

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

### INSIDE:



Four-page Women's  
Fightback including  
feature on women in  
Iran

# Why we defend Salman Rushdie

By an Iranian socialist

**W**e defend Salman Rushdie because we've experienced Khomeinism in practice. Many Iranians, in Iran and in exile, oppose the 'Islamic Republic', and want a secular Iran.

Those of us living in Britain would like also to see a secular Britain, and oppose any religious group, including oppressed minorities, trying to foist their religion on everyone else.

Ayatollah Khomeini's threat on the life of Salman Rushdie is typical of the man and his regime. The 'Islamic Republic' was founded on the defeat of the Iranian revolution in 1979, and instituted a regime of medieval barbarism, persecuting all of its opponents — left-wingers, Kurds, women and religious minorities.

There is at the moment in Iran a wave of executions of leftist opponents of Khomeini. The threats against Rushdie are also a warning to oppositionists in Iran, and opponents of Khomeini everywhere.

The spread of Islamic fundamentalism is very worrying. Obviously it was spurred on by the consolidation of the Khomeini regime. Although it claims to be 'anti-imperialist', it is deeply reactionary.

Salman Rushdie has a perfect right to write about Islam. Free speech and the right to criticise are vital for a democratic society and religious leaders do not have the right to prohibit or threaten their critics.

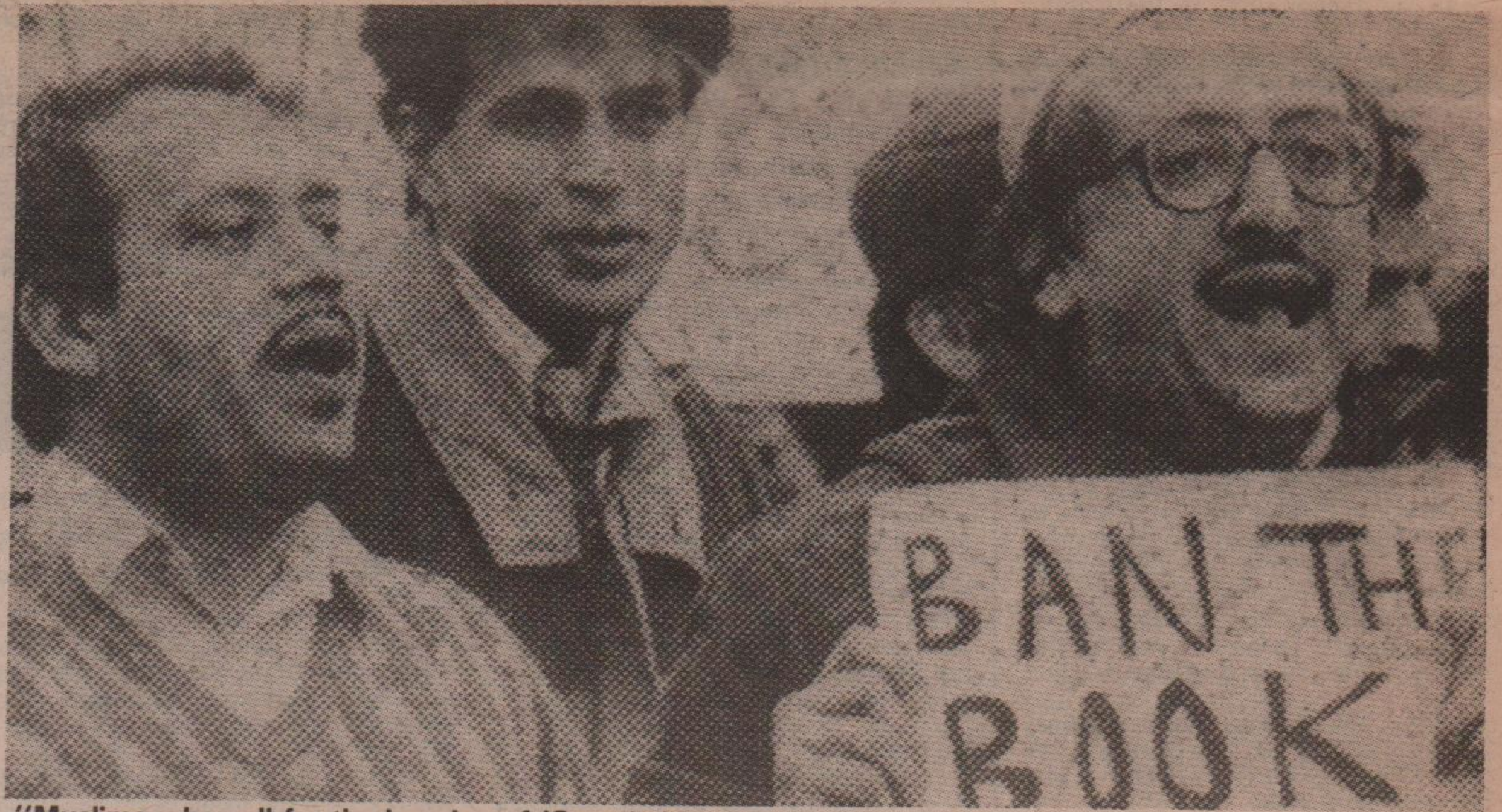
There is a danger of a racist backlash; the right have seized on Muslim opposition to Rushdie as an example of barbarian immigrants who don't know how to behave in a civilised country. But there is nothing exclusively Muslim about fundamentalism and intolerance — look at the recent furore over 'The Last Temptation of Christ'.

The working class movement must defend free speech. Muslim workers who now call for the banning of 'The Satanic Verses' are play-

ing with fire. The workers' movement itself always suffers from bans. If it's Rushdie now, it could be other anti-racist writers later — and Rushdie, let it not be forgotten, is a socialist and anti-racist writer.

The workers' movement needs democracy and debate — in Iran and in Britain. Khomeini and his ilk are the enemies of working class freedom. Religious leaders who want Rushdie banned or killed will not be striking a blow for Muslim communities, but against the rights of all people to think, write and talk as they wish.

It's wrong to equate Rushdie with fascists whom we seek to crush, not only because Rushdie isn't a fascist. When we call for mobilisation against fascists, it's less because of what they say than because of what they do. No one can seriously argue that 'The Satanic Verses' is encouragement to racial harassment or a threat to the democratic rights of black people in Britain.



"Muslims who call for the banning of 'Satanic Verses' are playing with fire"

## Stop the racists cashing in!

**R**acists have been climbing on the Salman Rushdie bandwagon. Muslim opposition to Rushdie's right to free speech has been seized on by racists to show the supposed 'barbarism' not only of Muslims but of immigrants in general.

The implication is clearly that 'these people' shouldn't come to 'our country' with their obnoxious views.

None of those putting forward such arguments could claim to be democrats. Their criticism of Islam is pure hypocrisy.

Christians have proved just as touchy. The attempt to ban 'The Last Temptation of Christ' was only the most recent example of a long list of Christian-inspired attacks on



Salman Rushdie

civil liberties. The original 'Gay Times' was eventually destroyed by a 'blasphemous libel' case.

Who wanted to ban 'Death on the Rock'? The very same racist

newspapers that now criticise Muslims for wanting to ban Rushdie's book.

Socialists are clear. We oppose absolutely the attempt to deprive

Salman Rushdie or any other artist of their artistic or political freedoms. We oppose the Muslim fundamentalists who will not accept any standards but their own.

Equally we oppose the racist backlash. It is a matter of fighting for free speech, not 'against Islam'. We are for full freedom of worship.

In fact not all Muslims by any means support Khomeini's call. Dr Zaki Badawi, chair of the Imams and Muslims Council, the voice of Britain's 400 mosques, told *The Guardian*: "If you go into any library you can find worse books about Islam, and Christianity for that matter."

Democratic debate is the way forward.

And the racists have no interest in that.



# Afghanistan: defend the cities!

## EDITORIAL

For nine years, the army and air force of the bureaucratic ruling class of the Soviet Union waged a brutal war of conquest against the peoples of Afghanistan.

They napalmed villages and burned the crops in the fields. They devastated the countryside, wrecked the primitive economy, and drove as many as five million refugees — one quarter of the entire population — over the borders into Pakistan and Iran.

Yet they never even came near conquering the people. Western military experts calculated that a full conquest would have taken at least three times as many as the 100,000 soldiers and flyers whom the Brezhnev regime committed to Afghanistan. They would have had to slaughter a large part of the population and terrorise the rest. Unprepared for an imperialist operation on that scale, the Kremlin made murderous but inconclusive war for a decade. Now it withdraws its army and air force.

Why? Essentially because Gorbachev wants to concentrate resources for the drive to modernise the economy. The new ruler, the reforming Tsar, wants to liquidate the costly blunder made by his predecessor, and he can even admit that it was a 'mistake'. Pulling out the USSR's army is also a useful gesture in USSR-US diplomacy.

But the withdrawal of the Russian army leaves the native Afghan forces of progress and modernisation in dire straits.

Those fighting the Russian occupation were always backward-looking and reactionary. The fact that the big majority of the people of Afghanistan are medieval in their thinking does not cancel out their right to self-determination. It could not justify the Russian invasion, nor make progressive the

bureaucratic state-monopoly system they fought to establish. When the overwhelming majority of the people of Afghanistan fought to drive out the Russians, they were entitled to the support of all socialists.

Now that the Russians have gone, the question is posed differently. The question now is what attitude we take to a civil war in Afghanistan — a civil war which is likely to be in large part a war between the cities and the countryside, between the men and women of the towns, with their relatively modern outlook, and the viciously reactionary and medieval forces which have been the main organisers of Afghan resistance to Russian imperialism. The question has to be posed like that, because no working class exists in Afghanistan strong enough to transform the situation.

A similar civil war predated the Russian invasion. It was subsumed into the conflict between the USSR and the people of Afghanistan.

In April 1978, the Afghan Stalinist party, the PDP, took power by way of a military coup. The Afghan airforce and army officers who formed the core of the PDP believed that it was their mission to drag Afghanistan into the twentieth century.

Army officers in many underdeveloped countries have undertaken the same mission. The difference in Afghanistan was that the air force and army officers had, from the mid '50s, been trained and educated in the USSR. They took the USSR as their model of development.

The PDP was essentially an urban middle-class movement — and a movement of a middle class trying to turn itself into a state-monopoly bureaucracy. It could make a coup; lacking mass support, it could not make a revolution.

When the government passed progressive laws against usurers and landlords and in favour of women, the landlords and the Muslim priests roused a large part of the



Women queue for bread in Kabul. If the reactionaries win the civil war all women will be forced to wear the veil

countryside against them. Similar things had happened in Europe at the time of the French Revolution, with the Catholic countryside roused against the Jacobin towns in Belgium and France — except that in Europe the forces of progress were strong, and in Afghanistan the Stalinist middle class was feeble.

The PDP regime responded with savage violence against the people of the countryside. The air force was dropping napalm on rebel villages within weeks of the coup.

In the subsequent 20 months the reactionary opposition to the regime grew and spread. At the same time the PDP tore itself apart in faction-fighting. By December 1979 the Russians became convinced that their client regime would be overthrown unless they intervened.

The Russians invaded, purged the PDP, and set out to conquer the country. They failed. Muslim reaction became much stronger. At the end the Russians had a grip only on the towns, and that an insecure one. They leave a native government in power which, though well-armed, is far weaker than its predecessor which the Russians replaced in December

1979.

The Muslim reactionaries have been subjected for over a decade to the napalming war of the Russians and their Afghan allies. They have good reason to be vindictive. Large-scale massacres of the townspeople are certain if the Mujahedeen conquer the cities.

One issue alone is sufficient to indicate that socialists should take sides in this horror, and tell us which side we should take: the position of women. In the towns some — middle-class — women have escaped the inhuman bondage decreed for women by Islamic fundamentalism. They will be slaughtered, and all women in Afghanistan thrown back to the Dark Ages, if the Mujahedeen win.

Before the Russian invasion — as we wrote in 1980 — socialists in Afghanistan would have had to give critical support to specific measures of the regime, though in no sense could they have supported the regime as such.

It would have been necessary to fight for the class independence of the tiny working class; to fight to dismantle and destroy the state apparatus; to criticise and expose the brutal military-bureaucratic

methods of the regime as both counter-productive in relation to the reforms and expressive of the class character of the regime.

Socialists would have faced the repression of the one-party PDP-Army regime. But they would have directed their fire against the reaction; and in that sense only would have 'supported' the PDP-Army regime, while maintaining political and if possible military independence from it and striving to overthrow it.

Now that the Russians have gone, the same basic arguments hold. The main enemy is the Muslim-landlord reaction.

Tragically, it looks very much as if the result of the decade of Russian occupation is to make certain the victory of the Islamic medievalists. The years of the Russian-conducted bloodbath are likely to be crowned by the slaughter of most of the people who form the elements of a modern society in Afghanistan.

There is little or nothing that socialists in the West can do about it — except understand the unfolding tragedy, and tell ourselves the truth about the why and how of it.

## The left and Afghanistan

When the Russians invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, almost every 'orthodox Trotskyist' group in the world supported them, or at any rate refused to call for their withdrawal.

Some were wildly enthusiastic for a while. A big part of the so-called 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International', grouped around the Socialist Workers' Party of the USA, hailed the Russians as 'going to the aid of the Afghan revolution'. Even those who had a more balanced view refused to call for the Russians to get out.

Over the years most of the Trotskyists changed their minds and started to call for withdrawal. *Militant* was an exception. *Socialist Organiser* was very much in the minority when it insisted at the beginning that socialists should call for immediate Russian withdrawal.

The tragedy, as yet unfinished, that engulfed Afghanistan, shows who was right; and it would have been a worse tragedy, in its human consequences, if

the Russians had decided to commit themselves to full-scale conquest.

Those, like *Militant*, who supported the Russians need to give an honest account of themselves on this question. They looked to the Russian bureaucracy to 'make a revolution' — against the entire population of Afghanistan. Logically they should now denounce the Russians for betraying that revolution. So far they have tried to square their circle by claiming that the Russians are withdrawing from Afghanistan victorious — but how long can that delusion last?

*Militant* won't give an account of themselves. The reason why they repeat the self-same errors over and over again is that they don't want to learn.

Delusions are more comfortable than the bitter truth. Nevertheless, Trotsky was right when he wrote: "To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; to be true in little things as in big ones... these are the rules" of Marxist revolutionaries.

## Allowing the racists to play at justice

Stompie Seipei may have been murdered by Winnie Mandela's bodyguards. The South African government, which has killed, maimed, tortured and terrorised thousands upon thousands of black youth, must be cackling with glee.

Now these racists can play at being the lawgivers, the protectors of the weak, the guardians of impartial law and order.

Over the weekend of 18-19 February the police picked up four members of the bodyguard. More arrests are likely. The South African police are making an elaborate show of proper procedure. Racist politicians are talk-

ing about how 'black on black' violence shows that black people are somehow incapable of democratic self-rule.

But white minority rule in South Africa means:

- The detention without trial of tens of thousands of people (including many small children).
- The systematic and terrifying torture of thousands of detainees using electric shocks, beatings, suffocating, rape, ramming nails through testicles, sustained isolation etc etc.
- The operation of Latin American style death-squads against political activists, striking people down across the globe from Port Elizabeth to Paris.
- The occupation of Namibia and

the laying waste of whole areas of neighbouring countries such as Angola and Mozambique. When invading South African soldiers cross the border into South Africa their officers traditionally tell them that "rape and pillage is the only way to deal with the locals."

• The sponsoring of vicious groups of 'vigilantes' of 'Witdoeke' — black collaborators and youngsters who terrify the workers in the townships on a scale which makes the "Mandela United football team" look very petty indeed.

Winnie Mandela and her bodyguards stand accused on two accounts. First, the killing of Stompie Seipei; and, second, giving the murderous apartheid state a chance to cover up its bloody record.

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

Karl Marx

Socialist Organiser  
PO Box 823, London  
SE15 4NA. Phone 01-639  
7965.

Latest date for reports: first  
post Monday or by phone  
Monday evening.

Typesetting: Upstream Ltd  
(TU), 01-358 1344.

Published by Socialist  
Organiser, PO Box 823,  
London SE15 4NA.

Printed by Press Link  
International (UK) Ltd (TU).

Registered as a newspaper at  
the Post Office. Signed  
articles do not necessarily  
reflect the views of Socialist  
Organiser.

## 4 LETTERS



Labour council leader Dick Knowles at the poll tax bazaar

## Gleeful about the poll tax

### GRAFFITI

One group of people who are rubbing their hands in glee over the introduction of the poll tax are the bosses of office supply firms.

At the recent 'Community Charge Implementation Trade Fair' 50 companies involved in computing, printing and paper vied with each other for a slice of the multi-million pound market which the poll tax will create. Something like £300 million will be spent on paper alone.

Opening the exhibition was...the Labour leader of Birmingham City Council.

Tory MP John Browne's Bill has had a lot of publicity.

The Privacy Bill has been vaunted as a way to protect people from the intrusive and tasteless journalistic methods of the tabloid press.

But it seems that Mr Browne's motives aren't quite so philanthropic as he would like us to believe. Browne himself has quite a lot to hide. He has lobbied ministers and civil servants to support constructive contracts, without revealing that he was being paid by middlemen. Just a few of the other payments he has received without disclosing them in the Register of Members' Interests are: \$88,000 from Saudi Arabian authorities for a report on the possible consequences if US banks froze Saudi assets in London; \$67,000 from a US merchant bank as commission for investment fund-raising and \$9,200 from a US oil company.

The Privacy Bill would enable public figures to take out injunctions banning the publication of their financial dealings — thus preventing us from finding out what vested interests they may have. No wonder Browne is so anxious to get it through.

Social Security minister John Moore and Margaret Thatcher are preparing a review of state support for one-parent families.

The review is expected to include more help with childcare expenses for mothers on ET schemes, and an increase in the amount a woman is allowed to earn without losing benefit. This is weirdly coupled with an intention to stop pregnant women from

council house "queue jumping" and a search for ways to get more men to pay maintenance.

The review has two aims: to reduce the state's financial commitment to single parents and to get more mothers out to work. Thatcher, apparently, intends to present the review as a "feminist" move.

The director of the National Council for One Parent Families has been closely involved in the consultation process. This is Sue Slipman, one-time president of the National Union of Students, who is famous for her comment on leaving the Communist Party to join the SDP: "My politics haven't changed."

Ms Slipman has said of the review: "The government is talking our language here, the language of enabling women to go back to work."

Perhaps someone should explain to her the difference between 'enabling' and 'forcing'. What Thatcher and Moore are really saying is that they don't want women on benefits — they want them as cheap labour instead.

People suffering from cancer, kidney disease and AIDS are seriously worse off after last April's social security changes.

In April special allowances for food, heating and laundry were abolished. The chronically sick often need expensive special diets, constant heating or their clothes and bedding washed more frequently.

All this costs money. Before April 1988 a single man with kidney failure would receive around £46 per week, plus all travel expenses to hospital. Now it's more likely to be £41 — out of which a substantial share of travel expenses has to be paid.

Organisations dealing with the chronically sick reckon that many have lost upwards of £20 a week. Doctors say that those who fell sick before are still receiving the higher rate because of "transitional arrangements" are noticeably less badly affected by their illnesses than those who became ill after April.

Other benefits, which have not been abolished, are harder to get. Attendance allowance is £22 per week and is also a passport to other benefits. Before the changes virtually all kidney patients received it — now virtually all new applications are rejected.

The Department of Social Security officially describes the changes as a "simpler, streamlined system."

## Labour council seizes protesters' accounts

### POLL TAX

By Stan Crooke

One hundred and thirty people in Central Region in Scotland had their bank accounts seized by Sheriff's officers last week for alleged failure to return poll tax registration forms.

Among the victims were Stirling District Council Labour Group leader Michael Connarty, Central Region councillor Corrie McChord

and a mother of five who had specially opened up a bank account in order to pay her monthly child benefit payments into it.

Falkirk West Labour MP Dennis Canavan received an 'earnings arrestment schedule' under which the fine for non-registration will be deducted from his salary as an MP.

Under the poll tax legislation local authorities can arrest wages, freeze bank accounts and seize and sell your property in order to recover poll tax payments and fines for non-registration or non-payment.

The Labour Party hierarchy is now involved in the well-known ritual of 'passing the buck'. The leader of Labour-controlled Central

Region Council has tried to pin the blame on the council officials, arguing that the 'arrestment' of the bank accounts is at odds with the Labour Group's policy that fines should be obtained from people 'sensitively and with caution'.

Labour Party spokesperson on local government, John Maxton MP, on the other hand, has suggested that it's really the Tories' fault: "It is very regrettable that the government is forcing local authorities into such actions. I hope that Central Region... makes sure that nobody will have their bank accounts frozen to the extent that they can no longer get sufficient money to live."

## Was Trotsky for a Jewish state?

### LETTERS

In Socialist Organiser No.388 (9 February 1989) John O'Mahony says "At the end of his life he (Trotsky) believed that the persecution of the Jews and the effect of that persecution on the consciousness of the Jewish people had made the creation of some sort of Jewish state an inescapable necessity."

"He did not support the Palestine programme of the Zionists, or anyway not as conceived by them. But — his train of thought is clear — he was for a Jewish state nonetheless".

The quotes given for Trotsky's views are from 1937. However, Trotsky's final remarks on the subject were given in 1940. It is my contention that at the end of his life Trotsky did not favour a Jewish



Trotsky state.

In a discussion between Sam Gordon and Trotsky on 15 June 1940 the following conversation took place.

Gordon: What tactical approach would you suggest (towards Jewish workers in the USA).

Trotsky: That is another thing. I

am not informed well about that phase. The first thing is to give them a perspective, criticise all the past, the democratic tendency, etc. To pose for them that the socialist revolution is the only realistic solution of the Jewish question.

If the Jewish workers and peasants asked for an independent state, good — but they didn't get it under Great Britain. But if they want it, the proletariat will give it.

We are not in favour (my emphasis) but only the victorious working class can give it to them. (Discussions with Trotsky in Writings of Leon Trotsky 1939-40, Pathfinder Press, 1973 page 287).

Obviously Trotsky did not have a dogmatic view on the question of a Jewish state, as a reading of all his words on the subject will show, but John O'Mahony was clearly wrong not to provide SO readers with Trotsky's 1940 position.

Barry Buitekant, London E5

## Scares don't help

There were some inaccuracies in SO's lead article last week (*Capitalism makes you sick*). The choice of subject was spot on — people are more and more concerned about what goes into their food and how it is treated before they purchase it.

But what it said about 'cow madness' will make us look foolish and ill-informed scare-mongers.

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (not eucephalitis) is a disease which causes degeneration of cows' brains and something that might be called dementia.

It is likely, but not proved, that BSE is the cow's version of the sheep disease, scrapie, having

crossed over the species barrier (as it has done in goats and dogs).

However, to say that BSE "can go on to induce dementia in people" is to state as a fact something for which there is no evidence whatsoever. It is to invite our readers to make utter fools of themselves.

It is merely a possibility that BSE can be transmitted to humans. The evidence, if anything, is against it, since scrapie does not appear to have infected people throughout thousands of years of sheep-eating.

The possibility should be investigated, and even guarded against, in view of the devastating effects were it a reality. But it remains a remote possibility.

The article would have been more use if it had given some of the less disputed arguments about food and its safety.

Les Hearn, South London

## Against the Angels

You inquired about the Guardian Angels in the US. Unfortunately I can't offer you any detailed analysis or discussion that we in the FIT have done on this subject. Nor am I aware of anything by the other Fourth Internationalist groups in the US.

My own personal view is that the Guardian Angels represent an attempt to channel the sentiment of alienated youth into collaboration with the 'law and order' establishment, and as such should be opposed. This is true despite the fact that, on occasion, the Angels come into conflict with that establishment.

If the Guardian Angels were organised by a mass movement within the communities of the oppressed to function as a self-defence force, and were under the democratic control of such a movement, then that would probably

give them a different character. As it stands now, however, the movement tends to function, or at least aspire to function, as an appendage of the bourgeois state.

Steve Bloom, Fourth Internationalist Tendency, New York

## Remember Blair Peach!

"On 23 April 1979 Blair Peach was killed at a demonstration protesting against a National Front meeting in Southall. He was killed by a blow on the head dealt by a member of the Special Patrol Group and witnessed by eleven members of the public. There were numerous injured people, 700 arrests and 342 charged with various offences — most of them from the local black community. Not a single policeman ever faced prosecution or disciplinary action."

Memorial March and Meeting  
Sunday 23 April 1989  
Assemble: 1pm Southall Park, Uxbridge Road, Southall  
March through to a rally at Fenner Brockway Centre, South Road, Southall at 3pm.

Organised by the Blair Peach 10th Anniversary Committee, c/o 1st Floor, 50/52 King Street, Southall, Middx UB2 4DB. Tel: 01-843 2333 or 01-555 8151.



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Uprising in Dudza township 1985. The ANC reacted to the township rebellion by pretending that making the townships 'ungovernable' would force the Botha regime to surrender.

# A policy, not just a person, at fault

By Bob Fine

**W**innie Mandela's predicament worsens by the day. Members of her personal bodyguard, the 'Mandela United Football Club', have now been charged with abducting four young men from a church refuge in Soweto, assaulting all of them and murdering one of them, Stompie Seipei.

Stompie was found dead in a ditch, severely beaten and with his throat cut. One of the youths who later escaped says that Mrs Mandela herself presided over and participated in the beating.

Mrs Mandela denied any knowledge of the murder and claimed that the kids had been 'rescued' from the mission. Her explanation was that they had been engaged in 'homosexual practices' with the priests and that such behaviour was not acceptable 'in our culture'.

Two further members of her bodyguard have subsequently been charged with shooting dead a doctor who examined the kidnapped youths. Police investigations are going on into further killings and disappearances.

One of Winnie Mandela's team has recently been charged with the murder of another member who said in his defence that his fellow bodyguard had tried to slit his throat. He appeared in court with a knife wound across his neck from ear to ear.

While little credence can be put on the reports of the South African police, Mrs Mandela's reputation

inside the Soweto community is equally bad.

It was not helped by her building a large and expensive mansion 'fit for a president' in Soweto. Things came to a head when school students destroyed her original home in revenge for the rape of a fellow student by members of her retinue.

Now the United Democratic Front (the half-legal pro-ANC mass organisation), the Congress of South African Trade Unions, the Weekly Mail (a left liberal, generally pro-ANC newspaper) and Mrs Mandela's own lawyer (her main contact with Nelson) have all disassociated themselves from her.

Oliver Tambo, the president of the ANC — strangely out of line with the response inside the country — has reiterated his support for Mrs Mandela.

What does all this mean?

First, it is important to discover the truth. We cannot trust the apartheid courts, not least because most black people would refuse to testify on behalf of the apartheid government. What is needed, therefore, is an inquiry by the democratic movement into what was done and how the situation got so out of hand.

Second, I think it is important not to turn Mrs Mandela into a scapegoat for what went wrong with the struggle for 'people's power' in 1984-5.

The ANC raised such slogans as 'make the townships ungovernable', and 'no education before liberation'. The aim was to create such chaos and mayhem as would force the government to negotiate with the ANC.

But who were the victims of the chaos? As the left wing academic journal 'Work in Progress' put it at



Winnie Mandela

the time: "Undisciplined comrades, often acting with no organisational basis or mandate, have divided communities, setting workers against the unemployed, children against parents, trade unions against community groups."

"Some of the rent boycotts have been enforced with a high degree of anti-democratic authoritarianism. The youth have often acted without the organisations structure necessary for democratic decision making, and without adequate mandate or consultation. Recourse to 'discipline' — 'necklacings', beatings and other punishments — has come too easily to a group which often lacks a mandate to act on behalf of a constituency."

Mrs Mandela was a vocal champion of the 'necklace' and of the rather injudicious use of 'people's justice'. She delivered political statements without any mandate and 'called upon the people' to follow certain lines of struggle with little concern for the norms of democratic decision making. Her elitism certainly alienated many trade unionists accustomed to the ideas of accountability and participation.

When she spoke at a number of trade union congresses advocating adoption of the Freedom Charter (the ANC's basic programme) and at the miners' conference ad-

vocating a united front between the mine owners and the mineworkers against the state, many workers were resentful.

Mrs Mandela was only following the policies of the ANC at the time. She is a strong and articulate woman, the wife of the man whom the ANC has elevated as the personification of the struggle, and she seemed by then to have won a certain level of immunity from police repression. Of course she was a particularly important representative for the ANC inside the country.

Today the failure of the ANC's strategy is clear enough and so is a certain degree of popular discontent with the excesses to which it led. But ANC policy has remained in a state of limbo, offering no formal change of direction and no formal assessment of what went wrong.

Now a number of kites are being flown about the need for the democratic movement to reconsider its whole approach to non-participation and 'people's power'. Archie Gumede and a number of intellectuals have floated the need for participating in elections.

The South African Communist Party, which is highly influential within the ANC, is under pressure to adapt to the new spirit of reform and détente in Russia and to Gorbachev's diplomacy in Southern Africa.

So the UDF's condemnation of Winnie Mandela may signal the beginnings of a change in line by the ANC's CP axis, with some individuals trailing behind the new consensus. A critical honest review of the mistakes made in the past is certainly welcome, but it will only shortcut this much-needed process if the woman previously named 'mother of the nation' is turned into the individual embodiment of the sins of the past.

For us here in the solidarity movement the fall of Mrs Mandela should be a timely reminder of where uncritical admiration of leaders may lead, particularly when these leaders are unelected. Our solidarity with the liberation movement should not blind us to the fact that working class people in Southern Africa have the same interest in, and need for, democracy as do working class people here.

Democracy is not a 'western concept' — it is a universal requirement of the working class.

## A letter from Moses Mayekiso

"To all Moses Mayekiso supporters.

"This serves to acknowledge and thank you for the moral and financial support we (my family, the Alexandra 5 and NUMSA) have received from yourself and solidarity generally, supporting us in our trial, pressurising the state.

This support has strengthened us, our families, and workers generally and encouraged amongst ourselves unity, knowing that, and the enemy recognising that, we've got friends on whom we may lean.

I have decided to take this opportunity to air my sincere gratitude to you for all that you have done for us and urge and encourage you to continue with your campaign of support and pressure as the trial judgement is imminent. It will be through the strength and solidarity of workers here, at home, and internationally that we will win this trial and get the liberation of workers from exploitation and oppression.

'An injury to one is an injury to all!'

As you may have heard, we have been released on bail under very strict, severe and restrictive bail conditions.

It is difficult and impossible to do the union work because of these conditions. We cannot attend any meetings, we cannot be with more than 10 people at a time. We can't talk to the press. We must remain in the Witwatersrand area.

We are not allowed to go to Alexandra township, our residential area, and we must report daily to the police.

I remain yours in the struggle."

Moses Mayekiso  
General Secretary  
National Union  
Metalworkers of South Africa

## Khola Mayekiso tours Britain

Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of the giant South African metal workers union, NUMSA, is now on trial for treason for organising working class people into street committees in the black township of Alexandra, near Johannesburg.

To raise support for Moses and the other four defendants on trial alongside him, Khola Mayekiso (Moses' wife) is to visit the UK next month.

Khola Mayekiso's tour is organised jointly by NUMSA and the TUC. Regional TUC's will be organising events on the following timetable:

- 5 March: arrive London
- 6 March: address TUC international committee
- 6-10 March: TUC North West region including TUC Women's Conference (Blackpool, 9 March)
- 11-13 March: Glasgow (annd STUC international forum, Edinburgh)
- 14-15 March: Newcastle upon Tyne. TUC North region
- 16-17 March: TUC Yorkshire and Humberside region
- 18-19 March: TUC East Midlands region
- 20-21 March: TUC West Midlands region
- 22-23 March: TUC East Anglia region
- 24-25 March: NUT Conference
- 27-29 March: Wales and South West TUC regions
- 29 March-1 April: London area (South Eastern region TUC)
- 2 April: Depart for USA and Ireland

## Democratic inquiry needed

A shop steward from the giant South African metalworkers' union NUMSA explained how he and many other workers in Soweto see the Winnie Mandela scandal.

"It is rank and file trade unionists along with many progressive organisations who have taken the initiative to demand an apology for the way Winnie Mandela and her

supporters have handled the situation. People are seeking a democratic inquiry into the allegations against her.

"Enough evidence exists for all progressive organisations to have distanced themselves from her.

"It is expected that she will revert to using her maiden name in order not to harm the name of Mandela."

# A Polish worker speaks out

**Jack Allison recently visited Poland and talked to working class activists there. In this interview, one such activist — active in Solidarnosc and in the 'Democratic Revolution' wing of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS-RD) — explains how the workers organise, why he thinks new strike waves will come, and how he thinks the present system in Poland can be replaced.**

**S**olidarnosc's underground structures are a kind of compromise between democracy and security. The members are the people who collect money in the factory for the secret committee. Then there are secret inter-factory committees covering different factories in a town; and then the regional secret committee of Solidarnosc.

Security had to be tightest at regional level, as it is dangerous for people to be known to be members of one of these committees.

The regional committees are made up of one delegate from each inter-factory committee — who was never known to the inter-factory committee — to be their delegate.

The members of the regional committee would always keep a low profile in the inter-factory committees.

These structures still exist and the best situation is where they work with the new open structures of Solidarnosc, both having a role in making decisions. In many factories this is impossible as only the underground structure exists, or only the open Solidarnosc committee exists.

The reason that many good activists keep the underground structures going is because the open declared structures offer no protection to militants. The result of the open structures was seen in the two most recent round of strikes. The open structures were completely destroyed, but the secret committees had meetings every day and in many factories were able to build big strikes, with an organisation that has contacts in each factory.

There is, of course, a problem of security inside the factory. The only way someone can get involved in the secret structure is through their own activity. This is done by the most active members. Those who pay and collect money for the union are invited by people on the secret committee to join it. Within the committee there are free and open elections for leaderships and jobs on the committee. The same method is used to make up the inter-factory committees, taking the most active and able people from the factory committees.

The problems of the leadership are not as important as people think, because a change in the leadership can, and will, not change the situation in the factories. We must go back to the ideas of 1980 and organise the basic work inside the factories, then all the problems between the people at the top will lose their meaning.

People are more active in Wroclaw than in other parts of

Poland. After martial law, people started to organise themselves into secret committees without any influence from outside, as at that time all the people with a name inside Solidarnosc were in prison. When the people with famous names were released, the conflict between the well-known people and the secret committees began.

The open committees were set up with these well-known people and hand-picked workers. There were some good people in these open structures, but also many people with bad ideas.

In 1987 the national committee made it clear that they did not want a member of a regional secret committee to join the national committee of Solidarnosc. They did not want a person who represented factories, real structures, real workers and so on; instead they wanted people who are eloquent, have famous names, have interesting ideas, but are not trade unionists. They want to make Solidarnosc into a kind of social movement — not a trade union but a social movement.

I don't want to stop people building a Solidarity social movement. Let them be. For me, the most important thing is the trade union, because it is the weakest point of the communist system.

It does not matter what the communists say on TV, or what they publish, because always there is inflation, and always people have less food, worse food, less money, less places to live. A social movement under the name of Solidarnosc cannot help them when they have no chance of buying a flat, and have not got enough money to buy food and the most important things.

There will be new strikes and not the structures or even the activists of the union will do that, but maybe people who today even think that the trade union doesn't exist. They will be people with their backs to the wall. They will have to fight



Some heads will be cut off this time — the heads of our bureaucracy, the oppositional bureaucracy.

The patience of our society is wearing out. Solidarnosc is no longer the most important element of the new strikes. Solidarnosc is weak. People do not see that Solidarnosc can help them, as a structure, as an organisation. The most important thing for people is their own pockets.

Those strikes will not be when the

leadership of Solidarnosc call for them, but when someone watching TV, who may not listen to the free radio and does not read many opposition underground newspapers, will switch off the TV and check his pocket, find there is not enough money in his pocket, and decide he will have to take things into his own hands. The strikes will be decided by many people who are outside Solidarnosc now.

At first PPS made a lot of

## WHERE WE STAND

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

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under

workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide, including the struggle of

workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

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

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

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

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

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

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

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Top: 1980. Above: 1988



## The class struggle in Parliament

**Eric Heffer MP reviews 'Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma', by A.Y. Badayev, with an introduction by Tony Cliff. (Bookmarks, £5.95)**

**I first read this book many years ago, and it is as interesting as ever. The introduction by Tony Cliff is, however, a travesty.**

I am sorry to say this because I have always felt a liking for Tony Cliff, but his distortion of my own political position in his introduction of the book is unforgivable. For example, he writes on page 11 that, "If, for a left Labour MP like Heffer, the struggle in Parliament appears as all important, whilst the class struggle of workers merits only a footnote, for right-wing Labour leaders the industrial struggle appears nonsense, and if on a large scale, may impede electoral success."

At no time have I ever said that the struggle in Parliament was all important. I said and argued in my book 'The Class Struggle in Parliament' that the fight and struggle in Parliament were reflections of the class struggle outside. If the struggle outside was really tough, strong and widespread, then the struggle in Parliament would be more vigorous, because it would force the fainthearts to make a more determined stand.

I was, in fact, in the book, writing about Parliament. That was where I was and it was there that I helped co-ordinate the attack from the Front Bench against the Tories' legislation and before that, the right-wing of the Labour Party and those like Barbara Castle and Harold Wilson who, by 'In Place of Strife', had helped pave the way for the Tory legislation. That is all explained in my book, but it is clear that Cliff only wants to quote that (out of context) which helps his case.

In any case, I think it is ridiculous for Cliff to compare my book with Badayev's. There is no comparison. The situation was quite different and Britain under Wilson, or Heath for that matter, was very different from the situation under the Czar.

Unlike Cliff, I spent years of my life on the shopfloor, in the shipyards and on large construction sites. I was involved in, and helped lead, huge strikes involving many thousands of workers.

To me strikes were not and never have been academic questions. They are real, they are the true struggle of the workers and a great deal of suffering of varying kinds takes place.

To sit in the ivory tower of the SWP is somewhat different to the actual experience of the struggle at the grass roots.

Cliff visited my home and stayed with me when I was on the shopfloor and he knows I was never tied to the Parliamentary concept. In fact I had to be persuaded to stand for Parliament.

I entered Parliament only because the workers in the Labour Party and trade unions wanted me to do so, not because I was looking

for opportunistic preferment. In fact some of those in the SWP earned more in a day as bourgeois journalists, etc. than I earned in a month.

I have always regarded and continue to regard the industrial and political struggle outside Parliament as the real struggle. Parliamentary struggle has only ever been a reflection of that struggle.

Certainly, Labour governments can and do bring in legislation that benefits workers. Legislation for example, which today is being destroyed by the Tory government on behalf of the capitalist class.

My experience, for what it is worth, is that when the struggle outside Parliament heightens the consciousness of workers, that is reflected in votes for the Labour Party at local and general elections. When the struggle outside Parliament is quiescent, then the votes go down. Recent experience has shown that in places like Liverpool, the coalfields and Scotland. The votes increased because of the workers' struggles in such areas.

With regard to Badayev's book itself, one has to remember the historical circumstances under which it was written. Russia under the Czar was not at any time like Britain under the bourgeois democracy of Lloyd George, Disraeli or Gladstone. The democratic right to have elections, votes for the workers, constituencies or more or less equal size, and payment of MPs, had been part of the working class struggle, but such rights had not been really established in Czarist Russia.

As Badayev says on page 32, "The electoral law, passed by the government prior to the elections of the First Duma, was so drafted as to secure a majority for the bourgeoisie and the landlords. The voting was not direct but by a system of stages." Yet despite this fact, the First and Second Dumas

had majorities against the government.

Badayev says: "After the dissolution of the Second Duma on 3rd June 1907, a new electoral law was passed which still further curtailed the suffrage, and excluded large groups of the population. Special attention was paid to the workers and the number of workers' curias was greatly reduced."

With regard to the work of the Social-Democratic faction in the Fourth Duma, it is interesting to note, despite the fact that the Bolsheviks had a revolutionary position and the Tribunes and Campaign Groupers have basically a reformist position, just how similar they were in their activities.

The Bolsheviks held 'surgeries' and meetings with trade unionists and workers involved in strikes and various other struggles. I found all that absolutely fascinating. I read the book before going to Parliament, and having been in Parliament for 24 years, it makes even more interesting reading.

One of the most interesting parts of the book is that concerned with the role of Malinovsky, who was found to be a police spy. He was, however, a good speaker. Badayev says: "Malinovsky's oratorical powers made him one of the frequent speakers of our faction. But a careful analysis of his speeches reveals the fact that the blunt revolutionary content characteristic of the speeches of our workers' deputies was absent." How that could be said for some of the most glib speakers in the Labour Group in the House of Commons!

This is a book which should be read by all left-wing Labour MPs. But it must be read critically and in the historical context. To translate a situation automatically to a situation in Britain is wrong, even though a great deal of what is said in the book is applicable under both circumstances.



Lenin argued for the Bolsheviks to work inside the Duma despite its deeply anti-democratic nature

mistakes. We were a group of young people who did not know how to organise a political party. Instead of working together with trade unions we went into cabinet fights against the older group that was around Lipski, and it took a lot of time before we realised we weren't doing anything.

Now we bring together people who are active, and we have a real possibility to do something. Our weak point is that we have not got a programme.

We are now the biggest enemy of other opposition groups, and will be in the future — especially if they say we are on the left but they use liberal arguments and want a compromise with the totalitarian system, if they talk about getting richer and richer without speaking about the poorest levels of society.

They start to forget their big uncle who helped them to exist on the public level. That big uncle is the trade union Solidarnosc. They want to use that big uncle to get some power and then they can make a big turn and fight against the union.

Working alongside trade unionists, fighting for workers' demands together, we can build an alternative power to those liberals who have become stronger over the last months.

People know very well what the communists call real socialism. They also know capitalism from movies and travel to the West. Of course they prefer capitalism, because they see people live better here than they do here.

That does not mean, however,

that when they reach that world, and maybe they will live in better houses than now and have more money, they won't see the distance between the best houses and their better houses may be bigger than before. They will realise that they are again nobody — in another system.

Probably the whole of society will go to the right and then go back to the left. I think the best way is to make a mixture of the two systems — a mixture of the socialist system, taking care of poor people and so on, and the Western free-market system. In the West, capitalism started with children and old people working for 16 hours a day and became richer and richer over the years. We have not got the time to do that, and we cannot go back to the 19th century.

The structure of modern factories are completely different, so that when we change the system we will stop building big monopolies and rather atomise the structure into small pieces, going back to the mixture of capitalism and socialism, the beginnings of which we had before the Second World War, when there was a strong trade union movement and a strong PPS and they worked together.

There is a big problem with our factories. Most of our factories produce emptiness, which means 90% should just be closed. But who owns those factories? Who will close them? The most powerful people in Poland are the working class, a 19th century-type working class that no longer exists in the West.

# It's a ruling class, but in crisis

## DISCUSSION

Barry Finger contributes to our debate on the Eastern Bloc

Stan Crooke (SO 386) questions whether the ruling stratum in the Eastern Bloc can rightfully be characterised as a ruling class.

If I understand his argument correctly, the crux of the issue is the inability of the bureaucracy to generate an effective regulator for the supply and extraction of social labour. Failing this, it cannot master the appropriation of the surplus-product and consequently unable to fulfil its class aspirations.

This explains why the bureaucracy and the society it dominates find themselves ever more deeply into a historic 'blind alley'.

What is so problematic in this argument is that Crooke identifies that condition which under any other mode of production would be characterised as a 'class' crisis, but denies its applicability for Stalinism.

After all, a capitalist crisis, looked at from one angle, is nothing if not a failure of the pricing system to generate a sufficient level of demand for the profitable accumulation of capital. Conversely, commodities are over-produced relative to the current level of exploitation so that markets cannot be cleared at prices that preserve the existing level of capital values.

Yet it would be absurd to analyse capitalism solely during such periods of crises. For then one would have to conclude from the observation of contracting output and declining or stagnating living standards that capital lacked a mechanism of social regulation.

Every antagonistic class society suffers from problems of waste and problems inherent to the introduction of new technology which are unique to it, including capitalism. The pricing system is incapable of preventing disproportionalities — concurrent gluts and shortages — and can detect and correct them only *ex post facto*. This predominant form of capitalist waste prevents the individual expenditure of labour counting as social labour and is a continuous and unavoidable phenomenon of capitalist society.

The pricing system also filters out the introduction of labour saving technological innovations which are too costly to be profit-enhancing. Under crisis conditions these problems are multiplied and thereby brought into bold relief.

So might one not apply Crooke's analysis to capitalism? By isolating capitalism under crisis conditions, would we not be forced to conclude that, lacking an "effective" social regulator, capitalists are incapable of constituting themselves as a class?

Similarly the undeniable historical fact of reproduction on an expanded scale also proves the thesis untenable that Stalinism lacks an economic regulator. For what we are witnessing in the Eastern Bloc today is not the normal — i.e. historically typical — workings of the Stalinist system, but a breakdown crisis.

Granted even this, still stagnation is not the universal current experience of the Stalinist social system, merely its predominant expression — witness the East German exception.

Clearly the Stalinist social systems have also seen prolonged periods of dramatic economic growth. This requires the performance of surplus labour, its ap-



All those against calling ourselves a new ruling class.

propriation and its reapplication to the production process, all of which is executed however imperfectly in response to planning directives. And whether these directives are detailed commands or general guidelines the details of which are fleshed out by market forces, they are drawn up by a bureaucracy answerable neither directly nor indirectly to any other social force.

This in itself is sufficient to belie the "orthodox" Trotskyist distortion that by preserving nationalised property the bureaucracy acts as a fiduciary agent of the working class. The task for Marxists remain in working out how class conflicts within the Stalinist system express themselves in the acute breakdown of the bureaucratic planning mechanism.

Crooke provides a fruitful starting point for this by distinguishing between a system of bureaucratic commands and planning through socialist democracy. For the bureaucracy's power lies in its ability to circumscribe popular initiative and by so doing shape society in accordance with its own priorities.

This planning-from-above is necessarily a one-way system which, by choking off all feedback from below, precludes a continuous correction process. In this it differs from socialist planning which aims to bring into *ex ante* alignment production decisions with consumer demands.

Such a free association of immediate producers would effectively invoke a system of production to order. But this presupposes the fusion of economic and political power within the democratic self-governing organs of society. It is otherwise inconceivable.

The Bolshevik revolution and its soviet institutions represented the first tentative, historical steps in that direction. Because of the cultural backwardness of revolutionary Russia, labouring tragically without the fraternal assistance of a revolutionary society to its west, workers' power came to be ever more mediated through a party bureaucracy. This consigned the revolution to teeter in the elan of its bureaucratic ranks — ranks whose

revolutionary zeal was thinned at once both by civil-war losses and their replacement with careerist intellectuals imbued with the ideals of the old society.

The revolution was therefore borne with a fatal susceptibility. When revolutionary authority was filtered through a bureaucratic sieve, the potential existed to skim so much political power from the working class as to effectively disenfranchise it. The Stalinist counter-revolution realised this potential, but not before exacting an ocean of blood.

And because revolutionary authority consists in the fusion of political with economic power, the political disenfranchisement of the working class was at the same time its economic expropriation. Class society — albeit in a historically unique mode — was forcibly reintroduced. Or more precisely, the Bolshevik attempt at class abolition was subverted and a new form of class exploitation created.

Corresponding to this system of "bureaucratic collectivism" is a specific class dynamic. Production maximisation conflicts with the conditions of exploitation because, as was stated, feedback is lacking. Planning takes the form of ukase, while plan fulfillment becomes a shell game.

As a result disproportionalities cannot be detected until large, multiple bottlenecks jam up the system. But the rate at which the economy can grow is critically dependent, in the final analysis, upon the mass of surplus-labour which can be productively reapplied. Without an effective feedback system, bureaucratic planning lacks the sensitivity to anticipate and locate potential disruptions.

Offsetting this requires an enormous reserve of spare parts, inventories, intermediate goods and semi-finished products, in short — a colossal tie-up of necessary labour in social overhead before an hour of surplus-labour can actually be expended. This is reflected in the hypertrophic growth of the producer goods sector.

Bourgeois economists attribute this to some misguided ideological

attachment to Marxian theory, while the "state capitalist" school fancies itself to have discovered the dynamic of capital accumulation at play. Both conceptions are nonsense. The former because it attributes the inner logic of bureaucratic collectivism to an ideological quirk, the latter because the resemblance is purely superficial.

Accumulation under capitalism, it is true, necessitates an increase in capital-intensity or the organic composition of capital. Capitalists find it profitable to invest ever greater amounts of value in new, labour-saving technology as long as the savings in labour costs exceed the additional expenditure of constant capital. This occurs both to obtain the temporary monopoly profits of the innovator or to preserve the value of the capital already invested by meeting the innovator's challenge.

But the key point is this. The increase in the organic composition of value is the way in which increased productivity expresses itself under capitalism. Its result is the shortening of the necessary part of the working day and the increase of surplus-labour.

The increase in the "capital intensity" (for lack of a more appropriate term) under bureaucratic collectivism bears no necessary correlation to productivity gains. It has little to do with the investment in more expensive technological improvements.

On the contrary, the mere multiplication of production spheres, even simple expanded reproduction, multiplies the points of potential disruption. For even this process to proceed smoothly requires an increase in the offsetting "capital" reserves per hour of productive labour worked.

This furthermore means that every actual percentage increase in productivity that does occur results in a smaller increment in final output than would be the case under capitalism, owing to the difference held as reserves.

Multiply this problem by the sub-standard, even unusable, quality of much of the output, as well as the

economically exhausting demands of the arms race, and the enormous potential for stagnation becomes readily apparent.

The bureaucracy has historically sought indemnification of this through increases in the intensity of labour and in the length of the collective working year. But bad housing, shoddy consumer goods and inadequate living conditions place definite limits on the productivity of the working class.

Under Gorbachev, piece work and incentive pay — throwbacks to the Stalin era — are again the order of the day. Yet as the bureaucrats are well aware, without a dramatic improvement in the welfare of the working class such proposals have meagre potential.

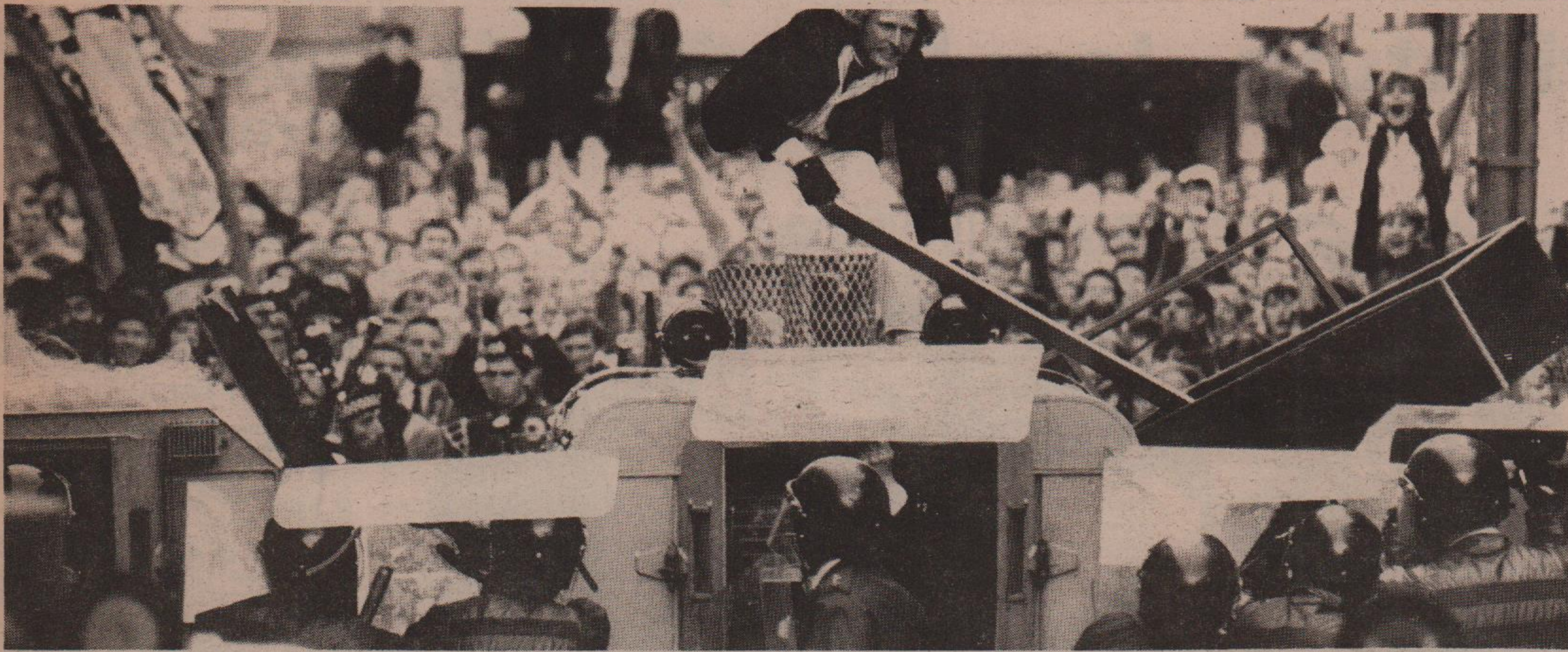
To this end limited openings for private initiative in personal services, and agriculture as well as major steps to economise on labour-time and producer goods through the employment of market rationing are being undertaken. Managers are being retrained to shed their "bureaucratic mentalities" and read market signals so that they can respond rapidly to a coherent set of prices. Workers are being asked to submit to the whip of unemployment — and this without the elementary legal and welfare provisions which are in place under modern capitalism — for the promise of better living standards.

How far this can proceed without challenging the supremacy of the Party in economic and social life is as yet unknown. The experiments in Eastern Europe represent so many national laboratories to test the limits of reform. For this reason they will be allowed to continue under microscopic scrutiny in advance of the USSR.

This has already opened an opportunity not only for the restoration of capitalism, but also for revolutionary working class upheavals. Bureaucratic collectivism is walking a tightrope. For this reason I would rephrase Stan Crooke's question.

The issue is not whether the class aspirations of the bureaucracy are attainable, but whether its class hegemony is sustainable.





## Ireland: the missing issue

By Martin Thomas

**T**'ime To Go' will be the major focus of debate at the Labour Committee on Ireland conference this weekend, 25-26 February.

'Time To Go', a campaign for British withdrawal from Ireland, was launched last year. Its first conference drew some 600 people, more than any other such conference on Ireland for some time. It plans a 'Great Debate' on the weekend of 24-25 June, a demonstration and carnival on 12 August, and activities round this year's trade union conferences. Some local 'Time To Go' groups have been set up.

Three different approaches to 'Time To Go' are advocated in the resolutions to the Labour Committee on Ireland.

*Socialist Action* supporters are 100 per cent for 'Time To Go'. It has "won support from a broad layer of MPs, from leading trade unionists, the Na-

tional Union of Students, the National Organisation of Labour Students, the Morning Star, the Irish Post, the Communist Party, the SWP, local authorities, artists and many others...This represents a qualitative broadening of the movement for British withdrawal."

*Workers' Power*, however, claims that "the 'Time To Go' campaign has not aided the fight to build a withdrawal movement" because it is "based on a fake mass appeal, celebrity support, and a sham openness to discussing 'all the options for withdrawal'." These comrades argue that the Labour Committee on Ireland should organise a distinct contingent on the August demonstration, with the demands 'Troops Out Now!' and 'Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole'.

A motion from *Socialist Outlook* makes the same proposal for a distinct contingent, with the slogan 'Troops Out!' instead of 'Troops Out Now!'. It is critical of 'Time To Go', but less

vehemently than *Workers' Power*.

*Socialist Organiser* supporters have submitted a motion which raises a different issue: not how sharply or briskly the demand for withdrawal is raised, but whether the demand on its own is sufficient. "'Troops Out' is only one part of a settlement. On its own, without the rest of the settlement, it would bring sectarian civil war, then repatriation. 'Troops Out' must be linked to a positive programme — for a free, united Ireland...a federal Ireland with regional autonomy for the mainly Protestant area."

At the recent Sinn Fein conference, Gerry Adams identified the Protestants' fears of the "creation of a Catholic state and an end to their Protestant identity" as a central issue in Ireland. He did not say much about how to deal with the problem; but at least he recognised it.

Sadly most of the perspectives proposed to the Labour Committee on Ireland AGM do not even mention the

issue.

For some schools of thought, how "revolutionary" your politics are is measured by the ferocity of your commitment to (Catholic) Irish nationalism. Thus two resolutions apparently inspired by *Workers' Power* call for "the withdrawal of British unions from organising in Ireland".

A broader range of opinion, however, is certain to be represented at the conference and a useful debate should be possible.

**Labour Committee on Ireland AGM. Saturday-Sunday 25-26 February, at the Summerfield Community Centre, Winson Green/Dudley Road, Birmingham. Starting 10.30am Saturday. Registration: £2 waged/£1 unwaged.**



GCHQ protest: workers are still fighting!

## Socialists discuss trade union work

By Colin Foster

**C**lass struggle is not dead! Despite all the wailing of the 'New Realists', all the theorising of *Marxism Today* about 'New Times', and all the dogmatising of the Socialist Workers' Party about 'the downturn', the working class is still here and still fighting.

The drop in unemployment (exaggerated though it is by the Government), and the revival of inflation, will probably fuel new struggles. And important, if limited, battles are happening now.

That was the theme of the *Socialist Organiser* industrial school in Manchester last weekend, 18th-19th, attended by some 100 people.

John O'Mahony opened the school by examining why the working class has suffered such setbacks in the 1980s. It was not inevitable that slumps and technological change would produce such effects. Crucial was the failure of the labour movement's leadership — and, given that failure was to be expected from the established bureaucrats,

the inability of the left to build a coherent rank and file movement.

Workshops took up most of the weekend. They discussed union organisation in workplaces; privatisation; 'post-Fordism'; union campaigns; breakaway unions; women in the unions; strike organisation; and the block vote.

A Sheffield railworker led a workshop on workplace bulletins. We examined the experience of local *Socialist Organiser* groups which produce such bulletins, and encouraged those who don't to start.

A series of workshops discussed problems of arguing socialist politics in the workplace. Introducing them, Lol Duffy explained how through bold and assertive argument he had been able to make headway against crude sexism in Cammell Lairds shipyard.

We also held trade union caucus meetings — in some unions, continuing work by *Socialist Organiser* supporters which is already well established, in others, organising coordination for the first time.

The patient, painstaking work of building groups of socialists in unions and workplaces now will be crucial in deciding victory or defeat in the struggles of years to come.

## Magazine sales drive

This week marks a new sales drive for *Workers' Liberty* magazine.

Sellers in cities round the country will be drawing up lists of local socialists and labour activists to approach with the magazine. Many people who have no great sympathy for the general politics of *Workers' Liberty* and *Socialist Organiser* are nonetheless interested in some of the articles in the magazine.

The current issue includes basic

articles by Max Shachtman on why he considered the Soviet bureaucracy a new ruling class, a dissection of the hype about 'post-Fordism', an examination of modern and post-modern architecture, a survey of civil liberties under Thatcher, and much more.

*Workers' Liberty* is available for £1.50 plus 32p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Wednesday 22 February**

Adam Keller tour meeting: 'The struggle for Palestinian-Israeli peace', Brighton

**Thursday 23 February**

Balsall Heath/Sparkhill Against the Poll Tax. Speakers include Cate Murphy. St Paul's School Hall, 7.00. Contact the campaign c/o 448 Stratford Rd, Birmingham

**Thursday 23 February**

York SO meeting: 'South Africa: for a workers' party!'. Speaker Tom Rigby. York University SU, 1.15

**Saturday 25 February**

Labour Committee on Ireland Conference (two days), Birmingham

**Saturday 25 February**

Women for Socialism Conference (two days). Wesley House, Wild Ct, London WC1. Contact: Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY; 01 992 0945

**Monday 27 February**

Sheffield SO Debate with Socialist Outlook on Eastern Bloc

**Tuesday 28 February**

Northampton SO meeting: 'Gorbachev and the Eastern Bloc'. Speaker John O'Mahony, 7.30

**Saturday 4 March**

'Women in Black' mass picket at St Martins in the Field, 3.00-4.00. Please wear black. To demand recognition of PLO and self-determination for Palestine

**Monday 6 March**

London SO education series: 'The General Strike of 1926'. Speaker: Vicki Morris, 7.00

**Monday 6 March**

Manchester SO meeting: 'Profits before safety'. Speaker Julia Coulton. Millstone pub, Thomas St, 7.30

**Thursday 9 March.** Merseyside SO

meeting: 'Lessons of Afghanistan'. Speaker Tom Rigby

**Monday 20 March**

London SO education series: 'Early years of the British CP'. Speaker Tom Rigby, 7.00

**Wednesday 22 March**

South London SO meeting: Socialists and Ireland with Martin Collins and Martin Thomas. 7.30pm, Walworth Town Hall, Walworth Rd, SE17

**Saturday 8 April**

Gorbachev and the European Left Conference (two days). ULU, Malet St, London WC1. Contact Gus Fagan, 30 Bridge St, Oxford OX2 0BA

**Saturday 29 April**

CLPs Conference on Party Democracy

**Saturday 17 June**

Socialist Conference Third Conference (two days). Octagon Centre, Sheffield

**Saturday 8 July**

Workers' Liberty Summer School (two days), London

**Saturday 11 November**

Socialist Conference 'Building the Left in the Unions', Sheffield

**Campaign Against the Massacres in Iran, Iraq and Turkey**

**Picket Iraqi Cultural Centre 177 Tottenham Court Rd (Goadge St tube) Saturday 28 February 1.00 - 3.00**

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

# STOP TORY LOANS!

By Jill Mountford  
(Convenor, Socialist Student)

This Saturday, 25th, sees the long-awaited official demo as part of a fight back against the National Union of Students (NUS) against the introduction of loans.

The NUS Executive is under a mandate to organise a national demo as part of a fight back against the Tories' proposals to turn education into an institution for the rich and privileged.

The Tories' proposals mean that the worst off and most oppressed in society will lose out once again. Black people, women and working class youth will be locked out of education — thrown onto the scrapheap in a society where profit and greed for a few individuals are more highly regarded than free education for all.

Last term a wave of direct action swept across the country. Thousands of students in all sectors of education organised and demonstrated against the introduction of loans.

A mass lobby of Parliament on 24 November last year turned into a 20,000-strong pitched battle against the police. For the first time many new student activists witnessed the

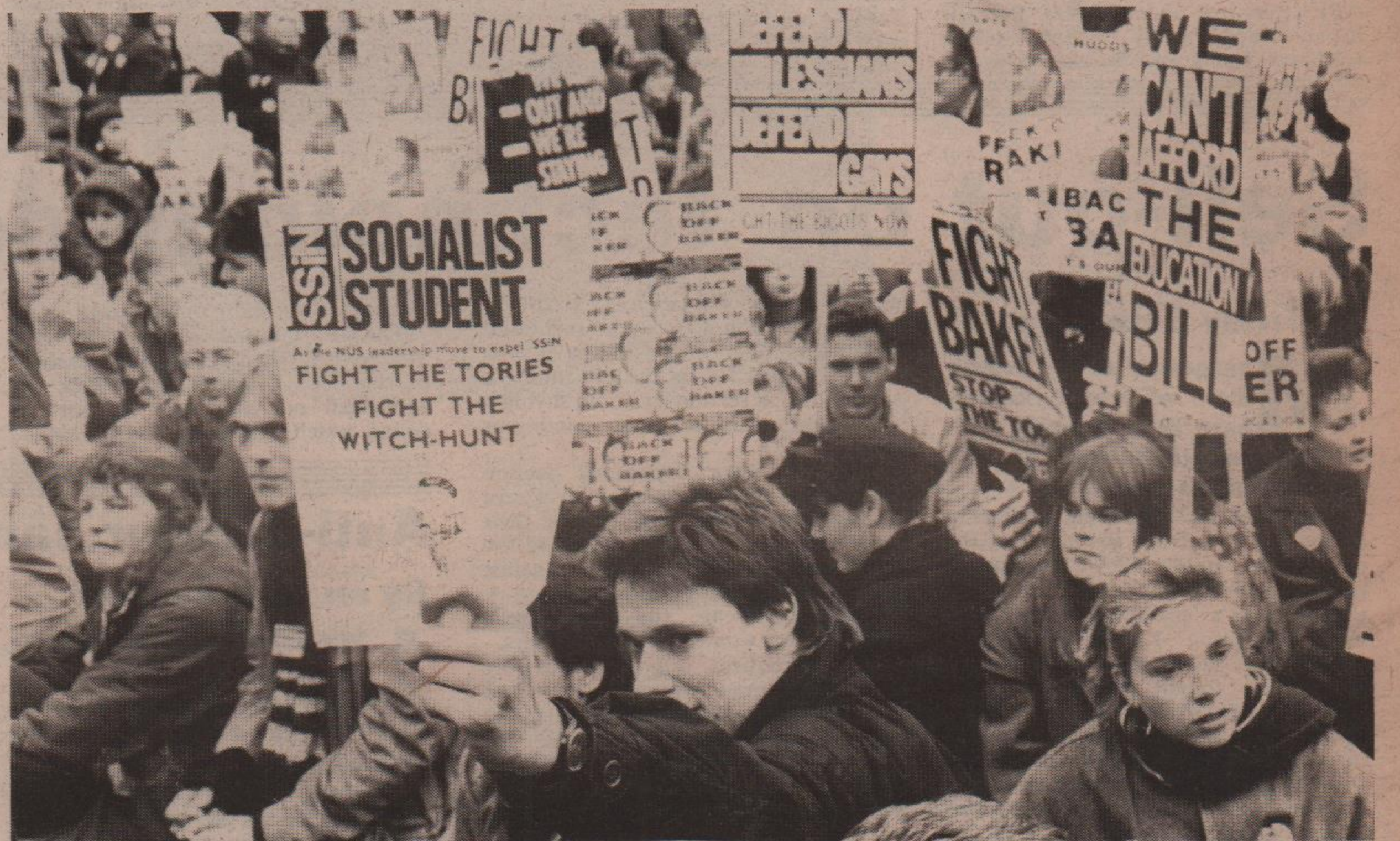
strong arm of the state at work. Police on horseback armed in riot gear, waded into crowds of demonstrating students. Many students were injured, but many more were inspired to fight on.

With such a wave of militancy on the ground many activists felt confident about beating the Tories on this issue. For the first time in four years the student movement was active, vibrant and fighting back.

Socialist Student said then that the militancy on the campuses had to be organised on a national scale — it had to be channelled in a co-ordinated resistance to loans. "The rank and file action must be built on, the opportunity seized." We said that "If the militancy is not developed, then the Tories have the green light from NUS to introduce loans."

That was the situation in November last year. But the so-called 'leadership' of NUS waited three months before organising more action — they are responsible for allowing student militancy to fade.

The Democratic Left leadership of NUS, made in the same mould as Kinnock and Willis, dissipated the action of the rank and file. Rather than calling for a 24-hour shutdown in education after the battle on Waterloo Bridge, rather than calling for a wave of occupations across the country and building the links with the campus trade unions



Student sit-down in Parliament Square, 1988. Photo: Ian Swindale

— especially linking the struggle of students to the lecturers' dispute — the Democratic Left leadership has once more sold out its membership.

This term's week of action has generally been low-level compared to last term. Many students feel isolated and demoralised. Just as Kinnock and Willis have played a

despicable role in demoralising and weakening the working class as a whole, NUS president Maeve Sherlock and her co-thinkers have done the business on behalf of the government in squandering the militancy and determination of the rank and file in the colleges.

This time last year Socialist Student stood a full slate in the NUS NEC elections. We ran a campaign to turn NUS into a fighting mass-based union. Socialist Student's record is one to be proud of. We have consistently offered a serious alternative to the block of the Democratic Left and Communist Student.

Unlike the SWP and the Militant, Socialist Student does not regard the student movement as a mere recruiting chamber to a particular group, but recognises the importance and potential power of a militant mass movement in fighting the Tories.

The SWP and Militant complain bitterly about the NUS leadership, yet the same SWP and Militant voted for that very leadership at last year's conference. Putting the sectarian desires of their own groups first, the SWP and Militant share responsibility for the Democratic Left leadership of NUS. The DL show little more than contempt for the rank and file of NUS — putting their careers first every time — but the SWP and Militant coldly decided last April to vote for the self-seeking careerists rather than the organised left alternative — Socialist Student — at the expense of the mass movement.

Socialist Student is standing Liz Millward for the National Secretary of NUS in this year's elections. Liz has been a part-time executive member for the last two years and has a strong campaigning record

behind her. She is by far the best candidate in this election.

The alternative is Cosmo Hawkes, an egotistical right-winger, who has repeatedly shown his contempt for the student movement by standing as a joke candidate. Also standing is Joe Marshall, Communist Student, who is probably most noted for his determination to redirect and disperse the students demonstrating on Waterloo Bridge on 24 November.

For Vice-President (Further Education Union Development) Steve Mitchell, an FE student from Manchester, is standing for Socialist Student against Jane Marshall, a self-confessed 'independent' — whatever that means!

We also have five candidates in the part-time elections — Paul McGarry, Emma Colyer, Mischa Eligoloff, Sigrid Fisher and Claire Standing.

The Militant and the SWP are faced with an option — either they vote Democratic Left and get more of the same, or they can vote for the serious organised left candidates in the elections — Socialist Student supporters.

The NUS leadership have squashed and diluted the militancy of last term. We have to make sure that that mood is regenerated. That means building strong activists' groups in the colleges, linking our student unions with the trade unions on and off campus, and tying the struggle against loans to the fight facing the working class against the poll tax, privatisation and the decimation of the NHS.

We can beat the Tories. Nothing is static. The demonstration on Saturday should be the relaunch of massive student fight back against the Tories.

## Two nations, two states!

### Israel/Palestine peace campaign launched

To follow up on the current speaking tour of Britain by Israeli socialist Adam Keller, an ongoing campaign has been launched, and is appealing for support.

The Campaign for Israeli-Palestinian Peace has been founded in solidarity with the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Formed in 1976, ICIPP is active in the wider Israeli Peace Movement, and has consistently advocated talks between Israel and the PLO on the basis of a two state solution to the conflict.

CIPP aims to promote the ideas and aims of ICIPP in Britain. As Israeli repression of the Palestinian *intifada* (uprising) intensifies, it is vital that we make solidarity with both the Palestinians and the Israeli left.

1. CIPP will organise distribution of 'The Other Israel', the ICIPP

journal, in Britain.

2. CIPP will engage in financial and material aid for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and for the Israeli Peace Movement.

3. CIPP will publish its own newsletter. Members will receive this in addition to 'The Other Israel'. It will include reports from the Israeli and Palestinian press, and articles by members.

4. CIPP will arrange meetings between the PLO, members of the Jewish community, and Israeli peace activists.

5. CIPP will publicise the activities of left-wing Oriental Jewish groups in Israel, who are struggling against the stereotype of Oriental Jews being collectively anti-Palestinian.

6. CIPP will challenge both Israeli and Arab chauvinism, maintaining the right of both peoples to self-determination. CIPP is against boycotts of Israeli goods.

7. CIPP will fight anti-Semitism and anti-Arab racism. We reject the idea that Zionism is racism, and other such smears.

8. CIPP will work with similar

groups in Europe and the USA.

9. CIPP will organise political tours of Israel and the Occupied Territories.

We aim to work primarily in the labour movement, the student movement and in both the Jewish and Palestinian communities living in Britain. If you want to take part in the struggle for peace in the Middle East, then join CIPP now.

Contact Ben Cohen, 91 Granville Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6AD.



Adam Keller

# WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

## Muslim woman backs Rushdie



Manchester nurses strike in defence of the NHS, 1988

# Health for sale? No way!

The Tories have unveiled their plans for the NHS — and they make horrendous reading. The intention is to completely restructure the NHS on market lines — good patient care is to be replaced by the criteria of cost-efficiency, strong-management and financial expertise.

The main proposals are:  
• GP practices with over 11,000 patients on their books are to be encouraged to apply for their own budgets. Those who underspend at the end of the year will be allowed to keep half of the money left.

So there will be a disincentive for GPs to take on 'expensive'

patients — the old, the disable, the chronically sick. Patients needing high cost drugs are likely to be switched to cheaper and possibly less appropriate ones. Doctors will be forced to 'shop around' for 'cheap' and 'efficient' hospital treatment — often meaning patients will be admitted to hospitals far away from their homes.

• Echoing the Tories education policy, hospitals will be allowed to 'opt out' — to become self-governing enclaves within the NHS. Funding will be from borrowing (from the government and the private sector). They will then sell their services to GPs, Health Authorities and other hospitals.

Not only will this be bad for patient care, but bad for NHS

workers. National pay bargaining will go out of the window. Efficiency will mean attacks on pay and conditions. Union-busting will be the order of the day.

According to the latest reports opting out can be proposed by any group. It will then be referred to the Minister of Health, who will make the final decision. There will be no ballot.

• The 'medical audit'. An audit could be used to make sure health care is of the best quality available. But now the criteria will be patient turnover and management expertise. Consultants will be kept in line by the use of 'merit payments'. These will be up for review every 5 years and to get them consultants will have to

"demonstrate their commitment to the management and development of the service" — that is, put cost-effectiveness before patients.

We can't let them get away with it. Labour Party Women's Sections should organise marches and rallies, public meetings, lobbies of health authorities, pickets of doctors surgeries against self-budgeting.

The Tory's policies on the NHS are extremely unpopular. The Labour leadership and the union fat cats have allowed the government to chip away at the NHS for 10 years. Enough is enough. We can and should channel the real anger which does exist into a mass campaign to save our NHS.

I am writing to you to say how horrified I am by the campaign against 'The Satanic Verses' presently being organised by various Muslim fundamentalist groups. I am even more appalled by the Ayatollah Khomeini's "sentence of death" upon the book's author, Salman Rushdie.

I have not read the book, but from the extracts I have read (ironically, circulated by people from my local Mosque urging us not to read the book!) it seems obvious that it is an honest and serious piece of literature that raises quite reasonable points about the nature of all religions and the role that religion plays in people's lives. If the mullahs and zealots don't like the book, let them debate the matter in public instead of burning it and threatening the life of its author.

I understand that 'The Satanic Verses' also makes some very critical comments about Islam's treatment of women. It is about time that this matter was brought out into the open.

As a Muslim woman, I have been fortunate to grow up in a relatively easy-going household, but even so I often feel very restricted. Many Muslim women lead terribly suppressed lives, trapped in domestic situations that should not be tolerated in any civilised society. It is noticeable that all the protests against the book that I have seen or heard about have been entirely male. Perhaps some Muslim men fear the consequences of a public exposure of the way they use Islam to justify their treatment of women.

I have not been very interested in politics until recently, but I always looked to Labour as 'my' party. I am very disappointed that the leadership of the Labour Party has so far remained silent on this issue. Worse still, we have seen some Labour MPs and councillors giving support to the book-burners.

The Labour Party should be organising full support for Salman Rushdie, defending free speech and publicly condemning the book burners — especially when they are Labour Party representatives!

Mrs Thatcher's government seems to be determined to make Britain a less tolerant and less democratic place to live in at the moment. It is very sad to see sections of the Asian community now copying Mrs Thatcher's methods and attempting to further restrict free speech. This short-sighted attitude will surely rebound in all our faces sooner or later.

Already, racists are using this issue to stir up hatred against all Asians and to divide us from ordinary white people who should be our allies against Thatcher.

As I said, I have not read 'The Satanic Verses'. I am sure that most of the book-burners haven't read it either. The difference between them and me is that in my ignorance, I say let freedom to write, read and argue prevail. In their ignorance, they say let ignorance prevail!

I now fully intend to read the book which I probably wouldn't have even heard of were it not for the campaign against it. I will let you know my opinion of it when I've read it.

**Ruksana Khan,  
Sparkhill, Birmingham**

# Solidarity with Iranian women

**Another International Women's Day is approaching, and Iranian women are still living under the most barbaric conditions recent history has witnessed.**

During the past 10 years, since the overthrow of the Shah's regime by a popular movement, the situation of women in Iran has gone from bad to worse.

The Islamic regime, using the Islamic ideology as an excuse for its repressive measures imposed on the whole of society, has given itself the right to intervene in the most basic rights of people, especially women, who are officially considered second class, and half a man.

Women, who after the revolution had started to organise themselves and put forward new demands, were the first to be attacked. After a long struggle, they not only failed to gain any new rights, but lost a lot of what they had won by struggle during the rule of the previous regime.

Using Islamic teachings, the regime started repealing women's legal rights, such as the right to divorce, child custody, abortion, contraception, etc. Instead, they imposed one of the most barbaric and brutal laws, the infamous law of retribution which completely undermines the position of women as human beings.

According to this law, the husband is allowed to kill his 'adulterous' wife and not be punished. If not killed by the husband, the law rules that the woman and the man involved be stoned to death.

Flogging is the softer sentence for lesbians and prostitutes, etc.

In case of rape, although the law considers it not to be the women's fault, she has to prove that she has been forced and, almost always, unless she can provide two male witnesses or four women witnesses, she becomes guilty of adultery and therefore is sentenced to death. In all cases, testimony of two women equals that of one man.

This law is just one part of a system which makes women's lives a misery. To better understand the present situation of women in Iran, we have to look at the women's situation under the Shah's regime and see how their condition has changed.

The Shah's regime, as part of its social and economic reforms to establish Iran as one of the allies of the West, and to show its march towards the "great civilisation", gave women some legal rights. There even existed a women's organisation, chaired by the Shah's sister, which was supposed to defend women's rights and enlighten them.

The reality of women's lives was that the vast majority of them could not benefit from the "freedom" given by the regime.

Girls generally were being brought up in traditional families with patriarchal and backward culture. Hence, especially in working class and poorer families, education for girls was available, at best, up to secondary school. Firstly, because too much education was seen to be harmful for women, and secondly, even if they were allowed further education, they could not afford it.

Most married women were financially dependent on their husbands and because of a lack of protection from the law, society in general, or even their families, they had to stay in unwanted marriages, and make what they could of their lives. In practice, they could not use the right to divorce.

Women were underpaid and treated unjustly at work. Sexual harassment was an accepted condition of work.

The picture of women's situation

in Iran was similar to that of many other underdeveloped countries. Despite all this, many women, mostly educated and coming from middle class families, had started to assert themselves in the social life of the country.

More and more women were taking up further education. Having a career and financial independence was the next step. Girls would not easily be persuaded to go into arranged marriages and wanted to decide their own future.

These women had a difficult fight on their hands, but were gradually making these wishes the norm. The greatest shortcoming women had was lack of any women's organisations, or any sort of organised movement. Whatever was done, was purely based on individual efforts.

During the rise of the popular movement against the Shah's regime, women joined the ranks of the movement in their thousands. But lack of organisation and a clear picture of their demands and what they expected from the revolution, pushed them to a situation where their demands as women were never raised. Instead of organising themselves and putting forward

their demands, to show their support for the revolution they wore the veil and demanded the Shah's downfall.

With the downfall of the regime, a number of women's organisations were formed. Many of these were offshoots of the existing political organisations, and almost none had a clear understanding of the situation of women, their demands, and how to organise around them.

Right from the beginning, the new regime made its position on women's issues clear. Women were to wear the veil and obey the Islamic code of conduct. On the 8 March 1977, women organised a mass demonstration in celebration of International Women's Day, and protested against the new rulings. This demonstration was heavily attacked by the Islamic thugs and hardly supported by the so-called 'vanguard' organisations, who saw the demonstration as an untimely act, and mainly composed of bourgeois women.

There were many other demonstrations and protests by women, but as the months went by women's organisations, due to their lack of tactics and solidarity, became weaker and eventually were

completely wiped out by the regime.

Women were once again left to their own devices to fight for their rights. Now it was not only the backward culture and male, it was the force of a regime which wanted to impose its Islamic ideology in its most brutal forms upon them. Women not obeying the new rule were sacked from their jobs, publicly humiliated, lashed — and even executed.

The ongoing war with Iraq meant even more pressure for women. Food rationing, soaring black market prices and long queues meant hours of extra work and tremendous hardship. But the real tragedy could be seen with the women whose husbands were killed in the war. A great number of them who had no income and nowhere to go were housed in common residences. They were under constant pressure from the thugs and were forced into prostitution, in what is called Islamic temporary marriage.

These common residences were turned into brothels for soldiers. The rate of suicide among these women was very high. Women were told that they should encourage their husbands to marry the war widows and not be selfish.

Women political prisoners have been subjected to the most brutal torture. Young girls are raped before their execution to make sure they do not go to heaven. The list of tragedies happening inside Iranian prisons is endless, and only history will reveal what went on behind those walls.

Despite all the unbearable pressure, women have continued their resistance. During the past 10 years, women have learnt a great deal about their situation and their power and are more than ever ready to fight for their rights as they do not have much to lose.

But there are no women's organisations to concentrate all this energy, to give it direction, to organise the protests and push for common demands.

One reason why there is no women's movement is that the regime has managed to suppress all opposition organisations, be they political, democratic, religious or nationalist. Almost all the people active in such organisations have either been executed, imprisoned, fled the country or live in hiding. The same goes for women's organisations, and those active in them.

As a result, setting up an active



Iranian women revolutionary guards

# Build a campaigning women's movement!

As we go to press the first national conference of Women for Socialism is about to take place. Women for Socialism was formed at the first Socialist Conference in Chesterfield, out of the need felt by many women for a socialist-feminist movement.

As women face attacks from the Tories and passive complacency from the predominantly male labour movement leadership, the need for us to organise and fight back is pressing. This means not only knowing what we are fighting against, but full and open discussion to clarify how we go about it, and a learning from past experiences — successes and failures.

Below we reprint a selection from papers to be presented to the conference.

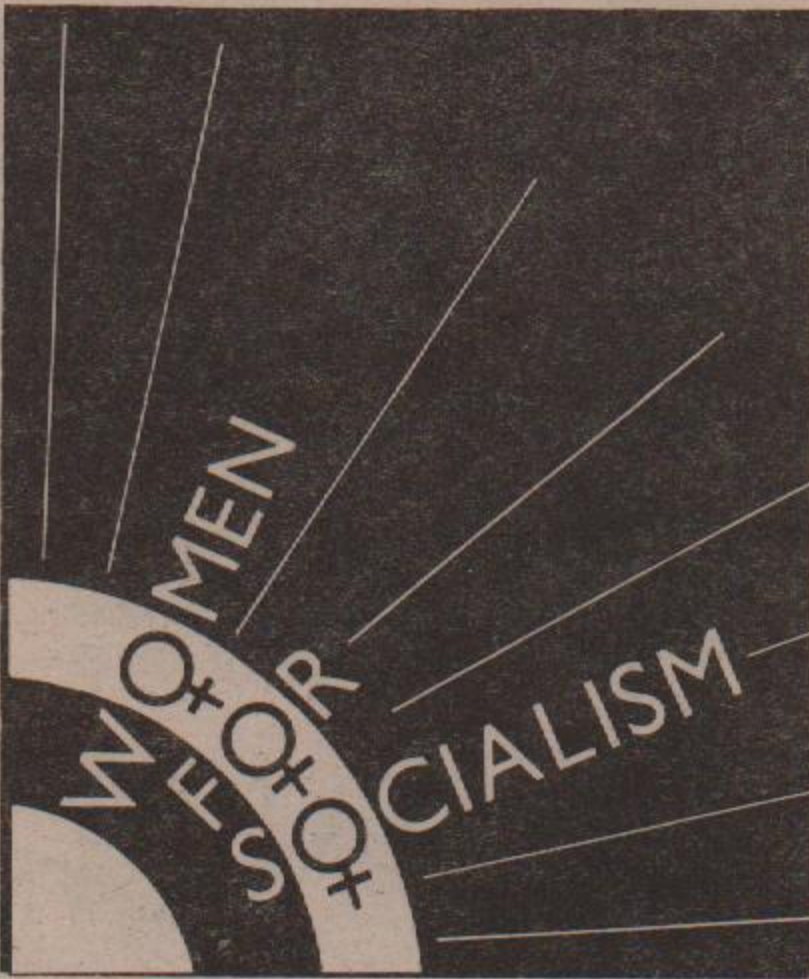
The next Women's Fightback will include a series of reports about the conference.

## Liz Williams, Wirral Women's Council

Women for Socialism was formed at the first Socialist Conference in November 1987. It came from a general regrouping of the left, particularly in the Labour Party, who saw the need to build a fighting alternative to the politics of Kinnock, which are increasingly anti-working class and becoming more like the individualistic US-style of organising.

It is recognised by all on the left that we must fight to get rid of the Tories now — not merely wait for the next general election, and in the meantime kowtow to the Tories' laws. And it is also widely recognised that we cannot be satisfied with replacing Thatcher's Tory government with a Labour one under Kinnock's leadership: that we must fight to create a Labour Party which is democratic, accountable, and based on the principles of socialism and women's liberation, and which is dedicated to class struggle as the only means to achieve these ends.

At a time when the Labour Party and trade unions are becoming more and more bureaucratised, moving away from basic socialist principles towards a watered-down Toryism, and are openly witch-hunting those that disagree with them, we have two choices: either, as some sections of the left argue, to leave, in particular the Labour Party, and form a new political party, thereby abandoning the working class to the Kinnocks and Willises; or to fight and change the labour movement as the most powerful



potential force that exists presently that could fight for women's liberation.

The lack of participation which has been fostered by the leaderships of both the trade unions and the Labour Party must be ended. They know that a real fight for women's rights will mean an active involvement by the rank and file, which will undermine their control and power. We must regenerate the labour movement, gearing it so that it fights for women's liberation and socialism. The commitment to women's rights that already exists — however feeble — must be put to our advantage.

We hope that Women for Socialism will help build and take forward the work that has already been done. It should not be counterposed to other, single issue, campaigns and campaigns outside the labour movement, but might help to draw together some common threads between the necessarily specialised work each of them is doing, and to build local activist networks of support.

The disintegration of the

women's movement left many women to work in isolation in their trade unions and Labour Parties: so we need a vehicle to build a coordinated campaign focused both politically and organisationally on the labour movement: a campaign which will go on the offensive against the Tories but at the same time fight for all those policies which are vital in the struggle for women's liberation and socialism. Women for Socialism can be that vehicle.

Therefore, Women for Socialism must:

- Be seen as the political alternative to both Kinnockite and WAC politics in the Labour Party. We must continue to take on the constitutional issues of democracy and equality, as the Women's Sections in the Labour Party have done for the last eight years. But, on its own, this is not enough.

- We must couple that with actively building the Women's Sections. We should encourage Women's Sections to affiliate to Women for Socialism so that we can build a national campaign in the party. We must argue for the Women's Sections to turn outwards so that they campaign around the issues relevant to women: on housing estates against the Housing Act and the Poll Tax; in the community against the cuts and closure of nurseries and other services; on the picket lines in support of those who are taking up the fight, eg the health workers; against deportations; against attacks on lesbian and gay rights.

- In this way we can build a large, militant section of working class women in the party which will add weight to the demands for democracy and accountability.

- We must also build women's sections in the unions around demands

for a greater involvement of working women in their unions, for a commitment from the unions to fight both for an improvement in the working conditions of women workers and for an end to sexual discrimination at work and in the labour movement.

- While the major focus of Women for Socialism should be in the organised labour movement — the Labour Party and trade unions — we should invite affiliations from other groups of women actively campaigning; especially black women's groups, campaigns against deportations, lesbian groups etc.

- We should aim to bring together all these groups which want to fight for women's liberation and for socialism into a broad, united campaigning body, acting as a bridge between the labour movement and the communities.

- To this end, we should produce a regular newsletter/broadsheet to which all campaigns, women's groups and sections can contribute, this to be organised by the steering committee.

- As part of the Socialist Conference, we must work together with them, building united campaigns, while still retaining our autonomy.

**For more information about Women for Socialism write to Ruth Clarke, 7 Cumberland Park, London W3 6SY. Or join — £5 waged/£2 unwaged, student.**

## Aims and objectives

1. Women for Socialism is an autonomous women's organisation affiliated to the Socialist Conference. Membership is open to all women who agree with actively supporting its aims.
2. Women for Socialism defines itself as a socialist-feminist organisation: socialist in that it does not believe capitalism can be reformed, but must be replaced by a socialist system; and feminist in that the oppression of women has to be directly opposed by women's self-organisation. Women for Socialism does not subordinate its feminism to its socialism nor its socialism to its feminism. Women for Socialism's socialist-feminism is anti-racist, anti-imperialist, anti-heterosexist, and anti-ablist.

3. Women for Socialism believes that women must organise autonomously to ensure that their interests as women are never subordinated to other struggles, while making alliances with other groups to effect change. Likewise Women for Socialism supports the rights of other oppressed groups to organise autonomously. Women for Socialism advocates positive action for women and all different groups of women who are particularly oppressed and practices positive action itself.

4. Women for Socialism recognises that not all women's interests are the same though all women are oppressed and exploited by sexism. It is in all women's interests to oppose capitalism and its attendant supremacist ideologies — racism, imperialism, heterosexism

and ablist.

5. Women for Socialism recognises that its members will reflect a wide variety of political views and believes diversity and democratic debate to be vitally important.

6. Women for Socialism aims to popularise these socialist-feminist ideas amongst all women and to develop policy and promote action on this basis. Women for Socialism works to:

- (a) unite in common action women within the labour movement and women outside the labour movement;
- (b) build support in the Women's, Black, Lesbian and Gay Liberation Movements and in the Irish community.
- (c) build support for the demands of these movements inside the labour movement.

## 'The case for socialist feminism'

**A new pamphlet coming from Women's Fightback. 75p plus postage from WF, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA**

1. We aim to build a mass campaign of action against the major attacks being mounted on women's rights, such as the right to control our own fertility, the right to health and childcare facilities, the right to work, the right to live in this country with the partner of our choice, the right to maternity leave and job security for mothers, the right to wages, benefits and legal status independent of a man, the right to organise as trade unionists and as women.

These rights and many other, many not yet won or consolidated, must be defended and extended in face of the onslaught against women by this government.

2. Such a mass campaign has to be part of a labour movement response to the Tory attacks. We aim to provide a focus for united action by women already organised in the labour movement and in campaigns and groups of the women's move-

## Where we stand

ment, and to involve women who do not relate to these movements.

3. We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for it to take our needs as a priority. We will encourage and aid the organisation and consciousness of women as women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.

We fight to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and for positive discrimination and changes in arrangements and practices to enable women to play a full

part at all levels. We fight for the implementation of the TUC Charter of Women in the unions.

We fight against the labour movement's reflecting in any way the oppressive ideas about a woman's role, which can undermine women's ability to fight back, and dangerously divide the movement. We ally with all those fighting for rank and file control, democracy and accountability, against those who hold back and sell out our fight. Never again a 'Labour' government that ignores party decisions, serves the bosses and bankers, and beats down workers' living standards and struggles.

4. We aim to co-ordinate and assist those women in the Labour Party, and the trade unions, who are fighting for these aims.

5. We are for direct action, solidarity as women and as workers, and for maximum mobilisation for all actions against the capitalist system that exploits and oppresses us.

women's organisation with popular support, under present circumstances, is almost an impossibility. However, the eventual face with Iraq and the end of the war, may change the situation favourably, since the regime will have to ease off the present social pressure to be able to carry out its restoration programme. This may well prepare the ground for opposition organisations to be set up.

Now more than ever we, as Iranian women living abroad, need to organise ourselves. We have two major tasks in hand. One, to organise campaigns in support of Iranian women's struggles and oppose the brutal treatment of them by the regime. And, second, to raise about the women's question as a whole, and Iranian women in particular, in order to be able to contribute to the women's movement in Iran.

The women's section of the Campaign Against Repression in Iran (CARI) has taken up the first task. In the women's section aim to draw people's attention — and particularly women — the situation of Iranian women, and to mobilise solidarity with them.

Mehrzad,  
CARI Women's Section

# "...No revolution without women's liberation"

## Women and Class

**Penny Newell takes a look at women's oppression in the past and present and concludes patriarchy alongside capitalism is a primary cause of women's oppression**

I'm only 5ft 1½ins tall, but if I piled up all the books I have on women and feminism and stood on them, I could touch the ceiling of my living room — paint it even. That's a lot of books.

I have many more novels involving women, written by women, enough to pile up and reach my third floor flat if the need ever arose. Yet I'm still confused about women and class. Here's the contradictions.

Get a group of women together anywhere — a mix of any old ideology, and they will have a good beef about men. Men are hopeless/stupid or both, they will say. Revolutionary socialist feminists do the same. They don't prefix the statement with "It's because of capitalism that John never cleans the loo/is boring as hell."

So I have this problem in my head. I have no choice but to be involved, and believe in, the class struggle, yet I'm not fully convinced that men will change with the overthrow of capitalism. Why? I suppose it's because so many of them act so badly towards women now and claim to be socialists.

So is the prime cause of women's oppression capitalism or patriarchy? Is it capital or men that make up our problem? It's clear to me that patriarchy serves the needs of capitalism. Give me five good reasons why it couldn't serve the needs of socialism just as well.

Take women in paid work. There is a sexual segregation that keeps the vast majority of women in low-paid, unskilled jobs. Over the past 100 years this segregation has increased.

Now that is the result of capitalism, you might say — the bosses want a reserve army of labour, workers who can be shunted back into the home when not needed.

But that doesn't completely answer the question why women end up at the bottom of the pile, why they are the reserve army, not men. Capitalist employers don't worry about 'the family' when they want cheap labour and there's lots of examples where employers have replaced 'expensive' men by cheaper women. So why don't they just go for women as the main, cheapest labour and ditch the men and make them the reserve army. A clue can be found, I think, in the trade unions' history.

Male workers have consistently fought to keep women out: journeyman tailors in the 1820s and 30s, for example. "The men are as bad as their masters," complained a woman worker to the Owenite newspaper in the 1830s, and we are still saying it: "Men are all the same."

Jumping on a hundred years, in 1920 the National Union of Teachers' newspaper, The School Master, removed an ad for equal

scale salaries for women and men teachers. As the National Union of Women Teachers pointed out at the time, the ad that had appeared in previous issues might have been insincere, but by removing it the NUT gave a very clear signal to the employers that they had no serious intention of fighting for equal pay.

Interestingly, the internal reason for this decision was to attract more male members from the National Union of Schoolmasters. Yet the NAS had split from the NUT because the majority of NUT members were women, and the union was dominated by women, they said! Sort that one out!

It's all about keeping the men happy, I think. Sometimes called patriarchy.

Let's jump again to 1988, the P&O dispute. Sam McCluskie spoke at NALGO conference on behalf of the sacked men of the National Union of Seamen. We had an NUS woman striker called Becky at the conference, and she was furious. At a fringe meeting she spoke at she pointed out that the president had excluded them from the union and hadn't recognised them as strikers in his speech.

Of course, there have been famous exceptions, like the London dockers' support for the struggles of women workers in the 1880s. The exceptions are thin on the ground, though.

Does it matter to capitalists who they employ? Is capitalism sex blind? Surely it just wants cheap workers and high profits. So is it patriarchy that is helping to segregate the workforce? Heterosexual men benefit by their partners minding the home and children, and keeping women out of their well-paid jobs. Capitalism joins in because the situation suits it too. But does it lead?

When cheap labour is wanted in the world, any sex will do. Former black women slaves in the US could have testified to that. When nurses were wanted here, black women were recruited from the Caribbean. The government didn't fret about them leaving their children behind to be brought up by reluctant aunts and grandmothers back home. The family didn't have priority over labour needs then.

Most Marxists will say that the class struggle is the basis for the overthrow of capitalism. If working class means everyone without capital, as Clause 4 of the Labour Party still says, "worker by hand or brain", then all those jibes about middle class women must be ditched immediately.

Or if the term working class is more tightly defined by job status, or lack of it, surely as there are more women in low paid jobs they should be the central pivot of all revolutionary socialist vanguards. Aren't they the majority that will create the change?

But they aren't in trade unions often, so have no access to recognising their collective potential for change. So it's back to the white, male dominated trade unions again.

However much the government doctors the unemployment figures, we know that there are less women in paid work than men, and women make up 52% of the population, so they must make up the majority of unemployed people. Quite frankly, I think it's dead fishy that women as the majority in the class struggle aren't paid more attention. To revive an old slogan:

"There will be no women's liberation without revolution. There will be no revolution without women's liberation."

I think patriarchy is a bit like VD. Every time a drug is invented to kill VD, it develops a resistance and starts to thrive again. I'm still not convinced that after the revolution I won't get VD or a dose of patriarchy.



A young girl working in a US cotton mill c1900 as cheap labour. Is this the result of capitalism or patriarchy?

## Busworkers win day off for periods

### Work A woman's place

By Frances Albin

**Workers in Camberwell bus garage, many of them women, came out on strike two weeks ago over a new garage manager who had been moved in there to do a job on the union — paving the way for the selling-off of bus routes and garages.**

No sooner was he in there than he started ripping up local and London-wide agreements and coming down heavily on discipline over sick records.

One of the London-wide agreements that he decided he was going to ignore was one which says that women workers are entitled to one day off each month for menstrual problems, without it affecting their sick record: women don't get paid for that day, but it can't be used in disciplinary action against them.

ed in disciplinary action against them.

As I understand it, such an agreement is quite rare in most workplaces. Women are usually made to feel that their periods are one reason why they are unsuitable for certain, particularly traditionally 'male' jobs. But what ought to happen is that menstruation is taken account of so that women can take part in a normal working life.

Ripping up this agreement on London buses would mean women driving with severe headaches, stomach cramps or any other of the symptoms their periods give them, which, when you have responsibility for up to 70 people's lives in your hands, is no joke.

The Camberwell workers won their dispute, and the garage manager had to back-track on all the things he was out to attack. And the women kept their right to one day a month off for menstrual problems. Now we must fight to get it as a paid day off! Why should we be penalised for problems beyond our control. The rest of the trade union movement should also be fighting for such agreements for their women members, if they are serious about fighting for equality.

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## STUDENT WOMEN

# York women students show the way

By Claire Standing, North Yorkshire Area NUS Convenor

International Women's Week (March 6-10) should be the ideal focus for activating women's campaigns, not only in the colleges but also in the community and the Labour Party. The response of NUS Women's Campaign, however, is to call a one-day 'briefing' in London. All well and good if you happen to be a HE student in London, but useless if you are a FE student or VIth form student in York.

The North Yorkshire Area Women's Campaign have taken a radically different approach because we believe that we must turn NUS away from the idea that women's liberation is something that only happens in the cosy confines of a campus women's group.

The Area Women's campaign is co-ordinated by a fortnightly women's network which not only links up women students but also women's groups in the community. So far this year we've had meetings on Women and the Poll Tax with York Women's Aid, meetings on reproductive rights with the Reproductive Rights Campaign and the National Abortion Campaign; on women and safer sex.

For Women's Week we've organised a Reclaim the Night march to highlight the issue of women's safety and to make demands for better street lighting and free rape alarms.

We will be touring a women's school around the colleges with basic information on women's health, Rape Crisis centres etc. The main focus of this women's roadshow is for a Women's Fightback speaking tour which will be covering most of the colleges in our area. This speaker tour will be used as a launch pad for a sexual harassment campaign at the York VIth Form college and to set up a Women for Socialism group in York which will link up women from the Labour Club and women in the Labour Party.

The NUS Women's Campaign should follow our example to turn the campaign outwards and build an active Women's Campaign.