the major tragedies, too, there is evidence that cost-cutting and profit-squeezing played a role.

The M1 plane crash: The engine manufacturers were already being sued by a former manager for neglect of safety inspection.

Lockerbie: The flight engineers' union NUMAST has accused airlines of skimping on security.

King's Cross: Underground bosses had axed cleaning staff, fobbed off demands from the Fire Brigade for better safety standards, and neglected staff training.

Clapham Junction: British Rail has suffered years of underinvestment because of Tory Government policy. Now trains are overcrowded and outdated signals are being replaced late and on the cheap.

Piper Alpha: Safety standards in the North Sea had been cut steadily as falling oil prices squeezed the bosses' profits.

The Zeebrugge ferry: Unions had complained for years that procedures for checking the ferry doors were inadequate, and had even threatened industrial action on the issue.

The sacrifice of human life to the drive for exploitation is far greater in poorer parts of the world. Untold numbers died and millions were made homeless, in the floods in Bangladesh last year.

Most of Bangladesh's people live on low-lying land near huge rivers. Yet they have no protection against floods. It is not profitable to provide it; and Bangladesh has to pay the interest on its foreign debt.

Millions of people died in the famine in Africa in 1984-5, and millions are still dying in Sudan. A small proportion of the money squeezed out of Africa by the international banks in debt payments would save those lives. But profits come first.

At least 25,000 people died in Armenia's earthquake. Corrupt and reckless bureaucrats had made most of Armenia's buildings shoddy and unable to resist the earthquakes which they well knew were likely in that part of the world.

Poverty kills. Profit-grubbing kills. Exploitation kills. We need collective ownership and social control to save lives.



You thought Reagan was bad...

Women winning safety

WOMEN'S EYE

By Lynn Ferguson

Women in Britain are more afraid of violent attack on the street than of getting cancer or of losing their job.

9 out of 10 women rate their worst fear as being attacked. 67% of women won't go out at night alone unless absolutely necessary.

The statistics come from a survey carried out by the 'World in Action' programme. 1000 people, women and men were interviewed. Not one man rated fear of walking the streets as important for him — in fact men's greatest fear is cancer.

In terms of bare statistics, women's fear is irrational. Two out of every three rapes are carried out by a man known to the woman. Most violence against women takes place in the home. Young black men in their early 20s are far more likely statistically to be attacked on the street than women.

But is that the point? Are women just being hysterical? Do lurid press reports of particularly nasty attacks on women exaggerate the problem?

One woman in the programme answered this very well. A nurse, she was attacked 20 years ago. She

still won't go out alone at night. Her husband drives her to work when she's on night shift. She has imposed a curfew on herself, out of fear. One night she decided to do an experiment, to see if she was out of the ordinary. On her 3 mile car journey to work she counted the people she saw. There were 57 men and one woman — with two dogs. If women aren't going out, maybe that's why they're not getting attacked.

Then of course, there are the attacks that women do not report — either because we are ashamed or, typically, we think will be considered too minor to bother with. There are the potential attacks that women escape by the skin of their teeth. One of the good things about the programme was that it showed well-known women telling of their experiences.

Su Pollard told how she was followed, and escaped by knocking on a door and asking the woman who answered to pretend to be her mother. Rula Lenska hid behind dustbins for half an hour waiting for a potential attacker to give up and go. How many men ever have to do that?

Then there are the other things we have to put up with. Things which may not be physical attacks but which put us down, undermine our confidence and self respect, make us fearful.

The whistlers, the 'flattering comments' and the abusive ones if we don't smile back, the quick gropes on the bus or tube, the

flashes. 34% of the women 'World in Action' interviewed said that they had been sworn at in the street. 18% reported unwelcome physical contact. 17% had been 'flashed' at.

So what can we do? The programme showed two different self-defence groups for women, which taught women not only how to physically defend themselves, but how to have confidence in themselves. But when the women in the survey were asked for their solutions the results were depressing. Demands were for less TV violence, sterner sentences, and more stringent policing. Better street lighting figured too. But no one mentioned the possibility of women standing up for themselves. That's how much women lack self-confidence.

Free self-defence classes should be available to all women, street-lighting and public transport should be improved. Police procedures should be made more sympathetic to women, using women-only squads.

But none of that will stop rape, or violence against women. As Jo Richardson said in the programme, so long as women are second class citizens, treated as not full human beings, rape will continue. We don't want a society in which rape is just made difficult, we want a society without rape, where the impulse to rape has disappeared.

New parties in Yugoslavia

Slovenia, the richest and most westernised republic of Yugoslavia, is moving towards a form of multi-party system.

May saw the founding of the Peasant's Union, a party with around 30,000 members which calls for the return of nationalised land to private hands.

This month 2 new parties will receive their official launch. The Democratic Union, composed mainly of writers and academics, wants western-style democracy, a free market, and closer links with the west. It plans to run its own candidates in local and national elections. The Social Democratic Union

intends to be a workers' party and is led by France Tomsic, an engineer. It is supported by the radical youth magazine *Mladina*.

The Peasant Union is affiliated to the Socialist Alliance, the Communist Party led umbrella organisation which also encompasses a number of feminist, ecological, and other groups. The CP leadership would like the other 2 new parties to be part of the Socialist Alliance, but it seems that in particular the SDU would prefer full independence.

This poses a dilemma for bureaucrats. Do they curb the new parties or risk being voted out in free elections? A recent poll in *Mladina* showed only a 10% vote for the CP in any free election which would take place.

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7 steps to beat the Tories

EDITORIAL

From page 1

4. Fight for unilateral nuclear disarmament! The world response to Mikhail Gorbachev's unilateral cuts in the USSR's armed forces shows that unilateralism is the way to mobilise politically for peace. Yet Labour's leaders are openly trying to dump unilateralism and replace it with vague hopes that officials in Geneva will negotiate away the threat of nuclear annihilation. They will not.

Any gains from negotiations are welcome, but the only solid answer

to the threat of war is mobilisation of the people in every country to disarm their own warmongering rulers and to destroy the nuclear arsenals.

5. Fight for the right to study! The Tories want to move to a 'US-style' education system, largely governed by market economics. The replacement of student grants by loans; the option for schools to leave local authority control, the abolition of the Inner London Education Authority, the remodelling of further education as a market-driven service industry, and the idea of reintroducing fees in higher education, are steps along this road.

In the US, an elite get an excellent education; a large 'underclass' leave school illiterate. That's where the Tories would take us. And Britain was the worst-educated country in Europe (after Turkey) even before the Tories started.

Labour should campaign for a genuinely comprehensive and well-resourced education service, accessible to working class children, women, black people and adult students.

6. Defend civil liberties! An opinion poll shows that 65 per cent of people reckon that the Tories have expanded state control more than individual freedom. Indeed they have!

Labour should draft a Bill of

Rights — including workers' rights to organise, to run their own unions as they wish, to negotiate, to strike and to picket — and campaign for it.

7. Fight for public ownership and democratic control! The Tories created a sham prosperity for some by selling off public enterprises cheap and forcing mass cut-price sales of council housing.

The October 1987 stock market crash took the shine off privatisation. Now interest rate rises have increased the average mortgage-payers' costs by £70 a month.

More and more households are going to be unable to keep up their mortgage payments. At the same

time the stock of low-rent public sector housing is being cut still further by the Tories' new housing law. The double squeeze is brewing a huge housing crisis.

The general rule in Tory Britain is riches for a few, poverty for many. About one-third of the population live in poverty by the Tories' own figures, and the services we all rely on, like public transport, are becoming worse and more costly.

The Labour leaders have meekly followed the Tories down the road of free-market economics, protesting feebly at the worst excesses but offering no alternative. Now more than ever, is the time to offer an alternative — and fight for it. Seize the time!

Yes, we can beat the Tories!

Unchain your mind!

The latest copy of *Workers' Liberty* is out now. And this 60 page bumper edition includes important articles either unpublished before in English or now out of print.

Workers' Liberty thrives on debate and is not afraid to question familiar left wisdoms when reality itself questions them.

Much of the magazine is given over to discussion material on the Eastern bloc, including excerpts from Max Shachtman's writings which have long been out of print. Shachtman is somewhat of an anti-Christ figure on parts of the left. This is partly due to his role in splitting the American SWP in 1940, partly due to his political trajectory far to the right of socialism in the decades after the war and partly, I suppose, because so few people have read his writings.

His ideas on the USSR need to be taken seriously. Shachtman judged Stalinism as a new form of class society: bureaucratic or totalitarian collectivism, both anti-capitalist and anti-socialist. He scoffed at the left's tendency to fetishise nationalised property. He reasserted the need for working class participation and political supremacy in any socialist society and reiterated the fundamental link between democracy and socialism.

These themes are taken up in an editorial on Britain, and in Bob Fine's article on the erosion of civil liberties under Thatcher. Tory successes are largely based on piecemeal reforms, trial and error — each victory making the New Right more confident and the labour movement weaker. He

By Ray Ferris

blames the left for not waging the battle of ideas and championing democracy — thus allowing Thatcher to hypocritically steal the high ground.

The root of Thatcher's successes is taken up again in a debate between Martin Thomas and Jack Frain.

Thomas stresses how the Tories stumbled onto many of their reforms and emphasises the failings and low morale of the labour movement. The Tories have failed to create a new consensus or to dramatically increase their vote. Frain stresses the departure from the post-war welfare consensus that the Tories do entertain strategic long-term goals and can stay with a split opposition.

A seemingly contagious and peculiar fad at present is an attempt by sections of the left to double their political vocabulary by sticking a 'post' in front of their favourite words, believing the world to have changed accordingly. So what's going on? Belinda Weaver and Chris Reynolds take up the challenge.

Weaver discusses modernism in architecture. She shows how a new school in architecture armed with exciting new building materials and a desire to build for the poor, rather than the rich, ended in catastrophe and blighted inner cities. And she exposes post-modernism as "just the same old concrete and steel boxes with ornament on".

Reynolds examines the roots of 'Post-Fordism' championed by 'Marxism Today'. He shows how 'Fordism' itself was never a precise



Stalin: leader of a new ruling class?

concept. Gramsci's notes on 'Fordism' are radically different from the theory developed by Aglietta, a French Marxist economist. And Aglietta's development of 'Neo-Fordism' is radically different from the 'Post-Fordism' of Marxism Today. Beneath the obscure language lie no new analyses or perspectives, just another pretext for abandoning serious working class politics.

Clive Bradley looks at why the PLO opted for 'two states' in the Middle East and the implications of the intifada, and the Israeli general election results. Other articles cover Ireland, Yugoslavia, Brazil, Nicaragua...

It is of course, impossible to mention everything in a review, you'll just have to buy your own copy.

Finally, *Workers' Liberty* 11 commemorates the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International with a lead editorial which examines Socialist Organiser and *Workers' Liberty*'s place in Marxist thought and the traditions

of creative Marxism we aspire to. It reveals the fundamental role analyses of the Stalinist states played in shaping our movement — both positively (in fierce ideological combat) and negatively (in the forms of capitulation).

It rejects the fetishes of na-

tionalisation, and the indifference to democracy prevalent on the left. Our political compass is attuned to the working class, their interests and the irreplaceable struggle for their political independence as a class. That's why we fight for *Workers' Liberty*, east and west.

'The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race'

Karl Marx

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Out now!

The new issue of *Workers' Liberty* includes Max Shachtman's key articles on Stalinism (in print for the first time for decades); Zbigniew Kowalewski on super-exploitation in the Eastern Bloc; Bob Fine on civil liberties in Britain; and articles and reviews on 'post-Fordism', modern architecture, Ireland, Palestine, Thatcherism, the Greens and much else. £1.50 plus 22p post from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

WITHOUT MONEY



GRAFFITI

The government have just gleefully announced a saving of £65 million last year by stopping 'fraudulent' social security claims.

Norman Fowler told a press conference that DHSS fraud squads (snoopers to you and me) forced 90,000 people to withdraw their claims and prosecuted 4,000.

Fowler promised to 'intensify the drive against benefit fraud and the black economy in 1989'. So more and more energy will be put into sniffing out suspected 'fraud' whilst claimants have to wait for ever increasing periods of time to receive their benefit. That's an efficient social security system for you.

On the dole? Thinking of applying for the Social Fund loan for extra bedding or a heater for the winter?

The answer from many social security offices is likely to be "forget it".

Around two thirds of applicants are rejected, frequently on the grounds that they are "too poor" to pay back the loan! Talk about Catch 22.

At least one DHSS office has been told to refuse loans unless the applicant has written proof that they have been refused a loan by two "credit companies" (read 'loan sharks') and one charity.

Not surprisingly, very few people are willing to go through the humiliation of such a procedure. They'd rather go without. A survey of visitors to Citizens Advice Bureaux showed that only 45% of people were interested in pursuing claims once they were told how the procedure worked. Two thirds of the rest were put off by the prospect of having up to 15% of their benefit stopped as repayments.

A researcher into the Fund, Gary Craig from Bradford University, commented: "One of the harshest ironies of the Social Fund is that those who most desperately need its help are unable to receive it."

The Russian Communist Party is moving to make friends with the Italian Communist Party.

Relations between the two parties broke down in 1980 with the Italian leaderships' criticisms of Soviet Stalinism, and their espousal of SDP type politics.

Now an article in the Russian CP's journal Kommunist admits that many of the Italian's criticisms were just, and that some of the PCI's policies may have been 'misjudged' by the Kremlin.

A long way from its denunciation of the PCI in 1982 as aiding 'imperialism and anti-communism'!

A third of households in Manchester are living in poverty.

Manchester City Council has just produced a report on poverty in the city, based not on the dubious official poverty line of the income support level, but on the ability of families in Manchester to buy a list of 16 essential items. The list included such things as a bed for every household member, a warm waterproof coat, and meat or fish every other day.

Anyone not able to afford three or more items was considered to be poor. Manchester, particularly East Manchester has been badly hit by the decline in heavy industry. 20% of the male workforce in the city are out of work, many for several years.

The changes last April in the benefits system have made matters worse. Before April it was possible for welfare rights workers to get extra money for around 85% of people who asked for help. Now the figure is nearer to 50%, with the loss of special needs and other extra payments.

Urban decay is another factor. With the better off increasingly moving out to Cheshire, inner Manchester is simply being left to rot.

According to the researcher Barbara McLoughlin, parts of Manchester are turning into a 'twilight zone'.

For Manchester's poor, Thatcher's policies mean a return to the 19th century.

Who dares loses

Insight the Sunday Times' investigative team, has suffered a series of blows to its once-proud reputation. The latest humiliation involved last April's Thames Television programme 'Death on the Rock', which was savagely attacked by most of the Thatcherite press, with the Sunday Times and Insight leading the bay- ing pack.

Last week a former Insight reporter, Rosey Waterhouse, wrote to the UK Press Gazette, to disassociate herself from the Insight 'investigation' into the programme:

"Now that I have resigned from the Sunday Times I would like to set the record straight belatedly, about my involvement in Insight's investigation into the Thames TV documentary 'Death on the Rock', she writes.

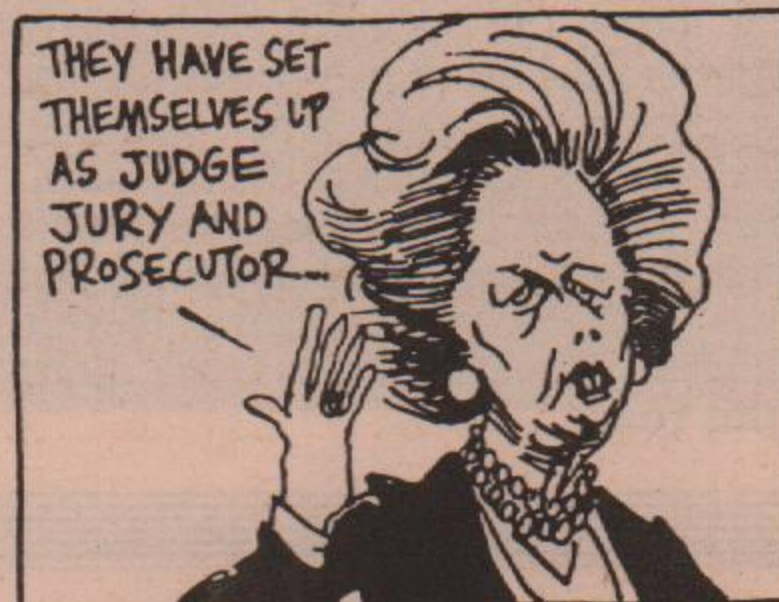
"After the programme I interviewed two witnesses to the shootings of the 3 IRA terrorists in Gibraltar who appeared on the programme — Josie Celicia and Stephen Bullock. The account of my interviews with them was inaccurate in the Sunday Times and had the effect of discrediting parts of the documentary and the evidence of another witness, Carmen Proetta.

Ms Waterhouse sent a detailed memo to editor Andrew Neil (who had personally compiled the story) listing her objections and she says two other Insight reporters also complained.

"I came very close to resigning then, but my mortgage got the better of me" continues the guilt-ridden Ms Waterhouse: "I was and still am deeply unhappy that my copy was used to discredit another piece of investigative journalism."

The Waterhouse revelations provoked on 'indignant' defence of the Sunday Times from Neil's toady, features editor Robin Morgan, in the letters column of the Guardian. This proved to be a tactical error on the part of Neil/Morgan, because it gave 'Death on the Rock' producer Chris Oxley the opportunity to fire off a detailed point-by-point refutation which the Guardian printed in a prominent position on the letters page.

Oxley's almost surgical dissection of the Neil/Morgan case noted that the Sunday Times' character assassination of key witness Carmen Proetta has since been shown to be without foundation and the Sunday Times stable mate has already paid 'substantial' damages for similar statements; one of the witnesses quoted by Insight (Stephen Bullock) has publicly denounced the Insight story as a 'complete load of nonsense', and another (Mrs Celicia) is 'furious' about the way the Sunday Times attempted to use her account to contradict Mrs Proetta. The Sunday Times even got the identities of Thames' four witnesses wrong and attributed the evidence of Dianna Treacy (not



PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR

DAILY STAR

THE INDEPENDENT

By Jim Denham

named at the time) to the self-confessed liar Kenneth Asquez.

Oxley's demolition job contains many more points of a similarly damning nature and should ensure that Neil and Morgan make no further attempts to justify the Sunday Times' increasingly transparent role as a mouth piece for Ministry of Defence propaganda.

Oxley closes with a challenge that we can confidently predict will not be taken up: "Thames Television set-up an inquiry under Conservative peer Lord Windlesham, former Minister of State for Northern Ireland and Richard Rampton QC when the

programme was criticised. Should not the Sunday Times do the same? If they can't persuade Lord Windlesham to take part, perhaps they should ask Harold Evans the founder of Insight to enquire whether the Sunday Times has maintained the best traditions of the Insight team?"

One irony of all this is that the ignominy that has attached itself to the name of Insight will probably provide Andrew Neil with the excuse he is waiting for to kill off the team once and for all, as part of his drive to turn the Sunday Times into a gargantuan bundle of yuppie 'life style' features about holidays, wine and flashy motor cars — all held together by an unquestioning Thatcherite editorial line. Another irony is that despite overwhelming evidence of the basic accuracy of "Death on the Rock" (the Windlesham inquiry is expected to largely vindicate the programme) and of the dishonesty of the press campaign against it "The government", (in the words of Roy Hattersley who sometimes hits the nail on the head), "used the programme to threaten individual independent broadcasting companies, to legitimise its assault on the IBA and to help justify its broadcasting ban".

The Fleet Street hacks who were presented with special "Who Dares Wins" ties by the SAS after the Gibraltar inquest have now served their purpose. Wear the ties with pride, lads.

Spit and move on!

LETTERS

I've never understood why Jim Denham's 'Press Gang' paid so much attention to Wendy Henry, ex-editor of the News of the World, etc.

There are lots and lots of ex (and not entirely ex) lefties in and around Fleet Street. The News of the World is especially vile, and Henry was careless enough to get caught making up an interview. But most of the tabloids are vile, and they all lie and invent and "creatively enhance" the 'news' they bother to notice.

Why is Henry, who was a marginal member of left wing groups 20 years ago, but left politics some 15 years ago, more interesting than, for example, Paul Foot, a central leader of the SWP, who writes a — sometimes useful — column in the extremely sleazy 'Mirror', Robert Maxwell's fanzine?

Foot hasn't sold out, of course; but then Henry long ago ceased to have anything to do with the left. Spit in contempt — and pass on.

I write because Jim Denham's comments last week might be read as suggesting that it is a point against the SWP that Henry was once — until 14 or 15 years ago — a member of theirs. Well then, it is also a point against SO, because she was a member — as recently as mid-1971! — of one of SO's ancestral groups, the "Trotskyist Tendency", which was part of IS/SWP until December 1971.

I cannot see that it is a point against either the SWP or SO. There are an awful lot of renegade socialists, and you'll find them in the strangest places. In any case, SO can't in decency throw stones at the SWP for this particular renegade. Spit and move on.

Sean Matgamna, London.

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On a Soviet factory floor

By Stan Crooke

In December of 1968 'Pravda' carried a report on a typical working day of a three-man brigade of machine operators in a factory in Perm. Their shift at the factory broke down into the following activities.

7.45 am: start work (but only one of the brigade arrived on time). 9.20 to 9.40: break for a smoke. 9.40 to 9.55: work. 9.55 to 10.20: break for a smoke. 10.20 to 11.05: lunch break. 11.05 to 11.20: aimless wandering around the shop. 11.20 to 11.40: tuning a press. 11.40 to 1.00: work. 1.00 to 2.00: smoking and aimlessly wandering around the shop. 2.00 to 2.30: cleaning up. 2.30: finish work.

Pravda carried the article twenty years ago. And it must have been an extreme case to make the papers. Even so, it represents a fair reflection of working life for many Soviet workers through to the present day.

Many Soviet workers simply don't bother turning up for work. Three-day sick passes can be easily obtained from a local health clinic, paving the way for a prolonged drinking bout. Absenteeism rates of over 10% are the norm.

Some Soviet workers don't turn up for work because they do not exist. By keeping fictitious workers ('dead souls' as they are called) on the books, factory managers can use their wages to pay real workers for unrecorded overtime to ensure that production targets are met, or to buy spare parts on the black market for factory machinery.

Those Soviet workers who do turn up for work do not necessarily stay on the premises. According to a report in 'Pravda' in December of 1982, "73% of working people take time off from enterprises for personal visits...at some enterprises no more than 10% of the workers were at their places during the final hour of the shift".

Workers who turn up to their workplace and remain at it are not necessarily in any condition to work. In one Moscow factory a foreman reported that he knew that over 10% of his workers would be drunk on the job. Some factories have special brigades with the sole function of ensuring drunken workers do not injure themselves in the machinery.

Factories are generally in a poor state of repair, lacking in modern fixtures and equipment, and may not have been refurbished since the 1930s. When a delegation of Italian

workers visited the Togliatti factory producing the Soviet version of the Fiat car, one member of the delegation ate his Communist Party membership card during the visit to show his disgust at the working conditions in the factory.

Primitive working conditions result in a high rate of industrial accidents. Although no official statistics are published on industrial accidents (a revealing shortcoming in a country where statistics are published on everything else), individual workers and visiting foreign delegations have consistently referred to inadequate safety standards in Soviet workplaces.

Mining is the worst example. According to Klebanov, a former miner at Bazhanova and a founding member of the Association of Free Trade Unions, twelve to fifteen workers were killed each year at Bazhanova and another 600 to 700 injured in accidents. During a visit by a team of Western experts to mines in the Donetsk region in 1977, methane levels of 5.5% were recorded — above the level for potential explosions.

Canteen facilities, insofar as they exist, are less than appetising. A shortage of serving hatches leads to long queues for meals, cutting into the workers' breaktime. Those fortunate enough to get to a hatch cannot necessarily find a seat: in 1980 the ratio of canteen places to workers was one to over a hundred. Often the meal is not worth the effort anyway: short measures and rotting food are not uncommon, as canteen workers pilfer the better food for their own families.

Some 'trade union' officials regard canteen facilities as an unnecessary luxury anyway. When the paper 'Trud' asked one such official why there were no canteen facilities at his factory for night-shift workers, he replied: "Between the hours of 11 pm and morning the chemical workers do not need to eat, and, anyway, they could not, since they are not allowed to stop working."

Nor do Soviet workers have much to look forward to in their pay packets. Average monthly take-home pay for industrial workers in Moscow is estimated to be well under half that of workers in the USA and West Germany. The working time required for an average family of four persons to buy the same shoppers' basket is estimated as 18.6 hours in Washington, 22.2 hours in Paris, and 53.5 hours in Moscow.

But even this modest take-home pay can be achieved only if individual and factory production targets are met. Since production targets are generally defined in terms of quantity rather than



quality, the net outcome of this system of payment is substandard commodities, predominantly produced towards the close of the month to fulfill the monthly production target.

In a letter to Trud a foreman in a motor car parts factory in Kazan reported that his factory produced 12 to 22% of its monthly target in the first third of the month, 24% in the second third and 63% in the final third. This rhythm of production allowed the target to be achieved, but not over-achieved, lest the excess level of production became the new norm.

Concentrating production at the close of the month reduces still further the general quality of Soviet production. In 1987 alone 6,000 million roubles worth of goods were rejected by the State Quality Control Board as being substandard (although the goods

were nonetheless included in the gross national production and output figures).

The drive to achieve the target by the close of the month also leads to involuntary and unpaid overtime (save in those factories where the wages of 'dead souls' cover the overtime costs). In a letter to Trud a worker in Balebeyevd complained of his wife being forced to do overtime for which she was neither paid nor received appropriate time off. Workers at her factory who refused to do the overtime were denied their annual bonuses.

Such working conditions inevitably create a high level of job dissatisfaction, though this is rarely publicised in the Soviet media. A survey carried out amongst workers at the Voroshilovgrad locomotive works, the results of which were published in Izvestia, found 66% of the workers dissatisfied with their

wages, 71% dissatisfied with their working equipment, and 70% dissatisfied with health conditions in the works.

Surveys carried out by the Soviet magazine 'Sociological Researches' have also found a high level of job dissatisfaction, albeit at a lower level than in the previous example: about 40% of those workers questioned about their jobs were either 'dissatisfied to the maximum extent', 'dissatisfied' or 'indifferent'.

Job dissatisfaction is also reflected in the high rate of labour turnover in the Soviet Union. Many Soviet enterprises report annual rates of labour turnover of between 70% and 90%.

Gorbachev's economic reforms are about getting workers to work harder through increased use of 'market mechanism' — factory-closures and unemployment where production continues to stagnate, and higher prices and a reduced 'social wage' to give workers the 'incentive' to increase production and thereby their wages.

Soviet workers recognise the meaning of these economic reforms. A survey of over 6,000 skilled workers in 500 Moscow factories found that over half of them thought that the reforms had brought little tangible result, apart from harder work. In one factory in the survey 62% were of this opinion.

In the communist society of the future envisaged by Marx, 'labour, from being a mere means of life, (would) become the prime necessity of life'. Clearly the Soviet Union still has a long way to go before realising this perspective. What makes the way even longer is that it is continuing to travel in the wrong direction.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Tuesday 17 January. Southampton SO: 'Why Socialists should fight in the Labour Party'. Speaker: Ray Ferris. 7.30.

Saturday 21 January. Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign conference. City University, Northampton St, London EC1. Starts 10am. Contact: 01-253 2464.

Saturday 21 January. 'Further Education Socialists' planning meeting, in London. Details: contact Mark, 01-639 7967.

Saturday 21/Sunday 22 January. Weekend school for women supporters of Socialist Organiser.

Details: contact Cate, 01-639 7965.

Monday 23 January. London SO education series on British labour history. 'The Chartist'. Speaker: Martin Thomas. PCL Student Union, Bolsover St. 7pm.

Monday 30 January. London Socialist Forum: 'Socialist Feminism into the 1990s'. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1. 7.30pm.

Monday 30 January. Sheffield SO meeting: 'Arabs, Jews and Socialism'. Speaker: John O'Mahony.

Saturday 4 February. 'Alternative Policy Review' conference. Queen Mary College, East London.

Monday 6 February. London SO education series on British labour history. 'The New Unionism and the first Marxist groups'. Speaker: Bruce Robinson. PCL Student Union, Bolsover St. 7pm.

Saturday 11/Sunday 12 February. Socialist Student weekend conference, in Sheffield. Details: contact Mark, 01-639 7967.

Saturday 11 February. Marxism Today 'New Times, New Thinking' conference. Caxton House, St Johns Way, London N19. Starts 10am.

Sunday 12 February. Cardiff SO public meeting. Speaker: John O'Mahony.

Saturday 18/Sunday 19 February. Socialist Organiser industrial weekend school. Manchester Poly Student Union, Oxford Rd. Contact Tom, 01-639 7965.

Monday 20 February. London SO education series. 'The formation of the Labour Party'. Speaker: Cathy Nugent. PCL Student Union, Bolsover St. 7pm.

Saturday 25 February. Women for Socialism conference. Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2.

Contact Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY (01-992 0945).

Saturday 8/Sunday 9 April. 'Gorbachev and the European Left' conference. ULU, Malet St, London WC1. Contact: Gus Fagan, 30 Bridge St, Oxford OX2 0BA.

Saturday 29 April. CLPs conference on Party Democracy.

Saturday 20 May. Socialist Conference Local Government Conference. Shawfield School, Rochdale. Contact: Tony Trehu, 7 East View, Mitchell St, Rochdale.

Saturday 17 June. Socialist Conference. Octagon Centre, Sheffield.

Saturday 1/Sunday 2 July. Workers' Liberty summer school. London.

Saturday 11/Sunday 12 November. Socialist Conference, 'Building the Left in the Unions'. Sheffield.

The Tories' assault on freedom

While it spouts about freedom, the Tory Government has greatly expanded state power at the expense of civil liberties. Liz Millward surveys the trends, especially as they affect students. Liz Millward is a member of the National Union of Students Executive, writing in a personal capacity.

Are we sliding slowly towards Britain becoming an authoritarian state? Are we close to it already? Is the Labour Party exaggerating when it accuses the Thatcher government of having organised 'the greatest erosion of civil liberties in living memory'? These are some of the most important questions in politics today.

Anyone who's been around in the student movement for very long will agree that civil liberties have indeed been 'massively eroded'. The mounted police charge into the demonstration on Westminster Bridge was the culmination of a longer process of restricting student's rights of 'free assembly'.

All over the country the police are being less and less co-operative in allowing any sort of student protest. They are more and more willing to wade into demonstrations violently and abusively.

Arrests are made at random, and once arrested people are bullied and beaten. Charges are out of all proportion to 'offences' — one Sheffield student is charged with 'incitement to riot' for taking part in a peaceful demonstration.

Another, Emma Colyer, who has photographs showing her being dragged along the ground by several police officers, is charged with 'obstruction'. The situation has not always been like this. Police violence towards students has noticeably increased in recent years.

This change is not arbitrary. The police have never been the friends of the working class, or the black community or demonstrating students — only now it is worse. The changes are in direct relation to what the police think they can get away with.

The Tories have made previously legal forms of protest illegal. Picketing is the clearest example. The right to demonstrate has been made subject to delays and police approval under the Public Order Act. Thus all protestors can be treated as criminals and trouble makers and so when a police bully boy lays into pickets or students they are only getting what they deserve. That the climate and that is the psychology.

In the guise of expanding 'freedom' the Tories are more and more silencing opposition to themselves and the business interests they serve.

In the name of democracy they restrict the right of democratic organisations (like trade unions and student unions) to take action in defence of their interests.

Before Christmas Newcastle Poly student union was served with an injunction preventing the executive organising any form of direct action. This is despite the fact that the executive could and would do nothing without a democratic mandate from their members!

So it is democracy, not violence, which is being curtailed.

In his ruling, the judge referred to the violence during the miners' and printers' strikes and on Westminster Bridge. In all those cases the violence came from the police and was directed at the protesters or pickets. **In all those cases the action had been democratically decided upon.**

What the Tories are restricting is the vital freedom of people to organise to change government

policy or to defend themselves or their interests. Much of what this government does is preemptive action to stop people resisting or reversing the 'Thatcher Revolution'.

For example, collective action, especially labour movement action, is one of the Tories' main targets. They want to stamp it out because they can see, quite rightly, that the labour movement could, if it were mobilised and led properly, defeat them. The labour movement is thus target number one.

But the Tories do not just wage physical war on organised labour, using police violence backed up by the courts and the jails. They also wage an ideological battle against any and all political opposition.

Under the banner of 'freedom' freedom of the press is restricted, allowing the Tories and their press barons to mould public opinion. They create bogey threats from which they protect us with ever more draconian laws.

They sell the vicious class legislation for the Poll Tax as a measure to "give us more say in how local government spends money". Other paper tigers they have protected us from include forced lesbian and gay indoctrination; the council as a landlord; local authority schools; and the ever present issues of violence, crime, terrorism and breaches of 'national security'. In most cases the Tories have either created, or exacerbated the original 'problem'.

Tory spokesmen argue that people should have the freedom to 'stand on their own feet'. In other words people should be free to direct their own lives, free from overbearing state interference.

That's fine, that's what socialism's all about. **But that is precisely what the Tories are moving away from!**

When the Tories 'free' Polytechnics and colleges from Local Education Authority 'control' they are freeing local people from the right to have a say on what goes on in them. That usually means fewer part-time courses, abolition of equal opportunities policies, privatisation, merger, course closure — that is less and less freedom of choice for students and local people. The Tories have also freed most colleges from the burden of enough money on which to run properly!

Freedom for the individual must involve real choices. Under this system and especially under this government many working class young people have no choices, and so no freedom.

They have no choice about the cheap-labour Youth Training Scheme, or about leaving home and getting their own place to live. And their rights to organise to improve their conditions are so restricted that they have little freedom there either.

And as the education system becomes more Americanised, choices will be further curtailed. The chance of an education will become more dependent on parental income and on the amount a 'free' individual can raise from the



Police officer in arrest of Emma Colyer. Photo: Neil Turner/Insight

bank.

The same technically free individual has little (and will have even less) freedom to information, or freedom of confidentiality.

Already a system of identity cards is proposed for students in Scotland as part of the implementation of the poll tax. Football supporters too face identity cards. **On their past record, if the Tories introduce identity cards for these two groups, it will not be long before everyone is carrying them.**

Universal identity cards in Britain seem almost impossible now, but then 5 years ago so did the idea of keeping someone in a police cell for a week without charging them, or allowing them to contact the outside world.

Five years ago no one would have imagined that the 'right to silence' without prejudice would simply be removed by the Tories.

The British legal system for all its faults and with all its class bias and prejudice is founded on some fine principles which, if universally and consistently applied, should ensure justice and fairness.

It is those very principles which are being attacked by a government which supposedly believes in freedom and equality of the individual.

In recent months two European countries have refused to extradite people to Britain on the grounds that they would not get a fair trial.

What makes all this worse is that the Tories are acting for political ends. Their ideological onslaught, for which they use the institutions of the state, has a political purpose, that of maintaining themselves in power by manipulation of information. So far they have succeeded terribly, aided by the feebleness and gutlessness of the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership of the Labour Party.

Thatcher and Co are essentially following in the footsteps of disgraced and ousted former US President Nixon, the man behind the "Watergate" scandal of the mid-70s. The only difference is that they have already changed the law so that they can't be indicted for what they do!

The real tragedy is that all this doesn't have to happen. The organised labour movement has the power to stop the Tories taking away its hard earned democratic



NUS Steward Emma Colyer is dragged along the ground by police officers during a November 24 NUS demo. Photo: Neil Turner/Insight

rights. It is probably true that if the Tories had made all their attacks in 1979 or 1980 the labour movement would have fought back and won. **But the Tories have taken our rights away bit by bit, growing more confident with each step.**

And with each step the Tories have made, Labour and the TUC have retreated. Where the rank and file have tried to fight, the bureaucrats have stifled, strangled and denounced them. They have scurried before the Tories.

All the left regard postal balloting as less democratic than voting based on hearing both sides of an argument at a mass meeting



Photo: Neil Turner/Insight

How Labour can win in 1989

By Eric Heffer MP

It would seem that some people in the Labour Party and trade union movement are without confidence that Labour can win the next general election. They are seriously wrong.

There are others, both in the movement and outside, who reflect the Thatcherite view that socialism is either dead or has no real future. They are equally wrong.

There are some in leading positions in the Party whose lack of confidence in Labour's future leads them to look for a political solution to Thatcherism in PR, and as a first step advocate a coalition government. Others seek not simply to change party policy, but to fundamentally change the nature and character of the party, thereby transforming it into a party which accepts the capitalist system, but with a slightly more benevolent face than capitalism has at present.

The competitive market system is now, in some Labour quarters, acceptable; and the argument to back it up is that such a system is now developing in the Soviet Union and other 'communist' countries. That, I believe, is a misreading of events in the Soviet Union.

All those who argue in such a way are actually helping to keep Mrs Thatcher's policies and government in being. They do a great disservice to the Labour Party and movement, and undermine the confidence in Labour's supporters in believing Labour can win.

The really serious point is that those who weaken the confidence of the people in Labour's victory and in socialist solution to Britain and the world's problems are terribly wrong. They exhibit an attitude similar to the rabbit before the stoat: either petrified into inactivity or into meaningless activity which they trust will meet approval of our political enemies.

There is no denying that the road ahead for Labour is difficult. To win a majority at the next election will be an uphill struggle. It will not come easily, but it can and must be done — otherwise the condition of the mass of the British people will get worse and the welfare state will be totally destroyed: political freedom will become a thing of the past; and Britain will increasingly become a satellite of the USA, accepting not only US troops and aircraft on British soil, but all the worst features of United States life.

Those in the labour movement who argue for PR and a coalition to get it must be firmly repudiated. There are some facts that have to be considered.

Firstly, the next election, whatever arguments there are about PR, will be fought on the present electoral system. The Thatcher government has no intention of changing that, and therefore Labour must go all out to win a majority under the present electoral system. They must do so with confidence, attacking those who would deflect it with arguments about PR.

Secondly, votes for the SLD and SDP will deflect votes from Labour, and instead of strengthening Labour can seriously weaken it. Labour's task is to win those who might consider voting for either the SLD or the SDP. The conflict between the SLD and the SDP gives Labour a real opportunity to win back lost support, providing Labour does not accept the basic policies of either of them.

Thirdly, Labour must have its own distinctive programme and policies. It must hold firm to its aim of building a democratic socialist society, which will be fundamentally unlike the bureaucratic societies of Eastern Europe. Labour has never equated the bureaucratic, state-controlled one-party system in Soviet Russia with socialism, despite the fact that most of the industry is state owned.

Socialism means the flowering of freedom, of the human spirit, of democratic concepts, in all aspects of political, social and artistic life — not its confinement to a strait-jacket. Labour rejects both the bureaucratic societies of the 'communist' East, which have no real equality and the unfettered, competitive free enterprise societies of Western capitalism which leads to great wealth on the one hand and grinding poverty on the other.

This year, 1989, must be the year of rebuilding the confidence of the British people in Labour. That can be done by the Party going out to the people, conducting real campaigns on issues and siding with the struggles of council tenants, with those engaged in fighting the poll tax, with trade unionists fighting for better conditions and against Thatcher's anti-union policies, and with those who seek greater devolution in Scotland; with those seeking a peaceful, political solution in Northern Ireland, with those who seek to assist Gorbachev in the Soviet Union — which must mean Labour keeping to its policy of getting rid of all nuclear weapons and bases and working for the ending of both the Warsaw and NATO pacts.

Labour's policy towards Europe must surely be 'No to the Common Market, but yes to a democratic socialist Europe'.

Internationalism is Labour's basic outlook; we must prove it by continuing to be on the side of all those in South Africa, Asia and Latin America who are fighting for peace and justice.

Forward to Socialism

By Eric Heffer MP.
50p plus postage
from Jon Lansman,
c/o Jeremy Corbyn
MP, House of
Commons, London
SW1



to a police van,
Turner/Insight.

conference. Yet the NOLS (National Organisation of Labour Students) leadership of the National Union of Students proposed a system of electing the NUS President as reactionary as a postal strike ballot. And that was before the Tories had even thought of it!

Neil Kinnock condemned student violence on television so quickly from Westminster Bridge that he shocked even his own supporters in the NUS. He didn't even wait to set out the facts before siding with the police and Mrs Thatcher's screaming Tory press.

We live in a country where every student is required to sign a declaration to cause no 'disruption' on

pain of expulsion when they go to college. Where the right of a fascist to speak on campus is protected by law — and enforceable by the police — but where it is illegal for students to organise democratically in support of their interests.

The Tories do not care at all about freedom for anyone, other than freedom to exploit people for money. Sometimes they don't even pretend, saying that the first freedom is the 'freedom of the market'. Indeed. For the vast majority who form the 'labour market' personal freedom is not on offer.

Socialists are the true democrats, and the real advocates of individual freedom. Not the freedom to buy a

tiny bit of an industry but the power to own and run it all, in our own interests. Not the freedom for some of us to buy our own home but the freedom for all of us to have decent, cheap accommodation without having to worry about eviction or repossession.

The Tories have got away with the erosion of civil liberties for too long. The labour movement has let them do it, and with every new bit of legislation it gets harder to fight back.

We have to take a stand now and expose the Tories for what they are. More than that, we must organise to beat them, because that is the only way to win real freedom.

Why Trotsky predicted wrong

In this second part of his discussion article, Vladimir Derer argues that Trotsky was misled by his view that the Kremlin bureaucracy was an unstable, hybrid, composite group rather than a cohesive class. Trotsky had argued — as the first part of this article set out to demonstrate — that a 'degenerated workers' state' must be acutely unstable. His mistaken prediction that Stalinism could not possibly survive World War 2 followed logically.

Having made certain changes in his use of historical analogies, Trotsky, now describing the Soviet regime as 'Bonapartist', continues on the same theme of it being a regime of crisis:

"Bonapartism by its very essence, cannot long maintain itself; a sphere balanced on the point of a pyramid must inevitably roll down on one side or the other. But it is precisely at this point...that the historical analogy runs up against its limits. Napoleon's downfall did not leave untouched the relations between the classes; but in its essence the social pyramid of France retained its bourgeois character. The inevitable collapse of Stalinist Bonapartism would immediately call into question the character of the USSR as a workers' state..." (The Workers' State, Thermidor and Bonapartism, 1.2.1935; Writings 1934-35, pp.181-2)

With the danger of bourgeois counter-revolution from the countryside becoming less acute, Trotsky turned to the increased danger of the USSR's involvement in a war, as a catalyst which would unleash the suppressed contradictions of the Soviet society. The setting has changed, but the underlying forces making for the disintegration of the regime have remained.

"But precisely the protracted nature of the war will inevitably reveal the contradictions of the transitional economy of the USSR with its bureaucratic planning...The rule of the uncontrolled bureaucracy will be transformed into a war dictatorship...In the heated atmosphere of war, one can expect sharp turns

towards individualistic principles in agriculture, and in handicraft industry, toward the attraction of foreign and 'allied' capital, breaks in the monopoly of foreign trade...etc.

"In the political sphere, these processes may mean the completion of Bonapartism with the corresponding change or a number of changes in property relations. In other words, in case of a protracted war accompanied by the passivity of the world proletariat, the internal social contradictions in the USSR not only might lead but also would have to lead (my italics) to a bourgeois-Bonapartist counter-revolution. The political conclusions flowing from this are obvious: only the proletarian revolution in the West can save the USSR as the workers' state in case of a long protracted war..." (War and the Fourth International, 10.6.1934; Writings 1933-34, p.316)

"Military danger is only one expression of the dependence of the Soviet Union upon the rest of the world, and consequently one argument against the Utopian idea of an isolated socialist society. "...the Soviet Union still remains a backward country. The low productivity of labour, the inadequate quality of products...etc.)...are only to a certain degree compensated by space and natural riches and the numbers of the population. In times of peace the measuring of economic might between the two hostile systems can be postponed...During the war the test is made directly upon the field of battle. Hence the danger.

"Military defeats, although they customarily entail great political changes, do not

always of themselves lead to a disturbance of the economic foundations of society. A social regime which guarantees a higher development of riches and culture cannot be overthrown by bayonets...it is hardly to be doubted that a military defeat would also prove fatal not only for the Soviet ruling stratum but also for the social bases of the Soviet Union...The instability of the Soviet regime...is due to the fact that its productive forces have far from grown up to the forms of socialist property. A military defeat threatens the social bases of the Soviet Union for the same reason that these bases require in peaceful times a bureaucracy and a monopoly of foreign trade — that is, because of their weakness.

"Can we, however, expect that the Soviet Union will come out of the coming great war without defeat? To this frankly posed question we will answer frankly: If the war should remain only a war, the defeat of the Soviet Union would be inevitable...if it is not paralysed by revolution in the West, imperialism will sweep away the regime which issued from the October revolution." (The Revolution Betrayed, pp.215-6)

With the outbreak of the war Trotsky becomes even more definite in his predictions of the immediate fate of the USSR. He restates his position regarding the "Bonapartist" nature of the Stalinist regime:

"A totalitarian regime, whether of Stalinist or fascist type, by its very essence can be only a temporary transitional regime. Naked dictatorship in history has generally been the product and the symptom of an especially severe social crisis and not at all of a stable regime. Severe crisis cannot be a permanent condition of society. A totalitarian state is capable of suppressing social contradictions during a certain period, but it is incapable of perpetuating itself. The monstrous purges in the USSR are most convincing testimony of the fact that Soviet society organically tends toward ejection of the bureaucracy."

"...Tsarism also permitted itself rather large-scale measures in purges and moreover precisely in the period when it was nearing its doom." In *Defence of Marxism*, pp.13-14, *The USSR in War*, 25.9.1939.

With reference to the arguments, advanced by his critics, that the bureaucracy has already constituted itself as a class, Trotsky sticks to the logic of his position.

"Symptomatic of his oncoming death agony, by the sweep and monstrous fraudulence of his purge, Stalin testifies to nothing else but the incapacity of the bureaucracy to transform itself into a stable ruling class. Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarch the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months (my italics) prior to its inglorious downfall?" *Ibid.*, p.14

"...Marxists never believed that an isolated workers' state in Russia could maintain itself indefinitely. True enough we expected the wrecking of the Soviet state, rather than its degeneration; to put it more correctly, we did not sharply differentiate between

those two possibilities. But they do not at all contradict each other. Degeneration must inescapably end at a certain stage in downfall". *Ibid.*, p.13 and Trotsky concludes:

"If this war provokes... a proletarian revolution, it must inevitably lead to the overthrow of the bureaucracy in the USSR and regeneration of Soviet democracy... To every single person it will become clear that in the process of the development of the world revolution the Soviet bureaucracy was only an episodic relapse" *Ibid.*, p.9

At this stage, however, Trotsky begins to allow for the possibility that some of the assumptions on which he was basing his analysis may not be valid:

"If, however, it is concluded that the present war will not provoke revolution... The inability of the proletariat to take into its hands the leadership of society could actually lead under these conditions to the growth of a new exploiting class from the Bonapartist fascist bureaucracy."

"Then it would be necessary in retrospect to establish that in its fundamental traits the present USSR was the precursor for a new exploiting regime..." *Ibid.*

"If... the October Revolution fails during the course of the present war, or immediately thereafter, to find its continuation in any of the advanced countries... then we should doubtlessly have to pose the question of revising our conception of the present epoch and its driving forces. In that case it would be a question not of slapping a copybook label on the USSR or the Stalinist gang (reference to the critics' insistence on calling the Soviet bureaucracy a 'class' rather than a 'caste') but of re-evaluating the world historical perspective for the next decades if not centuries..." *Ibid.*, pp.14-15.

The importance we attach to the fact that Trotsky's two main predictions (let alone the third about the Fourth International) were falsified by events, i.e. World War II was not followed by a proletarian revolution and the Soviet regime did not collapse, will depend not only on our assessment of Trotsky as a Marxist thinker, but also on our attitude towards Marxism as a valid method of interpreting social phenomena.

If we regard Trotsky as little more than a picturesque figure, possibly heroic, possibly pathetic, producing a sort of anti-Stalinist journalistic commentary on world events, then his numerous false prophecies need not disturb us. But to dismiss him in these terms one would have to show that Trotsky's writings between 1923-40, one, lacked internal consistency, and two, represented a departure from Marxism. None of Trotsky's innumerable critics have ever been able to establish either of these two propositions.

If on the other hand we regard Trotsky as a serious thinker, who over a long period, almost alone, tried to produce a Marxist analysis of contemporary events with his band of followers and — perhaps with less success — to formulate Marxist policies for his small band of followers, then an explanation of why his predictions failed becomes important. And an attempt to trace the origins of these erroneous predictions to the (false) assump-

tions he made becomes a worthwhile intellectual exercise.

I am adopting the second view, namely Trotsky as a serious thinker. In this article I limit myself — as far as possible — to discussion of the 'transitional regime', even though the area for a critical evaluation of Trotsky's position is clearly wider.

As was amply documented at the beginning, Trotsky's predictions concerning the future of the Soviet regime derived from the Marxist premise about the material base needed for socialism, and his diagnosis of the contradictory nature of the 'transitional' regime which stemmed from it. An explanation of why the Stalinist 'Bonapartist' regime did not collapse must be sought in the falseness of either or both of the two assumptions on which his prediction regarding the collapse was based.

The first assumption relates to the level of the material base which was thought to be indispensable for a socialist regime. If this assumption is invalid, then contrary to what Trotsky (and Marx) have asserted socialism can be built on a material base much lower than that of advanced capitalism.

If this is so, then not only was Trotsky wrong in opposing the theory of 'socialism in one country', but so also was Marx in emphasising the importance of the material base for the character of the superstructure arising upon it. For if socialism can be imposed on a predominantly pre-industrial society then politics takes precedence over economics, a point bourgeois sociologists have never ceased to labour.

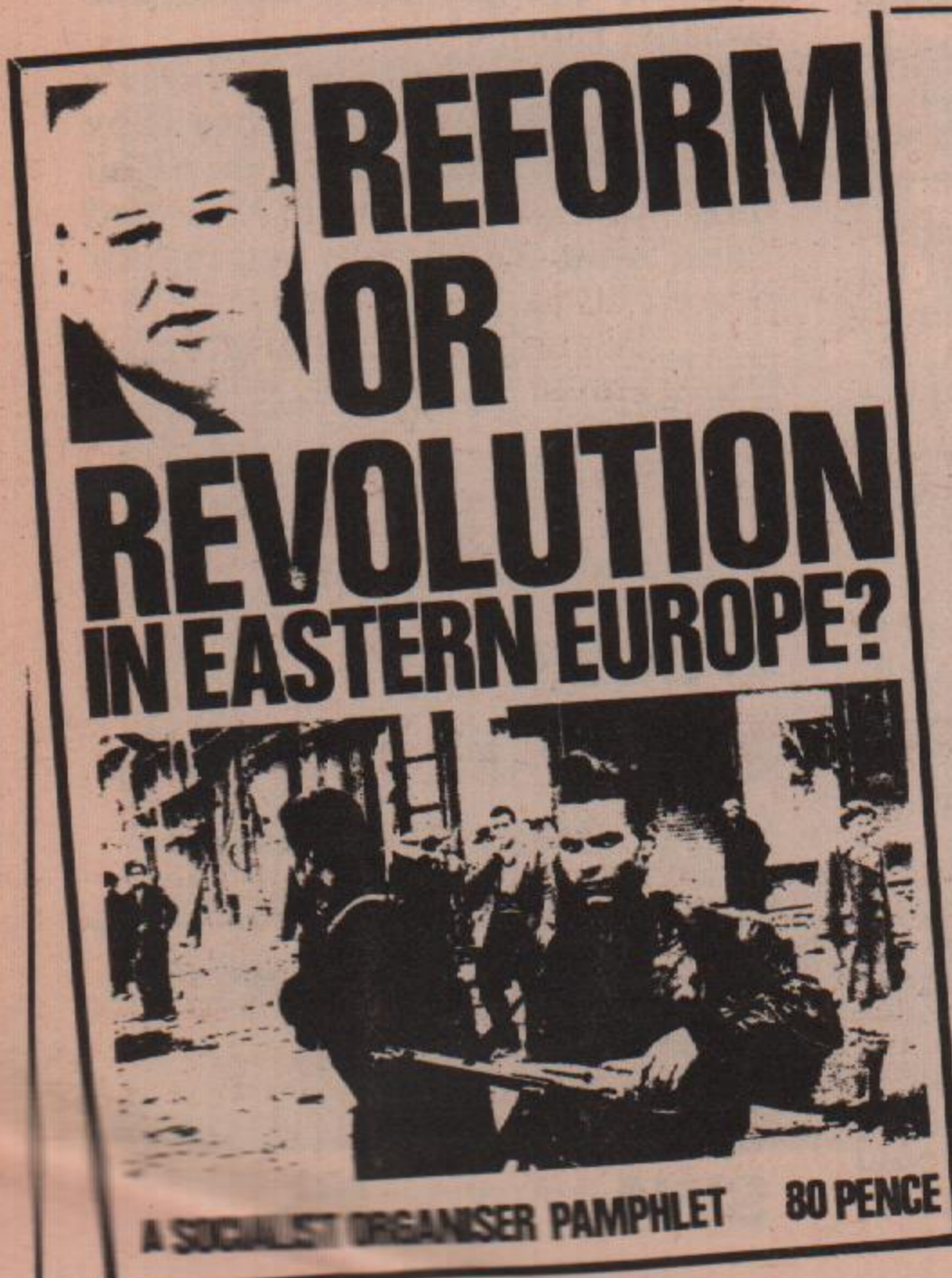
Further, if contrary to traditional Marxist assumptions class contradictions are not generated by a generally low level of development of the productive forces, then socialism can be built under conditions of relative poverty, i.e. relative to capitalism, and Stalin was right.

If, on the other hand, the original Marxist proposition about the determining character of the material base is upheld, then Trotsky's false predictions in relation to the Bonapartist nature of the Stalinist regime must be due to the falseness of the second assumption on which his diagnosis of the Soviet regime was based. This assumption concerned the nature of the class character of the Soviet regime which Trotsky assumed to be basically a proletarian one.

Trotsky and Lenin correctly concluded that a proletarian regime established in an industrially underdeveloped country, surrounded by capitalist states, would inevitably have to be of relatively short duration. Hence, after the initial 'heroic' period, it would show, given the objective conditions generating class differentiation, signs of increasing degeneration, the growth of 'dual power' and ultimately of impending collapse. Absence of these features and trends points to the conclusion that Trotsky was mistaken in his characterisation of the class nature of the regime.

Faced with 'ultra-left' critics who claimed that counter-revolution had already taken place, Trotsky repeatedly argued that a 'gradual' bourgeois counter-revolution was inconceivable.

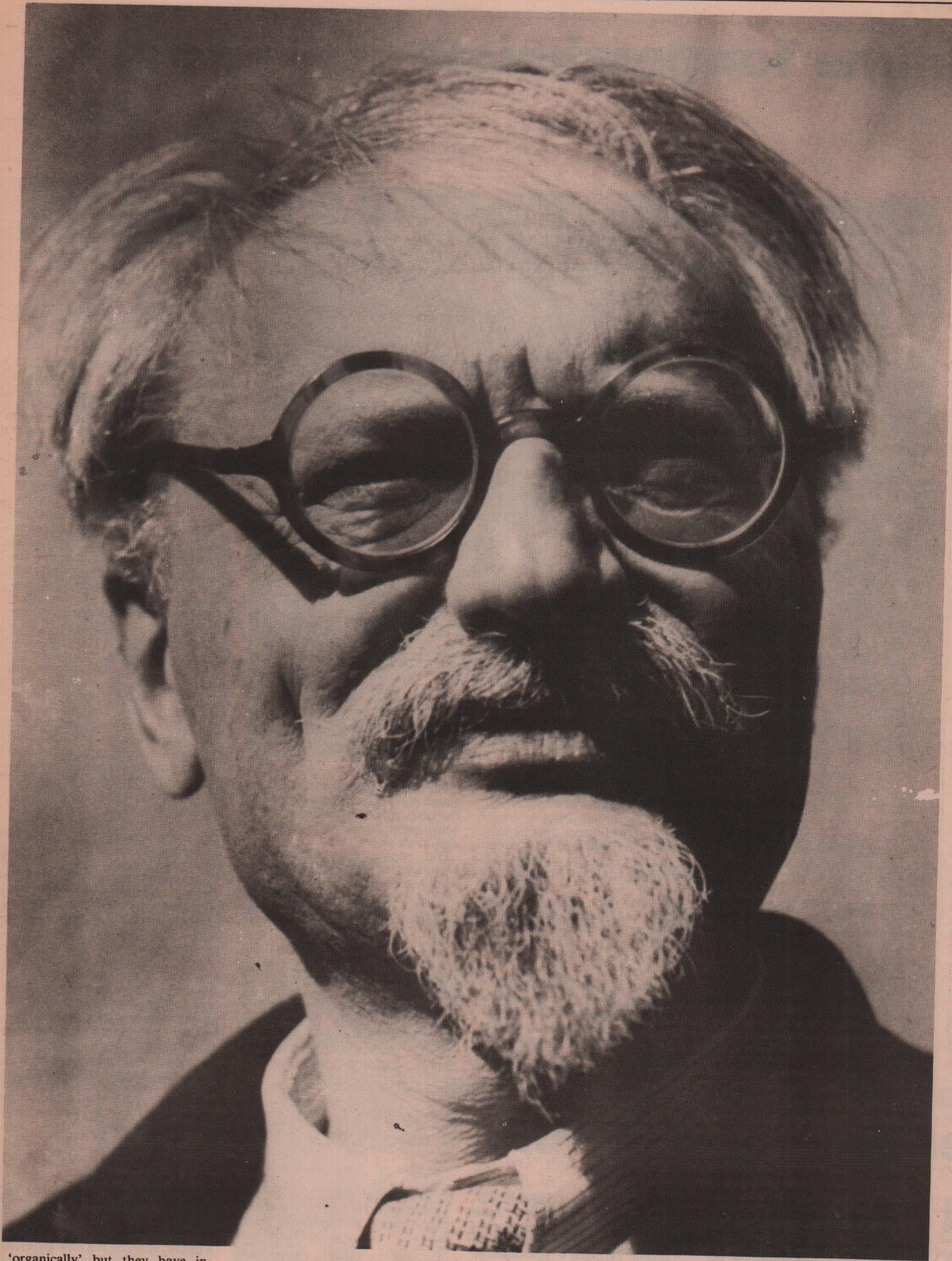
"Until now, in any case, feudal as well as bourgeois counter-revolutions have never taken place



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'organically' but they have invariably required the intervention of military surgery" *The Class Nature of the Soviet State*, 1.10.33. *Writings 1933-4*, p.102.

"He who asserts that the Soviet government has been gradually changed from proletarian to bourgeois is only, so to speak, turning backwards the film of reformism".

"Critics who consider themselves Marxists must demonstrate in what manner the bourgeoisie that has lost power in a three years' struggle could resume the power without any battles". (Ibid, p.103).

Here Trotsky's argument rests on the assumption that the class nature of the counter-revolution must be bourgeois in character.

"The Mensheviks and Social

Revolutionaries would form a bloc with the praetorian wing of centrism..."

"In the opposing camp, a no less decisive regrouping of forces would take place under the banner of the struggle for October. The revolutionary elements of the Soviets, the trade unions... Not only the centrist faction but also the right wing of the party would produce not a few revolutionists who would defend the October Revolution with arms in hand..."

Under these decisive circumstances, the faction of the Bolshevik-Leninists, sharply marked out by its past and steered by difficult tests, would serve as the element for a crystallisation within the party... and the rebirth of the true Communist Party"

(*Problems of the Development of the USSR*, 4.4.1931; *Writings 1930-1*, p.222).

Trotsky returns to the same theme in the *Transitional Programme*.

"The public utterances of former foreign representatives of the Kremlin, who refused to return to Moscow, irrefutably confirm in their own way that all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F. Butenko). The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist counter-revolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with ever greater consistency the interests of

world imperialism. These candidates for the role of compradors consider, not without reason, that the new ruling layer can insure their positions of privilege only through rejection of nationalisation, collectivisation and monopoly of foreign trade in the name of the assimilation of 'Western civilisation' ie capitalism". *The Transitional Programme, 1938; Documents of the Fourth International* p.210-211.

The importance Trotsky attributed to the tensions within the bureaucracy, illustrated by the exaggerated symptomatic significance given by him to the views of the defectors from the Soviet diplomatic service, assumes an even more grotesque form in Trotsky's earlier comments about the trial of

the 'Industrial Party' and that of the Mensheviks in 1931.

"The indictment in the case of the saboteurs' centre (the 'Industrial Party') is of exceptional interest... from the point of view of the struggle of the tendencies within the Communist Party of the SU."

"Thus it was pointed out by Ramzin, that the most important measure of the saboteurs in relation to all the basic branches of industry was 'the slowing down of the tempo of development, which is particularly evident in the old five-year plan worked out under the influence of the centre' (that is the centre of the saboteurs).

"In other words, during 1923-28, that is, in the period of the development of the struggle against the Left opposition, the Central Committee was the unconscious instrument of the specialist-saboteurs who, in turn were the hired agents of the foreign imperialists and the Russian emigrant compradors... But haven't we always asserted that in the struggle against the Left Opposition Stalin was fulfilling the dictates of the world bourgeoisie...? What had been sociological generalisations are now reinforced by the irrefutable juridical proof of the indictment". *What is to be Learned from the Saboteurs' Trial?* 30.11.1930; *Writings 1930-31*, p.66-67.

In connection with the trial of the Mensheviks Trotsky writes:

"The Mensheviks served the industrial centre abroad. In his struggle against the opposition, Stalin was the mouthpiece for the two parties: The Menshevik Party and the Industrial Party. Beginning in 1928, according to the confessions of Ramzin and the others, legal sabotage, in the form of artificial slowing down of the rate of industrialisation, became impossible because of the too-abrupt turn in the Menshevik methods of struggle against Soviet power. The bureau drew closer in this work to the counter-revolutionary specialists and the emigrant bourgeoisie."

"Thus the centrists did unconsciously what the Mensheviks did consciously that is, they carried out the tasks of the capitalist general staff abroad."

"It is, however, beyond doubt that the next trial will... show that if the Menshevik economists in the years 1923-28 saw, and with reason, the path to the bourgeois degeneration of the Soviet system in the retardation of industrialisation, many of them beginning in 1928 became veritable superindustrialisers so as to prepare, by means of economic adventurism, the political downfall of the dictatorship of the proletariat." *The Real Disposition of the Pieces 1.3.1931; Writings 1930-31 pp. 200-201.*

The 'trials' of the Industrial Party and of the Mensheviks were, of course frame-ups, and the confessions on which "the irrefutable juridical proof" was based were phoney. The point here is not that Trotsky was gullible in having mistaken the rehearsed performances of actors in the Soviet "Courts of law" for genuine judicial proceedings. (A mistake he did not make when it came to the trials of Old Bolsheviks a few years later). His misjudgement of reality was directly linked with his diagnosis of the Soviet bureaucratic apparatus as consisting of elements of both classes, of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Direct involvement of such "open agents of the bourgeoisie" must have seemed therefore quite plausible.

A programme for pessimism

Gary Scott examines the Communist Party's notion of 'New Times'

The Communist Party, though small, has influenced leading figures in the labour movement. Many of the ideas of people like Eric Hobsbawm have been taken up by Neil Kinnock and other leading people in the Labour Party.

Many of the ideas contained in their Manifesto "Facing Up to the Future" will appeal to those sections of the labour movement who have been demoralised by political and economic defeats suffered by the labour movement in recent years and who are pessimistic about the possibility of the building of a socialist society. For those reasons "Facing Up to the Future" has to be taken seriously.

"Facing Up to the Future" is full of references to a "new order" replacing an "old order". According to the C.P. everyone's lives have been transformed through the introduction of new technology.

"New technology is transforming the way people work and what they produce" the Manifesto states. Companies compete with each other not through cost-cutting but through diversifying their products. "Designer labels have replaced mass fashion."

The reconstruction of the working class has created divisions between skilled and unskilled workers. The Fordist order of large factories full of semi-skilled labour has been replaced by a new post-Fordist order of smaller workplaces, robots, computers, word processors and a more flexible workforce.

Though the idea that class consciousness can be decided by the kind of jeans you wear is absurd, there is some truth in the C.P.'s observations about the structural changes that have taken place.

There has been a decline in large scale manufacturing and an increase in part-time and flexible working.

The Communist Party, however,



present a distorted view of the structural changes that have taken place in the working class. While there has been a widening gap between skilled and unskilled workers, the barriers between white collar and blue collar workers have been broken down the number of working class people has actually increased. The working class has become more homogeneous.

White collar workers have become more unionised and more militant. Civil service unions have taken strike action not only over pay but also over the introduction of Y.T.S. in the civil service.

The C.P. see only what they want to see in order to justify their total abandonment of class politics. Since they believe the working class

are no longer a force that can bring about socialism "new alliances" have to be forged. Popular fronts involving the church, community groups and single-issue campaigns are to replace the old alliances. According to the C.P. trade unions "are no longer the focus for political mobilisation that they were in the late 1970s" and "local authorities are no longer able to provide the innovative models of municipal socialism that were produced in the early 1980s..."

In the new "post-Fordist" era the C.P. has turned to the old popular front strategy appealing to apparently "new popular movements" that involve the church, voluntary organisations and single-issue campaigns. An ex-

ample of this "popular alliance" in action was, according to the C.P., the Live Aid and Mandela concerts which were supposedly "implicitly anti-Thatcherite"!

The popular front strategy has been carried out by the C.P. countless times in the past and has proved to be disastrous. During the miners' strike the C.P. did not advocate spreading the strike action; they made no calls for a General Strike. The C.P. advocated making appeals to the wider public while saying mass pickets were futile.

In February 1985 George Bolton, the chair of the C.P. and vice-president of the Scottish miners commented: "We have had Liberals on our platforms and the S.N.P., obviously... We recognised

the need to approach the churches very early on. We leafleted the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in June..."

The popular front strategy has failed to save steel works, pits or shipyards from closure. The C.P. are well qualified to discuss the reconstruction of the working class. Through their disastrous leadership of campaigns against closures, they have contributed to the reconstruction of the working class.

The C.P. correctly state that the breadth of the poll tax "creates the potential for broad, popular protest, involving the labour movement, local authorities, community groups, black, youth and women's organisations."

The C.P. have opposed the only strategy that could defeat the poll tax — a campaign of non-payment and non-implementation. Instead they propose appeals to the wider public and organising events modelled on the "implicitly anti-Thatcherite" Mandela concert. To organise anything more militant than this may break up the "popular alliance" by alienating more "respectable" elements of the alliance such as the Church.

There was a time when the C.P. talked of alliances encompassing every section of the population from "bishops to brickies." In "Facing Up to the Future" brickies and many other sections of the working class are rarely mentioned.

In discussing the possibility of finding allies in Europe, they never mention the trade unions in other European countries. The miners' strike is mentioned only once in the whole document.

"Facing Up to the Future" ends with the statement that "socialism is not centrally about a party, or the state, but about empowering people to take control of their lives." There is nothing in their Manifesto to tell us how this is to happen without working class action.

The C.P. boast that "Facing Up to the Future" will "play a role in re-orientating the Left and progressive forces within Britain..." What the C.P. are attempting is to lead a retreat from class politics and an abandonment of socialism.

They write about facing up to the future because they haven't the guts to face up to the present.

An Argentine view of the Falklands war

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Veronico Cruz'

After the colossal movies of the Christmas season 'Veronico Cruz' comes as a pleasant surprise. It's built on a very small scale indeed — no big names, no special effects, no glamorous locations. It is nonetheless touching and well worth seeing.

You need to change into a lower gear for it; it doesn't have the speedy pace of car chases and recycled jokes. It's the kind of film that builds very slowly, relying more on emotion than on deed. Little is said, yet the film succeeds in drawing us into its own world.

Set in the lunar landscapes of Chorcan, a village in a high, remote province in Argentina, it charts the

life of Veronico Cruz, born in 1964, a motherless boy whose father leaves him to the care of his grandmother when he leaves to seek work in the canefields. The father can no longer grub much of a living from the soil, and he flees the place that reminds him of his dead wife.

The grandmother blames education for tearing her son away from his home, and plans to keep the boy, Veronico, close by her side by leaving him unschooled and ignorant.

Veronico is a lonely boy, who sullenly tends his herd by day, and dreams of his lost father by night.

His life begins to change when a new teacher comes to reopen the tiny long-closed village school. Veronico, now a teenage boy, longs for the school, but is forbidden to attend by his grandmother.

Eventually she relents and Veronico blossoms under the care of the teacher, who introduces Veronico to geography, and awakens in him a longing for the sea. Veronico's province is far from

the sea, but he imagines the immense salt pans of his native mountains as an ancient sea, long vanished.

When Veronico's grandmother dies, he moves into the schoolhouse with the teacher, and the lonely boy and the teacher grow to be close.

In 1976 the army takes power through a coup. The new military dictatorship affects even this tiny, isolated community. The hitherto slobby police constable has to smarten up, spy on the villagers, and seize the teacher's books. One of the villagers, old Domingo, is forbidden to listen to foreign radio on his old crystal set.

The military have been interested in the whereabouts of Veronico's father, Castulo. The teacher too wants Veronico to see his father. But seeking him causes problems. Castulo has become a militant in the steelworks where he works. The military take a dim view of the teacher's enquiries. He's soon transferred from Chorcan, leaving Veronico alone again.

The teacher's new job is in a larger town. He settles down, likes his colleagues, but misses Veronico, whose correspondence is spasmodic. Then comes the Falklands War, which the teacher observes on TV screens in cafes and bars.

Argentina goes to war with Britain to seize some small islands 2,000 miles away from Veronico's village.

Like the coming of the junta, the war hits the poorest members of society hardest. Just as ordinary workers who oppose the regime's fantastic brutality join the ranks of the 'disappeared' — like Castulo Cruz — so too do the children of workers disappear to act as cannon fodder in the war. The despair of parents over their slaughtered sons is everywhere, despite the nationalistic ballyhoo of the regime. The sinking of the *General Belgrano* alone claimed 1,024 lives.

Meanwhile the teacher frets over Veronico's silence and goes back to Chorcan to find him. He calls in on

old Domingo, who had lived cut off from the world since the demise of his old radio. But Domingo has heard from Veronico, who had sent a photo, showing the now grown up lad with his workmates in his new job. With a sinking heart, the teacher reads the dedication on the picture, 'The lads from the *Belgrano*'. Veronico had got to sea after all.

'Veronico Cruz' is an emotional study of Argentinian politics but it succeeds in making its political points successfully. Director Pereira was in London when the conflict broke out and felt the horror of suddenly being turned into an enemy, an 'Argie'. He saw the conflict as all wrong, with the Argentine junta cynically using the war, which cost thousands of lives, merely as a diversion from their own internal problems and failures.

Pereira saw the war, with its pointless slaughter of young men like Veronico, as an obscenity. He has managed to convey the message clearly and without sentimentality.

AEU/EETPU: organise the rank and file!

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

The long running on-off courtship between the AEU and the EETPU is definitely on again. Just before Christmas AEU President Bill Jordan emerged from the weekly executive meeting to announce that while "there are still major items to tackle...I still would not rule out an earlier target date of March 1989 for bringing the two unions together."

Significantly, this date comes before the AEU National Committee meeting, which though controlled by about 70-50 by the right, is firmly opposed to the merger.

The importance of these developments for the entire trade union movement cannot be stressed enough: an AEU/EETPU merger would create a solidly right wing 'super union' in engineering, as well as getting the EETPU back in the TUC on Hammond's terms. A merger would also represent a crowning triumph for a number of shadowy, employer-backed organisations (notably Truamid and Mainstream) which have been campaigning for a decisive shift towards company unionism for many years. Mainstream, for example, is organised by EETPU National Organiser John Spellar, and holds regular meetings bringing together representatives of the EETPU, the AEU leadership and the 'hard right' of the TGWU, and openly scab outfits like the Union of Democratic Mineworkers. The idea of a realignment of the trade union right within the TUC has long been central to Mainstream's strategy.

The idea of a AEU/EETPU merger has been kicking around since 1977 when the executive councils of the two unions held a joint meeting to discuss plans for changing the internal structures of their unions to give the respective executives greater control — a move that was clearly seen as favouring the 'moderates' cause. After the meeting Frank Chapple (then General Secretary of the EETPU) went to his chum and fellow Truamid supporter Sir John Boyd (General Secretary of the AEUW, as it was then called) making his intentions plain: "EC decisions should be final and subject only to reference back at national conference...The election of officials will have to be considered with a view to a possible continuation of our existing system." Chapple then went on to outline plans to establish 'trade' or 'industrial' groups to block to adoption of radical policies at union conferences.

Since then Bill Jordan, an avowed admirer of the EETPU's regime, has become AEU President, and the courtship has continued apace. The rank and file in both unions has been undermined, 'dissident' branches closed down or merged with larger, reliable right wing branches, and the control of the AEU Executive has been increased by rule changes (the EETPU Executive, of course, hardly needs to increase its control).

The response of the left in the AEU has been, to say the least, sluggish. The old Broad Left that in the 60s and early 70s controlled Sheffield, Glasgow, Manchester,

London and many other key Districts, and which ensured the election of Hugh (now Lord) Scanlon as President, now scarcely exists. It doesn't even like referring to itself as the Broad Left anymore, preferring the title 'Engineering Gazette'. At the last national 'Gazette' meeting the convenor, Executive member Jimmy Airlie (of Ford Dundee fame) threatened to "hammer" anyone who even used the name Broad Left. More seriously, Airlie made it clear that he has no interest in organising a rank and file campaign against the merger, preferring to put his faith in the anti-merger right wingers on the National Committee and in rumours of opposition from the General Secretary Gavin Laird. This strategy is a recipe for defeat. Jordan can by-pass the National Committee by calling a membership ballot, while Laird's opposition (if, indeed, it ever existed) is only based on his anxiety to keep his job as General Secretary — something that Eric Hammond would happily agree to (indeed Hammond has even said that he is willing to shelve any claim he may have had to a key post in the new union).

Airlie's complacency is not shared by everybody within the 'Gazette'. AEU North West Organiser John Tocher is known to favour a campaign that goes to the District Committees and branches. Some local groups of militants are now planning factory leaflets and local meetings. The way to stop Jordan and Hammond is to mobilise the rank and file, not to depend on bureaucratic manoeuvres and behind the scenes wheeler-dealing. But some people (i.e.

J.Airlie) never learn: the Broad Left lost its power and paved the way for the present leadership in the first place, precisely because it turned its back on the rank and file, becoming little more than an election-machine

and cheer-leader for Hugh Scanlon. That may be the sort of organisation James Airlie wants to revive, but fortunately a lot of AEU militants have rather different plans...

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Stop the AEU/EETPU merger!

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meeting starts 11am

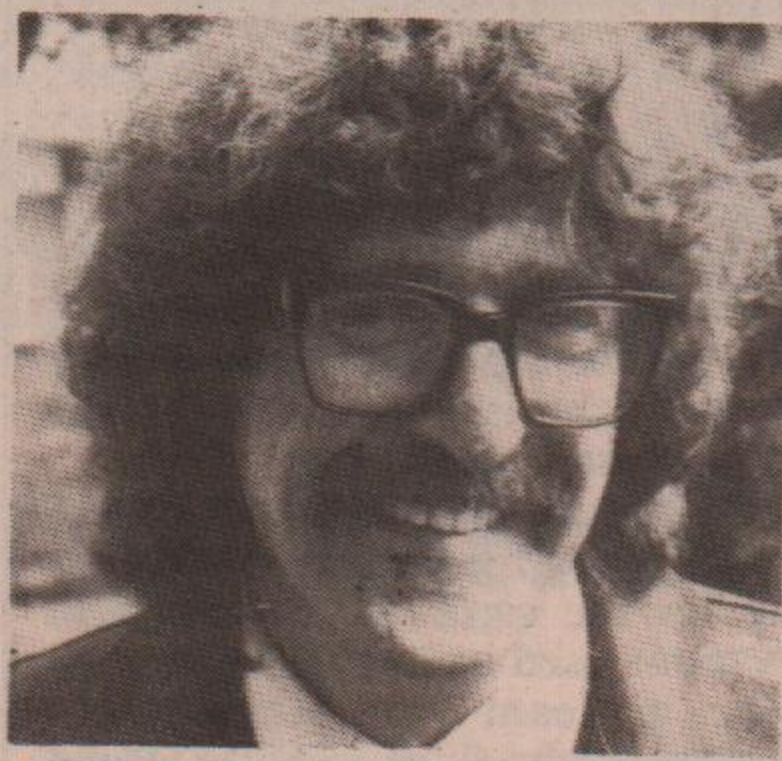
speakers include John Tocher

All AEU and progressive EETPU members welcome

Meeting called by the Engineering Gazette

Bosses attack pit safety

WHETTON'S WEEK



A miner's diary

The rank and file of the scab 'Union of Democratic Mineworkers' refused to go along with its leaders on the pay deal, so things are still up in the air.

I think a number of UDM members want to come back to the NUM, but they are waiting now to see what happens. I doubt if they will be satisfied with the results of arbitration.

If the NUM ballot on the overtime ban had gone our way then we could have short-circuited this process and made a major impact. That's something that should weigh heavy on the conscience of those

who campaigned for a no vote.

From the beginning the Coal Board has had to prop up the UDM with special treatment and support. But the industry is being prepared for privatisation, so they could only go so far to pamper the UDM, and so the UDM members are again in the firing line.

The organisation will disappear: the tragedy is the damage it has caused during its wretched boss-subsidised life.

Later this month there will be a special NUM delegate conference to discuss rule changes proposed by the Executive. Our branch was told that they were all to comply with the Tories' new labour laws: we have to keep changing the way we govern our organisation to comply with the way they want to run it.

We agreed to them all except the proposal requiring the vice-president to be a member of the NEC. We voted against that, with many feeling strongly that the rank and file should have the right to stand for that position, and it should not be the total prerogative of the NEC.

Safety has been much in the news, including mining safety. We have a growing number of private contractors in the pits, and figures have just been released showing accident rates for their face workers are nearly double those for British Coal workers.

Private contractors have been an issue for us for a number of years — we know they cut corners and take chances in order to push the job. Their workers are 'encouraged' not to take time off work — or else they'll be down the road. Hence the accident rates, and it will be the same for all miners with full-scale privatisation.

We said accident rates would go up with the introduction of incentive schemes, and we were proved right. They will continue to go up with the introduction of more private contractors, cost-cutting techniques like roof bolts, and the government's declared aim of gutting the tight safety standards miners have fought for and won in the past.

It is the same with the proposed longer hours and six day working. The more hours you spend underground, the less safe you are, and the greater the risk of accidents.

Now deputies have to 'pre-shift' a district underground before working: inspect the entire district before, during and after each shift of men work on it. This fits in quite well with the present shift system, but not so well with the new shift patterns the Coal Board wants to introduce.

So they have now approached the Mines Inspectorate to say they want to change the regulations on 'pre-shifting' to allow them to get the men onto the job and producing as quickly as possible. Just another small example of what's happening.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire.

IN BRIEF

Car industry: Jaguar workers voted on management's 'final' 2 year pay offer on Tuesday. Union leaders are insisting on a one year pay claim.

Workers at the IBC van plant Luton, have narrowly voted for a 2 year pay deal. 7% this year and inflation linked next year — though management want to re-open negotiations if inflation rises above 6½% by December 1989.

Workers at Nissan, Sunderland, have been awarded a 10%-15% pay rise as part of a 2 year deal. Next year's claim is to be inflation linked.

Researchers have estimated workers at the single union (and poorly unionised) plant get 20% less pay than those at Ford. Management operate as though they were in a pre-war non-unionised factory and working conditions are vastly inferior to comparable local workplaces.

Union leaders from 6 European countries are to discuss management tactics in boosting production. Ford workers here received a 9% pay increase, the second part of an inflation linked 2 year deal.

The AUT claimed a good response to its exams boycott began on Monday. Lecturers have been offered no pay rise this year. Management have threatened docking pay, and possible dismissals.

Union leaders representing 75,000 electricity and 30,000 gas workers are putting in pay claims for 'substantial' increases. Gas workers are moving towards a strike ballot after management threw out their claim.

NUS leaders are considering a possible strike ballot over this year's pay claim.

British Rail: management have imposed regional pay additions and performance related bonuses for some technicians in the South-East. They also have plans to change shift working and to decentralise pay bargaining. They intend drawing up plans for privatisation.

NUR leaders are predicting conflict over management dictats.

12,000 London tube workers are to be balloted over management proposals to put staff up for discipline who miss 4 shifts in 6 months — with or without doctor's certificates.

Engineers at Sellafeld walked out over changed shift patterns.

6,500 manual workers at Rolls Royce, Derby, began an overtime ban over this year's pay claim. In a ballot 4 to one voted for action.

The National Association of Health Authorities has raised doubts about meeting the Spring deadline (set by the government) for completing formal appeals.

No extra cash is to be provided for regrading.

Teachers defended

At Monday's meeting of AILEA's Labour Party, CLP and trade union delegates combined to lambast plans for Highbury Quadrant School.

Often inqorate the meeting was the best attended for many months.

Anstey Rice, deputy leader of ILEA was left floundering. A motion put forward by CLP delegates criticised ILEA's mishandling of the situation and called on the Labour Authority to reconsider its decision to transfer the teachers. Trade union delegates put forward motions about ILEA's abrupt decision to transfer 7 teachers from the school. With no chance to answer the charges against them, they accused the authority of denying basic trade union rights.

SOCIALIST

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War criminals of our times



Hirohito: He was emperor in the '30s and '40s while Japan's ruling class imposed fascist-type control on their own people, waged wars to create an empire, with brutal exploitation of the conquered Koreans and Chinese, and fought ruthlessly against the Americans and British to extend that empire.



Truman: Democrat, friend of the 'little man' — and the US President who ordered atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing hundreds of thousands, when Japan's defeat was already certain.



Kissinger: US Secretary of State while the US dropped a far greater tonnage of bombs on Vietnam than was dropped world-wide in World War 2. Vast areas of Vietnam were wrecked and defoliated; the whole civilisation of Cambodia was bombed to bits, paving the way for Pol Pot's atrocities. And Kissinger won the Nobel Peace Prize.



Pol Pot: Slaughtered over a million of the seven million people of his country when in power in 1975-8. He evacuated the cities and put the people into vast slave labour camps. The big Western governments continue to back Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge — because it fights the Vietnamese — and Margaret Thatcher said recently in so many words that she wanted to see the Khmer Rouge in a future government of Cambodia.



Margaret Thatcher: Jointly responsible with Argentina's General Galtieri for the deaths of hundreds of Argentinian sailors on the *Belgrano*, and thousands of other young Britons and Argentinians thrown into a futile jingoistic war over the Falkland Islands. The Argentinians have since jailed Galtieri. And Thatcher?



Kurdish child victim of Iraqi gas attack

Stop the killings!

The ceasefire in the Gulf war has coincided with the intensification of repression in both Iran and Iraq. Attacks against the Kurdish people have increased enormously in recent months, the most horrendous aspect of which is the extensive use of chemical weapons by the Iraqi regime against innocent civilians.

In Iran, the Islamic regime has stepped up its campaign of terror against political prisoners in a mounting wave of executions. Hundreds of political prisoners, already sentenced to jail terms, are being taken out and shot or hanged in an attempt to annihilate opponents.

The repression is by no means confined to Iran and Iraq. The many thousands of political refugees from this reactionary war are now at the mercy of the Turkish

and Pakistani governments.

We strongly condemn these acts of repression and ask all progressive forces and individuals to join us in our activities to defend the most elementary rights of those who are facing this repression.

The Islamic regime's top-ranking officials have openly called for the extermination of all political prisoners. Mousavi-Ardebili, the Chief Justice Minister, on 5th August 1988, officially urged that political prisoners be "executed altogether".

From September the mass executions began in Iran. On 2nd September 1988 Amnesty International issued an 'Urgent Action' appeal on the new wave of political executions in Iran. The statement reads: "Amnesty International condemns the political executions carried out in Iran during last month, which are reportedly still continuing. It is concerned by the continuing ban on family visits to political prisoners in Evin prison in Tehran

and elsewhere which has fuelled speculation that hundreds of political prisoners may have been executed."

According to the regime's official news agency, public hangings of local residents in several cities have taken place. The government's press also admitted mass executions of political prisoners. In fact, according to reliable reports from Iran, the figures are much higher and the extent of executions much wider.

* In September, several hundred prisoners were executed in Evin prison in Tehran.

* In November, 350 political prisoners were massacred in Mashad prison.

* In November, 150 political prisoners were executed in Khorramabad prison.

* In November, 21 prisoners were shot in Tabriz.

* Many others were executed in Qaemshahr, Kazeroun, Sabzevar, Garmsar, Rasht, Masjid, Soleiman.

Shortly after the ceasefire, the Iraqi army launched a so-called "finish off" assault to wipe out from the map the Kurdish presence in the north of the country.

The recent chemical attack has followed the previous attacks on Kurdish people. The Iraqi regime massacred 5,000 civilians in the town of Halabja in March 1988, as well as the killing of hundreds of others in similar attacks reported since April 1987.

As a result of the recent attack, about 200,000 Kurds, mainly women and children, have fled from Iraq to Turkey and Iran and are at the mercy of these two savage regimes, whose record of attacking the Kurdish people and ignoring human rights is at least as bad as the Iraqi regime itself.

In spite of the cooperation of the Turkish and Iraqi regimes in covering up the signs of the chemical weapons used against Kurdish people, a team of independent observers who have recently visited the area have confirmed the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds.

The labour movement should oppose attacks on political refugees in Britain. We should build the widest possible solidarity with those suffering from the fall out of the ceasefire in the Gulf. And we should fight against overt and covert friendly relations between the British government and the Iraqi and Iranian regimes — relations which include the sale of weapons.

* Break all links with Iran/Iraq.
* Hands off all refugees.
* Stop executions in Iran.
* Stop massacring the Kurds.
* Self-determination for Kurdish nation.

* Condemn the regimes of Iran, Iraq and Turkey.

A statement by the Committee Against the Massacres in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey

Israeli socialist visits Britain

Israeli Socialist Adam Keller will be visiting Britain for a two week speaking tour beginning on 10 February.

Adam will be gaining support for a network of British supporters to circulate the journal he edits, *The Other Israel*. *The Other Israel* is a regular bulletin of facts and reports, from a radical point of view, from Israel and the occupied territories.



**Tour Launch Meeting
A Socialist Point of View
The Palestine-Israeli
Conflict
Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq
London
Monday 13 February
7.30 pm
Speakers: Adam Keller,
Clare Short MP, other
guest speakers**

If you would like to help Adam Keller's tour (donate money towards costs) please contact:
The Secretary
Adam Keller Tour committee
24 Rye Court
Peckham Rye
London SE22
(Cheques payable to 'Visit fund')