

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

### International links vital

International links will be vital for the dockers' strike. The port bosses have already shown, during the unofficial strike, that they aim to get round the dockers by unloading cargoes in Rotterdam or elsewhere on the continent, breaking them down, and bringing them in to Britain in smaller loads. Only solidarity action by continental dockers can stop this.

And dockers from different countries have a direct interest in mutual solidarity. In Spain and Italy port bosses have already done what they are planning to do in Britain. In France port bosses have announced that they plan to do the same — after Britain's dockers are defeated.

There can be little doubt that port bosses are coordinating their tactics internationally. If the dockers of different countries fight separately, then the odds will be tilted against them.

Unless dockers unite across national borders, the future is one of "whipsawing", with ports continually being beaten down to the wages and conditions of the cheapest.

United we stand, divided we fall!

# Victory to the dockers!

**T**he battle is on. After four months of delay, a national official docks strike got underway this Tuesday, 11 July.

The strike is solid and the dockers have a far greater chance of success than the hostile propaganda from the media would have us believe.

Thatcher is in a weak position. The war cabinet convened last week under her leadership is a sign of weakness, not strength.

It reflects a crisis in the government as they attempt to deal with four major problems: the mounting strike wave, inflation and public spending problems and their declining fortune in the polls. Their attempts to buy off the railworkers' leaders are a sign of this weakness.

The port bosses' claims are hollow. It will not be as easy as they pretend for them to weather a strike. Although they have had four months to perfect their strike-breaking plans, an effective national strike will quickly start to bite hard.

Two thirds of Britain's exports and imports still pass through former Scheme ports, and it is difficult for the port bosses to develop an effective alternative system for many bulk cargoes.

Their highly publicised attempts to re-route container traffic will not solve the problems of moving such things as bulk chemicals and iron ore, vital for industrial production.

If the dockers pile on the pressure they can win.

The decision of the unofficial National Ports Shop Stewards' Committee to visit continental ports this week to drum up support is an excellent initiative, as is their commitment to organising flying pickets to make the strike solid if necessary.

Ron Todd and the T&G leadership should be the ones prepared to take such a lead. They should put the T&G full square behind the ac-



tions the stewards take to make the strike effective.

Ron Todd should stick by his threat to the port employers at this year's T&G conference: "If you sack any dockers, you will have a dispute the likes of which you have never seen...there will be no resolution of our dispute until every dockworker is reinstated and an agreement is negotiated nationally."

The central task now is to unite behind an effective strike. The port bosses may again try to use the law to club dockworkers into submission. If this happens dockers will be faced with the clear choice of spreading the action — or giving in without a serious fight.

There are several things that can

and should be organised now:

- Build an effective national strike.
- Elect strike committees to get mass involvement in the dispute.
- Approach non-registered dockers for a commitment not to handle redirected cargoes, and dockers in Europe for support.
- Approach transport workers for boycott action — railworkers, lorry drivers, NUS members.
- Set up 'propaganda committees' to counter Tory lies about 'jobs for life', etc., organise tours of Labour Party and trade union branches to put across the arguments and win support.
- Build support committees to pull the rest of the labour movement behind the dockers.

• Trades councils should set up co-ordinating committees to link together the actions of the dockers with those of all the other groups of workers being drawn into action.

• Finally, the Labour Party should put itself full square behind the dockers. Neil Kinnock should make a clear pledge that the next Labour government will re-introduce the Dock Labour Scheme and extend it to all ports.

There must be no sitting on the fence or equivocation. Kinnock must back all the actions of the dockers in their strike. The NEC should strongly recommend every affiliated organisation to mobilise the maximum physical, financial and industrial support for the dockers.

### The bosses' charter

Nothing underlines the need for a decent national agreement than the new contracts sent out by Associated British Ports to dockers last week.

Under this contract:

- Dockers can be sacked at a week's notice.
- pay and conditions can be imposed at a month's notice.
- Dockers face "summary dismissal" for "insubordination", "persistent disobedience" and "wilful disclosure of information detrimental to the company". In fact, they can be sacked for anything that management want to define as an offence.

- All job distinctions are to be abolished. Management will have the right to order dockers to do any job they may tell them.

### Strange things in Denmark

Strange things are happening in the Danish port of Esbjerg. British workers have been seen training how to use sophisticated dockside machinery.

After contacting British dockers, the Danes have promised to block this scab training operation.

We can expect similar strike-breaking dirty deeds to be underway elsewhere. Militant dockers should be thinking about mass pickets and even occupations to stop any scabbing.

# George Galloway MP: apology

In the issue of the Socialist Organiser on 4 August 1988 an article was published entitled "Labour's MI5?" in which a letter, now known and accepted to be a forgery, was printed purporting to be sent from Mr Galloway stating that he had compiled and computerised a list of hard left activists in breach of the Data Protection Act in order to conduct a witch-hunt against his political opponents. In the following edition of the Socialist Organiser published on 11 August, the allegations were repeated although Mr Galloway's letter of denial was published.

The Socialist Organiser and John O'Mahony as Editor now fully accept that the allegations were untrue and should never have been published. The letter referred to is

acknowledged to be a forgery. We accept that Mr Galloway has at all times behaved in a wholly honourable manner and had nothing whatsoever to do with the forged letter we published.

We were mistaken to publish it or suggest otherwise. We wish to make a complete withdrawal of the defamatory statements and to apologise to Mr Galloway for the distress and embarrassment which the publications have caused. Further John O'Mahony has undertaken not to repeat these statements and has agreed to pay Mr Galloway a suitable sum by way of damages and his legal costs incurred in this matter. On this basis Mr Galloway has graciously accepted to regard the matter as closed.

## The Soviet Disunion

By Stan Crooke

**A**lthough the ethnic clashes which flared up at the beginning of June in the Soviet central Asian republic of Uzbekistan seem to have died down, for the time being at least, ethnic unrest has now surfaced in the neighbouring republic of Kazakhstan, and is threatening to do so in Moldavia.

In Uzbekistan a series of bloody clashes last month between native Uzbeks and the Turkish Meskhetian minority (deported to the republic by Stalin in 1944) resulted in a hundred deaths, over a thousand people injured, 300 million rubles worth of damage, and the evacuation of 15,000 Meskhetians.

Then clashes broke out in Kazakhstan. Indigenous Kazaks attacked immigrants from the Transcaucasus (itself recently the scene of ethnic clashes). The deployment of troops and imposition of a curfew gradually restored order, but only after four deaths and over fifty injured.

At the same time up to 40,000 people marched in the Moldavian capital of Kishinev, "mourning" the creation of their republic (consisting largely of land seized from Rumania by Stalin in 1940), and demanding the use of Moldavian as the official republican language and the replacement of the Cyrillic script (as used in Russian) by the Latin script.

Ethnic hostilities were clearly one factor behind the clashes in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan the targets of the pogroms were mainly Armenians and Azeris (from Azerbaidzhan) who are disproportionately represented in the more privileged jobs in the oil sector and in the "co-operative sector" of the economy which, being effectively privatised, is notorious for charging high prices.

But the ethnic hostility is also closely related to more general economic and social problems in the two republics.

Uzbekistan's economy is based on cotton, which has flourished at the expense of the cultivation of fruit and vegetables. Recent mechanisation of the cotton industry has resulted in a high level of unemployment. Chemical fertilisers used in the cotton plantations are also blamed for the high level of infant mortality in the republic.

Kazakhstan likewise suffers from a series of economic imbalances, resulting in poor food supplies and frequent rationing, poor social

amenities, and a growing level of unemployment. Attempts to diversify the economy have failed to solve the economic problems whilst simultaneously provoking ethnic hostilities, as labour from elsewhere in the USSR was imported to operate new industries.

Corruption is also a prominent feature of both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, even by Soviet standards. Uzbekistan has the reputation of being the most corrupt republic in the Soviet Union after Georgia. Kazakhstan was the scene of widespread rioting in 1986 when a local leading bureaucrat was removed and replaced by a Russian as part of Gorbachev's "clean-up" campaign.

Various explanations have been put forward as to the more precise reasons for the sudden upsurge of violence in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan at this moment in time.

Reports in the Soviet press, for example, have claimed that a "Pan-Islamic" front in Uzbekistan launched the attacks on the Meskhetians after the latter had refused to throw their lot in with the front in a united effort to drive Russians out of the republic.

According to Pulatov, a leader of the unofficial Birluk movement in Uzbekistan, on the other hand, the unrest was organised and financed by local mafioso leaders who have seen their ill-gotten gains falling off in value as a result of successive anti-corruption drives.

Other explanations have attributed the unrest to the influence of Khomeini-style Islamic fundamentalism, whilst some coverage in the Soviet press has also wheeled out the standard references to "nationalist extremists" and "drunks, drug-addicts and hooligans" (which, in fact, explains nothing at all).

The precise combination of factors — it seems fair enough to assume that more than one factor was involved — which produced the recent clashes in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan remains unclear, but the basic trend of the events is clearer: towards the break up of the Soviet Union. Since Gorbachev came to power and reduced the level of repression, waves of discontent, pushing for more autonomy from the central government in Moscow, have swept through the country, from the Baltic states through the Transcaucasus to Central Asia.

Although the Soviet "Union" is held together only by bonds of national oppression, its collapse into a myriad of mutually hostile principalities would hardly be a step forward. But in the absence of the emergence of a genuinely socialist movement in the Soviet Union, this is the price which will end up being paid for the rule of Stalinism.



## Socialism is on the agenda!

**Moses Mayekiso is general secretary of the metalworkers' union NUMSA in South Africa. He has recently been released from jail after being put on trial for 'treason' because of his part in organising the black township of Alexandra, near Johannesburg.**

**The interview with him is abridged from the South African magazine 'Work in Progress'.**

**D**uring the uprisings in 1986, the state resorted to military occupation of the townships and declared a state of emergency.

This action went hand in glove with police brutality, restrictions, banning orders, the murder of activists by unknown murder squads, vigilante activities and other repressive measures which enabled the state to crush the organs of people's power.

But the revolutionary spirit of the working class is still very much alive. The welcome we received by the people in Alex and their enthusiasm to start building again has proved this.

Prior to our detention, Cosatu was still new and finding its feet. Things were not clear on which direction to take. Now we have resolutions on how to practically move forward, to restructure community organisations and build alliances. Also, political organisations and trade unions are coming together in a more non-sectarian

spirit. We must be careful this time to move slowly and build firmly.

The state is using the Brazilian option — taking leaders out of communities, trying to buy the hearts and minds of people by pumping money in and trying to improve living conditions — trying to bribe the community.

But this has not worked. Living conditions in the community as a whole have not changed. The shanty dwellers are still there — they have no taps, toilets or electricity.

They are also selling stands to whoever is prepared to buy them.

The yard where I lived in Alex has been sold and the room I was occupying for R7 a month is going for R35 a month.

The state has seen that it cannot force high rents on people so it has thrown the ball in the stand-owners' court. We are worried that the stand-owners and the tenants will not see eye to eye in rent boycotts. Conditions are in fact worse. Previously we co-operated with each other and organised ourselves to improve the situation. But now there is no immediate resistance.

When we were acquitted, people expected us to go back to Alex immediately, and start forming the Alexandra Action Committee (AAC) and embark on radical action. But we now prefer to crawl before we can walk.

We are definitely going back there. But for my part, it is obviously not wise for me to just jump into an open house and make myself vulnerable to attacks. Although we could be killed anywhere, we would still like to feel secure, especially to feel a bit relaxed when we sleep at night. So our houses must be secure before we move in.

We are already involved in a process of reviving the AAC. But as I said, we must move slowly and more steadily.

Like it or not, negotiations are taking place in some form at different levels, and there are feelers on negotiations on a broader level. As yet there is no set programme around this. But a process is taking place.

In our situation I don't think we will ever be able to march to

Pretoria with arms and take over. We have to be realistic.

The Thatchers and the Reagans, together with the SADF, will not make a revolutionary takeover possible. The frontline states and even the Soviets are backing a negotiated settlement for South Africa.

But what type of negotiations, and on what conditions, are things we have to think about carefully. Our situation is similar to the Namibian situation, except maybe we won't be as disadvantaged as the Namibians, who did not even participate in the negotiation process.

We must go to the negotiating table from a position of power, with all our organisations — they have to be unbanned first.

It will be a battle to even go to the negotiating table. We will have to pressurise them (the state).

In all class struggles you will find people who are enemies but who pretend to be our friends and have their own tactics to buy the working class.

If we want to undercut the power of the state we might be forced to make tactical alliances with other classes and other people closely linked to some state structures. But in doing so we must not compromise our principles.

If we go into these alliances ignorant, we could betray the class struggle and socialism. Therefore we must clearly state our interests, the interests of the working class — that is, socialism. To shy away from talking about socialism because we might alienate some people is hypocrisy. To say socialism is not on the agenda, that the youth and workers are not ready for socialism, is a betrayal of the working class.

As I see it, and as the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) sees it, the way forward is to build solid organisations with a centralised structure. We must not use western or eastern models of socialism — our conditions are different. The working class here must lead the struggle and decide what kind of socialism they want. As I said earlier, negotiations should only taken place on our terms, taking into account the class struggle.



Women march on Versailles, 1789

# 1789, 1889 and 1989

## EDITORIAL

**O**n 14 July 1789 the people of Paris stormed the Bastille, thus starting the French Revolution.

In 1889 socialists from many countries used the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the Revolution as the occasion for meeting in Paris and setting up a great world association of workers' parties, the Socialist International.

That International helped to organise and educate millions of workers before it collapsed, each national party supporting its 'own' ruling class, at the start of World War I in 1914.

As part of the celebrations of 1889, the French government made two Statues of Liberty. One was sent to New York, in acknowledgement of the American War of Independence of 1775-81 which had helped inspire the French Revolution; the other remains in Paris.

In 1989, students in Beijing symbolised their fight for democracy against China's ruling bureaucracy by erecting their own Statue of Liberty.

That Statue of Liberty in Beijing symbolised more than illusions in the West which the students who erected it might have. True, the Statues of Liberty in the West look like monuments of hypocrisy today. They are the property of governments which preside over the exploitation of the working class,

mass unemployment, racism, sexism and imperialist oppression.

But the French Revolution did proclaim and establish a new concept of liberty. Under the old regime, before the Revolution, 'liberty' meant hereditary, entrenched privilege.

Society was a hierarchy. Such rights as people had were not human rights or citizens' rights, belonging to everyone automatically. A person's rights depended on and belonged to his or her slot in the social hierarchy. Peasants had rights as peasants; aristocrats had (more) rights as aristocrats. Merchants and craft workers had rights through their guilds; priests had rights as priests.

All law was based on tradition and custom, in a crazy patchwork of parallel and overlapping jurisdictions. Taxes, tariffs, and regulations varied from district to district, governed by the authority of the local lord.

To defend 'liberty' was to defend the traditional prerogatives of your caste, estate or guild against the claims of the increasingly centralised, powerful and bureaucratic monarchy.

But the Revolution proclaimed 'liberty' as the companion of fraternity and equality — as a human right belonging automatically and uniformly to all citizens. It declared that government must be based on the will of the nation, not on the authority of god.

The great philosopher Hegel summed it up like this: "...Not until now had man advanced to the

recognition of the principle that Thought ought to govern spiritual reality. This was accordingly a glorious mental dawn. All thinking beings shared in the jubilation of this epoch.

"The halo which has surrounded the leading oppressors and gods of the earth has disappeared. Philosophers demonstrate the dignity of man; the people will learn to feel it and will not merely demand their rights, which have been trampled in the dust, but will themselves take them — make them their own."

The new concept of liberty was an epoch-making advance over the old feudal concept. But from the start it had within it the limitations that make America's and France's Statues of Liberty look so hypocritical today.

In the new world of free trade, equality before the law, and 'career open to talents', workers and bosses were formally equal. The contract between worker and boss was, on the face of it, a free agreement between equal individuals. The worker sold his or her labour power at the going rate, the boss bought it.

But in selling labour power, a worker is selling not this or that particular useful item, but the general capacity to produce new value. The value produced by a week's work is greater than the value paid for that week. The difference makes profits — and profits make a new privileged class, owing its wealth and power not to traditions, customs, laws and religious authority but to the impersonal workings of the market.

That is why we fight for a new concept of liberty — workers' liberty, which means the workers controlling the machinery of production rather than being controlled by it.

Yet workers' liberty expands and subsumes the bourgeois liberty proclaimed by the French Revolution, rather than simply negating it. And in much of the world today, including the countries which falsely call themselves socialist, even that

bourgeois liberty still has to be fought for.

The French Revolution was also the starting point for the modern socialist movement. Dreams of socialism, and even sporadic practical attempts to create crude communist utopias, had existed long before then. But it is from 1795-6 that we can trace a continuous thread of sustained political organising for socialism.

Frustrated by the inability of the French Revolution to meet its pro-

mise of equality, Babeuf organised a group called the 'Conspiracy of Equals', with the aim of seizing all property and putting it into common ownership. The group was tracked down by the police and arrested before it could do anything. But its ideas lived on. The Communist League, the group for which Marx and Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto, was a direct descendant of that Conspiracy of Equals.

## Chinese Solidarity Campaign founding conference

Saturday 29 July

10.30-5.00

County Hall, London

Get your union branch, Labour Party or Students

Union etc. to delegate you

Delegates: £15 union branches; £5 smaller

organisations. One delegate plus one or two

observers per organisation

Send details of your delegation and fee/donation to:

CSC, 68 Shaftesbury Ave, London W1

phone 01 836 8291

## Workers' Ireland forum

*The Protestants of Ulster: what are their rights, and what are the implications for socialists in Britain?*

Debate with Geoff Bell and John O'Mahony

Chair: Nadine Finch

Thursday 20 July, 8pm at the Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Rd, London (near Kings X)

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

Karl Marx

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## 4 LETTERS



Two of Britain's top directors, Sir Terence Conran and Anita Roddick — laughing all the way to the bank

# When 50 per cent isn't greedy

## GRAFFITI

As bosses attempt to hold workers' pay rises down to 7%, it seems they aren't applying the same "anti-inflationary" criteria to themselves. Five of Britain's top companies have admitted that their highest paid directors have received pay increases this year averaging 50%.

Many have been awarded much more. Lord Sharp, chairman of Cable and Wireless, has just had a pay increase of 86.5%, and the director of Whitbread's brewery has taken a 55% rise. A survey of 91 of the 100 biggest companies shows an average increase of 28% for directors. So much for greedy busworkers, rail staff, local government workers....

In these days of male trade union leaders falling over themselves to prove that they are, really, interested in representing women members, Derrick Fullick, the new leader of the train drivers union ASLEF, sticks out like a sore thumb. ASLEF has 20,000 members, only 27 of whom are women. Fullick is, however, unperturbed. "The problem with recruiting women," he says, "is that they'd have to put sinks in the cabs so that they could do the washing up." Probably so, if they were unfortunate enough to have a husband with the neanderthal attitudes of Mr Fullick. Fullick also has this to say of his South London birthplace: "Where men were men and women walked around with their knickers in their hands." Quite a charmer, eh?

The right-wing think-tank, the 'Centre for Policy Studies', is noted for its wild and wacky theories, but the latest takes the biscuit.

According to its director, David Willets, homelessness could well be a Thatcherite "good thing". He said: "Homeless people may be examples of a rise in individualism and taste for independence."

Sounds like a nifty bit of rationalisation to me.

Shareholders' dividends are mushrooming, according to a survey of the top 50 companies published in the latest issue of *Labour Research* magazine. 43 of the 50 largest UK-based companies increased profits per worker between 1987 and 1988 in real terms. Grand Metropolitan boosted profits by 82%, Thorn EMI by 58%, and Ford by 108%.

Ford topped the table for profits per worker, making £14,050. 17 other companies made £5,000 or more profit per worker.

Dividend payouts rose at all but two of the companies, six of them by more than half. Workers' pay in these companies, however, has not fared so well. At 41 firms the pay rises were smaller than dividend increases, and at five the workers' average pay actually fell.

The British Medical Association's conference has come up with recommendations to combat discrimination against women in the medical profession.

Almost half of medical students are women, but women doctors are frequently confined to the "lower end" of the profession. Dr Fleur Fisher, who led the BMA's working group into discrimination, said that not one of the 44 consultant general surgeons appointed in the last five years had been a woman.

The BMA is recommending more childcare provision, a campaign for childcare expenses to be tax deductible, and a requirement that health authorities meet targets on employing women doctors.



'Red' Army: which class do they defend?

# We need more analysis

## LETTERS

Long after powered flight had first taken place, Simon Newcomb, President of the American Astronomical Society, and Vice-President of the US Academy of Sciences, continued to write scientific papers dismissing it as an impossibility.

Edward Ellis (Letters, SO404) performs a comparable feat, albeit in reverse, with regard to the Soviet economy: at a time when Soviet economists themselves recognise that the economy is in a terminal nose-dive and predict the outbreak of large-scale famine sooner rather than later, Ellis assures us all that, whatever its limitations, "planning", after a fashion, nonetheless exists in the Soviet Union.

It certainly is an odd kind of "planning" which plans the production of shoes for people with two left feet, which plans the production of doors but forgets to plan the production of doorhandles with which to open them, or which plans the import of Western high-tech goods such as soap and toothpaste because the Soviet economy itself cannot generate sufficient production of them.

The basic problem in the approach of Edward Ellis of Southwark is summed up in his statement: "Bourgeois governments — and enterprises — plan. Not all planning is socialist planning. You can call bad planning 'organisation' or 'administration' if you prefer, but we're still talking about the same thing — which is that production in the USSR is not completely anarchic."

This is true enough, in a sense, but it does not get you anywhere in attempting to analyse the nature of the Soviet Union.

You can say that there is some planning in capitalism if you want to, just as you could say that there was some planning in slave-owning societies (how else could the slave owners tell the slaves what to do?) But no-one in their right mind would describe capitalism or slave-owning societies as examples of badly planned economies.

You could pursue the approach of Edward Ellis and come up just as easily with the conclusion that the Soviet Union is a state-capitalist formation. Indeed, this is exactly what Martin Thomas did in an earlier letter in SO: "Bad planning is not the same as no planning...I would add that bad markets are not the same as no markets."

Edward Ellis argues: "Look, there's a bit of planning in the Soviet Union, so we'll say that it's really a badly planned economy", whilst Martin Thomas argues: "Look, there's a bit of a market in the Soviet Union, so we'll say it's really a kind of state-capitalist economy". Neither put forward an analysis of the Soviet economy as a whole.

Martin Thomas is simply wrong. One need merely ask the question why workers in capitalism go to work and why workers in the Soviet Union go to work (insofar as they bother to do so) to recognise the qualitative difference between the Soviet economy and a capitalist-type economy.

In an earlier contribution to the debate on the Soviet Union, Clive Bradley wrote: "The objection that you have to specify all the laws of motion of a system before you can call it a class system at all is silly".

It might be a bit pedantic to expect every dot and comma to be explained — but surely it is not too much to expect a basic analysis?

And yet, with the possible exception of a contribution from Barry Finger, the practitioners of the theory of bureaucratic collectivism have yet to even begin to explain their view of the functioning/dysfunctioning of the Soviet economy.

We are told, for example, that the Soviet elite is a ruling class with a distinct relationship to the means of production. But what is that "distinct" relationship (if it exists)? What is the ideology of this ruling class (if it has one)? How does it reproduce itself (insofar as it could be argued that it does so)?

Is it not about time we were offered a serious attempt at analysis by Edward Ellis of Southwark and his co-thinkers, rather than just a name-tag for the Soviet elite ("ruling class") and a name-tag for the Soviet economy ("badly planned"), with no other 'justification' than that the Soviet Union exists, and 'therefore' there must be a "ruling class" and a (badly) "planned" economy?

Stan Crooke  
Birkenhead

# Unusual thought

Clive Bradley's article, 'A new start in Ireland' (29 June), was a sane contribution to discussion on the subject.

I have long been distressed by the shallowness of much left thinking on Ireland. At best there is a naive expectation that 'Troops Out' will solve everything, at worst there are those who identify so strongly with the IRA that you wonder why they themselves aren't using Armalites and Semtex. But then these people won't be the ones who have to pay if the Irish situation deteriorates.

Bradley, in contrast, attacks the problem head on. There will, as Bradley points out, have to be

some concessions to the Protestants if there is to be a chance of an end to the fighting. And he actually gives consideration to the mechanics of achieving a withdrawal of British troops, and account is taken of the problems involved — such thoughtfulness is unusual.

I don't have a solution to offer Ireland, except to say that 'Troops Out' and a united Ireland must be the eventual aims. But the battle to achieve these aims is not a hopeless one if the difficulties themselves are remembered and if suggestions rather than slogans are put forward.

Steve Kaczynski  
Reading

## Which way forward for the left in the unions?

A national conference for the left in the trade union movement organised by Socialist Conference

Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 November  
Sheffield Polytechnic Students Union

Pond St (opposite rail station)

Saturday: registration 10.30am, conference 11.00am-5.00pm; Sunday 10.00am-4.00pm

Credentials: £6 waged, £4 unwaged from The Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1V 3DG

# Where now in Poland?

In a discussion article, Martin Thomas looks at the options

**P**oland is in greater political disarray than any state-monopoly system has ever been.

General Jaruzelski has announced that he will not run again for president. Semi-free elections last month swept Solidarnosc candidates into almost all the contested seats, and hugely discredited the government, whose members failed to win election even in uncontested seats.

The top bureaucrats, or at least some of them, want a coalition government with Solidarnosc. But there is also talk of Lech Walesa running for president, to create a Solidarnosc government.

The right-wing in Solidarnosc wants a coalition government. The centre wants to stand aloof, cooperating with the regime on this or that issue, but maintaining some independence. The left-wing in Solidarnosc boycotted the election, and sees its task as organising the rank and file in Solidarnosc against a leadership which is hand-in-hand with the state, coalition or not coalition.

What should we say? *Should we raise the call: All Power to Solidarnosc!*

This would mean calling on the elected Solidarnosc deputies to declare themselves the elected representatives of the people and to constitute a new National Assembly, rather as the Third Estate did in France in 1789.

That National Assembly should declare itself sovereign, while convening the sort of representative body which Solidarnosc itself demanded back in 1981: a workers' self-management parliament.

Any such proposal would have to be linked to proposals to dismantle the existing hierarchies of the state bureaucracy and the army's officer corps, and the militia, replacing them by elected and accountable people. A Solidarnosc government which tried to govern with the existing state machine would fare even worse than a Labour government in Britain governing with the existing capitalist state machine here.

Assuming that the bureaucrats and generals allowed Solidarnosc to form a government, such a govern-

ment, attempting to govern with the existing hierarchies, could only tie Solidarnosc to the bureaucratic state-monopoly system in the same way that a coalition government would.

The system does not allow for independent workers' organisation. The only way that Solidarnosc could become an integral and central part of the system is by transforming itself into a state-controlled pseudo-union.

Such a thing could be done. After the 1956 upheaval in Poland, workers' councils were formed which at first had some real life but soon became mere agencies of the state.

In the late 1940s the Stalinists constructed their systems in Eastern Europe by more than brute repression. The absorption of the Social Democratic party into the Stalinist party in East Germany was genuinely welcomed by many workers as "workers' unity". The completion of Stalinist control in Czechoslovakia, in 1948, was backed up not by Soviet troops but by a workers' uprising. There were genuine workers' movements which were first duped and then gutted of real life by the Stalinists.

To gut Solidarnosc today would be more difficult: the ruling group is weaker and more divided, and the social model of the USSR inspires hatred and cynicism among workers rather than the respect and admiration it had in the 1940s. But it would be foolish to think that gutting Solidarnosc is impossible.

That is the danger most to be avoided. Certainly we must oppose any coalition. But can we best take the argument further by demanding "All Power to Solidarnosc!" and fighting for measures to break up entrenched bureaucratic power, or by fighting for Solidarnosc to stay rigorously independent and aloof until better conditions have matured for an assault on bureaucratic power?

It is difficult to judge at a distance.

Would a call for Solidarnosc to take power, whatever the qualifications and additional slogans, only help to tie Solidarnosc to the state? It would depend on the struggle within Solidarnosc.

The present leaders of Solidarnosc are not willing to take power on their own. Their only options are joining a coalition or remaining aloof. So calling for Solidarnosc to take power would mean struggle inside Solidarnosc, including a struggle to renew the leadership and to construct or reconstruct structures of accountability.



'All Power to Solidarnosc!'

Would an attempt by Solidarnosc to take power only mean provoking a premature and crushing conflict with the Polish army? Certainly there would be conflict; but can we really expect that conflict to be smaller or easier at a future time? The Polish army must be in serious disarray now; it may not stay that way.

What about the danger of a Soviet invasion? An official Soviet representative has said that the USSR would not invade if Solidarnosc

formed a government in Poland. The assurance is not to be trusted; but the fact it was given is significant.

Hungary and Yugoslavia are in ferment, and could well explode into revolution if Solidarnosc took power in Poland. The leadership in the USSR is insecure. No-one can be sure, or even confident, that a more favourable international situation for Solidarnosc will arise again in the foreseeable future.

But isn't the Polish working class

at a low ebb? Isn't it necessary to wait until the workers are more confident and more mobilised?

As far as can be judged from a distance, the relative apathy of Polish workers is due to the fact that they are beaten down by economic hardship and can see no clear way out of it. Solidarnosc no longer seems to propose anything radically different from the government.

If Solidarnosc does not change course boldly, this apathy is likely to increase rather than decrease. But an assault by Solidarnosc on the entrenched ruling bureaucrats could revive workers' militancy very fast.

# Land of the Rising Daughter

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Lynn Ferguson

**T**he Japanese government hasn't been having a lot of luck lately.

First there was the 'Recruit' corruption scandal. Now Prime Minister Uno is under fire after revelations of sexual alliances with geisha girls.

Uno has come under fire from the press, and from female politicians, who have charged Uno with treating women "as pieces of merchandise".

Sex scandals, you may say, are not uncommon in politics — and press outrage, normally

hypocritical, is par for the course. But in Japan things are a little different. Until recently, male adultery was tolerated — so long as wives did not end up infected with disease. Wives were expected to sit stoically at home. That Uno's philandering has drawn such public disapproval is a small sign that things are beginning to change for women in Japan.

Japan did not experience a feminist movement along the lines of that in Europe and the US. There is a small, beleaguered feminist movement in Japan now — but women involved are often subject to physical attack. There isn't even a word for "feminist" in Japan — the nearest equivalent means "a man who likes women".

Not surprisingly, then, the position of women is way behind the West. Women are still dogged by pervasive images of passivity.

Until World War II, around 70%

of Japanese marriages were arranged — women being selected as good childbearers and housekeepers. The average number of children per woman was five. There was no mass movement of women into industry during the war, along the lines of that in Britain.

In Britain that gave women a taste of freedom, which, if not affecting their own lives post-war, affected their aspirations and expectations for their daughters. In Japan, most older women still expect little of their daughters.

Women have been moving into careers — but slowly, and against much resistance. In Japan's largest companies the percentage of women in managerial jobs has risen from a pathetic 0.9% in 1975 to a measly 1% in 1987. Some companies are unwilling to employ single women who do not live with their parents. At lower, clerical levels, women who are still single

and working after their 25th birthday are called "Christmas cake" — too stale to be married.

For many qualified Japanese women, US companies in Japan are the only way in to a proper career.

US firms are only too eager to recruit Japanese women — according to one executive, "They have the same skills as men and are hard-working."

But Japanese firms will have to change their attitudes — and before too long. Japan's population is ageing more rapidly than that of virtually any other industrial society. With unemployment low, at around 2%, a skills shortage is beginning to manifest itself. Economic expediency may push Japanese business to open more doors to women — but as we are seeing in Britain, understanding the need to employ more women and actually making provision for them to make it possible are two very different things.



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## 6 IRELAND

# Ireland: where is the force for progress?

The Protestant 'marching season' in Northern Ireland is beginning.

As in previous years, there are conflicts between Protestants who want to take their traditional triumphal sectarian marches through Catholic areas and the police trying to re-route marches. Underlying it all is the bitter, tense division between Protestant and Catholic in Northern Ireland, which the Anglo-Irish Agreement has only reinforced.

At the 'Time To Go Show' on 27-28 May, a major session discussed the 'Bloodbath Scenario'. If we call for British troops out of Northern Ireland, how do we avoid that leading to bloody civil war?

Naomi Wayne presented the argument of her recent book, written jointly with Bob Rowthorne ('Northern Ireland: the political economy of conflict'). Withdrawal could be linked with peaceful progress to a united Ireland, she said, if Britain would use its economic and military strength to apply pressure to the Protestants.

Sean Matgamna from Socialist Organiser put an alternative view. We cannot look to the British state to solve the conflict between the communities in Ireland. Instead we should look to the Irish working class. We must develop a democratic programme — a federal united Ireland, giving regional autonomy to the Protestant-majority area — which would enable Protestant and Catholic workers to join in a common fight against all discrimination.

Much of what's said on the left gives the impression that we imagine that things are actually falling apart for Britain, or might not be too far from falling apart. My picture is very different.

Over the last three years in Northern Ireland, the British government has had a pretty substantial series of successes. The Anglo-Irish deal has held. It has done that partly by not doing a great deal on the ground, and that's one reason why it's avoided a much bigger Protestant backlash than there might have been. Nevertheless, the Anglo-Irish Agreement is in place. The British and Irish bourgeois strategy for Ireland is relatively healthy. So the

framework that has existed for a long time is holding, and Britain has carried through quite serious measures to strengthen it.

What London and Dublin are doing with the Anglo-Irish Agreement is best understood in terms of the analogy of the Common Market. After the Second World War the West European bourgeoisies needed to unite their economies. They couldn't do that because of the ingrained national antagonisms. So, in a series of measures, beginning in 1951 with the creation of the Coal and Steel Community, they began to create supra-national structures. They've put aside the national antagonisms and begun to unite the European economy. And they have been enormously successful in doing that.

In Northern Ireland, London and Dublin are putting aside or trying to put aside all the vexed questions of sovereignty, and they have begun to create, gingerly and tentatively, structures which they hope will grow and take on a role.

The whole notion that Britain is soon going to start looking for ways out is nonsense. That's not what is happening. That is not the stage we are at all.

Gerry Adams said in response to a question from a comrade of mine that if British withdrawal was done badly, it would probably lead to repartition, rather than to a united Ireland. I think that's true. I think it's central. It's quite possible that the people who set out to create a united Ireland will in fact create two Irelands — not the present two Irelands, but a repartitioned Ireland.

And a repartitioned Ireland with the Protestant community establishing a state on some smaller territory would be the end of all aspirations for a united Ireland.

So when Gerry Adams also dismissed the idea of a bloodbath by saying there is a bloodbath already, it struck me as entirely light minded.

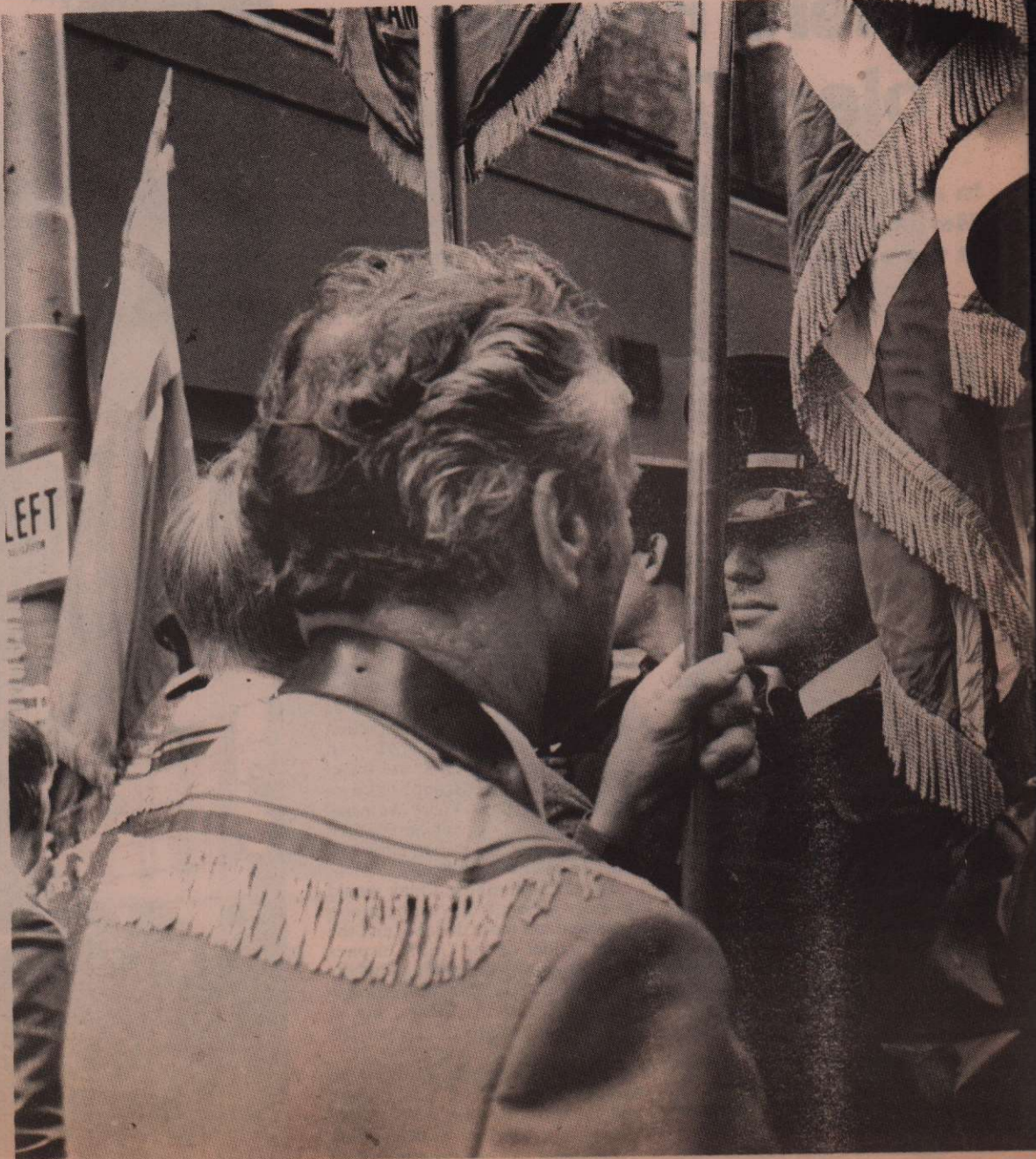
At present the level of casualties in Northern Ireland is lower than the usual rate of violent death in some American cities. A bloodbath is very different. A sectarian civil war is very different. And I believe that a sectarian civil war is a real danger.

What Naomi Wayne has said seems a very reasonable, rational, sensible way of looking at it. But it's a picture of reality that is like a watch without a spring.

In reality, if Britain decided to withdraw, there would be a vast alarm among the Protestant population. It wouldn't just be fear of some future laws passed by an all-Ireland majority, it would be fear of the IRA, for example. In that atmosphere of alarm and insecurity, the initiative would not belong to the rational reasonable people who would draw up a balance sheet and calculate the economic prospects.

The extremists, the intransigents, the Protestant militants, the people who go in for sectarian assassination, would set the tone. And actions by a hardline minority could in fact control, to a large extent, what happened.

For a parallel, think back to what happened in 1968/9. I lived in Derry in the crucial period in 1969. In 1969 in Derry and in Belfast the Republicans were virtually non-



The marching season has begun

existent. They had virtually disarmed and they played no role in defending the ghettos except as individuals.

Yet, within 18 months the Provos had split from the Official IRA, they had reorganised, they had recruited the raw youth, and they had launched a big military offensive. All that within 18 months.

In situations of insecurity, the initiative belongs to people who know their own minds, who are determined, and who are reckless. That was one of the decisive things about the Provos — recklessness. Many of the left-wing Republicans would have hesitated to start the war because of the Protestant antagonism. But the Provos struck out boldly — they grabbed the initiative.

The main storm of sectarian assassinations in the 1970s was the work of Protestant militants, though there were terrible acts of Catholic sectarianism too. Such people would set the tone when the British decision to withdraw was announced. Rational calculations, balancing things nicely, would not actually determine what happened.

We don't have to speculate. We can look back in history. There is an obvious parallel — what happened when the British decided to abdicate power in Palestine in 1947. What happened wasn't people getting round the table and being reasonable and rational. Jews and Arabs in the towns and villages and the hills competed to control commanding positions and drive out people of the other community.

You may think it was a good thing that Britain withdrew, but what you got was not a reasonable putting together of two communities, or even agreement to stick by the position that the UN had decreed (unjust as that was), but war between Jews and Arabs, and the Arabs being driven out.

Northern Ireland would be similar. Rationalistic economic calculations would not decide. If they did, the problem would not ex-

ist in the first place.

Why do such community conflicts exist? Are the Lebanese, for example, irrational people? Are the Lebanese the equivalent of music hall joke Irish people? Lunatics, crazies, irrational people?

Or take the communal conflicts between Sinhalese and Tamils in Sri Lanka. That conflict is a clear refutation of the argument that if you have a united Ireland on the basis of something like the conquest of the Protestants (whether conquest by threats or by direct military force), then the Protestants would not be likely to have an IRA of their own because they wouldn't have an objective to fight for.

In Sri Lanka there is a Tamil minority. The Tamils are a minority in Sri Lanka, but just over the sea in India there is a Tamil state, Tamil Nadu, with about 50 million people.

Under the British, some of the Tamils were privileged people. The Tamil elite agreed with the Sinhalese bourgeoisie to have a secular independent state. For a few years it went all right. But then discrimination began against the Tamils.

Conflict escalated, and the result now is that the Tamils fight for independence in a tiny part of Sri Lanka.

There is no reason why you would not get that sort of situation developing in Ireland if the Protestants were in a united Ireland feeling alienated like the Catholics in Northern Ireland feel now.

What is the objective of socialists? I object to the idea that people in Britain, whether English or, like myself, Irish, do not have the right to discuss the affairs of Ireland. I reject that for several reasons, and one of them is that there are a million people in Ireland who say they are British.

They say other things too, they

define it variously, but it comes down to the belief that they are British.

Those people have rights. I consider myself to be an Irish Republican, and I don't think that it's possible to be a Republican and have the attitude that you can simply conquer the Northern Ireland Protestants.

Any talk of solving the existing antagonisms by changing the situation where half a million Catholics are oppressed into one where a million Protestants would feel oppressed inside a united Ireland, is no solution at all.

**"Gerry Adams said that if withdrawal was done badly, it would probably lead to repartition rather than to a united Ireland. I think that's true"**

In practical realpolitik, it is probably not workable, and above all it is not a Republican solution, still less a socialist solution.

Wolfe Tone set out to eradicate the old denominational emphases and to unite the Protestants (the Anglicans), the Catholics and the Dissenters (the Presbyterians) under the common name of Irish.

The previous history of Ireland had been a history of wars between these denominations. The Catholics were usually underneath, but sometimes on the top, as under King James's parliament of 1689. Wolfe Tone argued for forgetting such divisions, for renouncing revenge, and for accepting rights for all the various identities and thus merging into a common Irish identity.

The Protestants cannot be just defined as pro-imperialist. They are

# Making ideas a real force



## Clive Bradley reports on the "Workers' Liberty 89" summer school

The lesson of the past, argued Jean Lane in the closing session of Workers' Liberty 89, is that militancy is not enough.

The new wave of strikes needs to be linked to a political alternative to the Tories, reaching beyond Neil Kinnock. Socialist Organiser must be built as a Marxist tendency rooted in the labour movement.

Over 300 people attended this year's Workers' Liberty, organised jointly by Socialist Organiser and the Iranian group Socialism and Revolution. Discussions and debates covered a wide range, from the class nature of the USSR to the Green party, from Jesse Jackson to Marxism Today, from lesbian and gay liberation to Islamic fundamentalism, from Jazz to Marxist philosophy, from permanent revolution to pornography.

The Communist Party, the Green Party, Labour Focus on Eastern Europe and a representative of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation all attended debates and workshops.

In a debate with *Marxism Today*, Alan Johnson challenged their notion that the working class is finished, and that "old fashioned" class struggle is dead. Times have changed, and we need to relate to the changes, but the working class is still the agent of socialist change.

The school included a series of workshops on China, and



was rounded off by Sui Wai from the Chinese Solidarity Campaign leading the singing of the Internationale in Chinese.

A big part of the weekend was given over to debates, conducted with an openness which contrasted markedly with the Socialist Workers' Party's "Marxism 89" school the previous week. In the major sessions at "Marxism 89", speakers who would put a different point of view from the SWP were systematically excluded, or if by chance they did get in, all subsequent speakers would compete to denounce and slander them.

At Workers' Liberty 89, in contrast, we had debates not only with Marxism Today, but also with the Green Party, Charter 88, a campaign to ban pornography, and representatives of a wide range of views on Ireland and on the Eastern Bloc.

The session on the Eastern Bloc was particularly packed and lively.

But the weekend was not just about debating theoretical issues. The opening session on "Ten Years of Thatcher" heard activists from major groups of workers now in dispute speak about their struggles, and a trade union forum on Saturday looked at those struggles in more detail.

Summing up, Jean Lane commented that these discussions had shown that Socialist Organiser has the beginnings of an implantation in a wide range of industries. And we have the political ideas to take the struggles forward. What we lack, above all, is the numbers and the resources to make those ideas an effective force.

While continuing our discussions, we also have to build a movement in the day-to-day struggles around us. We came away from the weekend better prepared to do that, and with a number of new comrades who had decided to join us in that effort.

a segment of the Irish people with a distinct identity. They feel that identity, and it's not for anybody else to say they haven't got it or that they are not entitled to it. And that is the element missing in Naomi Wayne's exposition.

People fight for their identities. Maybe they shouldn't rationally, but they still fight for their identities.

Consequently, the only Republican policy in Ireland is a policy that takes account of the different Irish identities and finds a common formula. The only possible framework here is some form of federal Ireland in which the guarantees for the Protestants are not dependant on whether or not the Irish majority is willing at all times in the future to grant them those rights. They have to be guaranteed the right to maintain their own identity.

Obviously, that would have to go together with eradication of all oppression of Catholics inside the mainly-Protestant area. But anything less is not Republican, and antagonistic to any socialist perspective.

We can't look to Britain to deal with the Protestants. We can't look to Britain as the progressive force in this situation.

The British are *not* the progressive force in this situation. Britain has maintained a situation of simmering civil war in Ireland now for 20 odd years. The British ruling class has done terrible things. Their sole policy for most of those 20 years has been to beat down the Catholics.

The British are *not* the progressive force. The Irish working class is — and that includes the Protestant working class. What socialists, democrats and Republicans must do is fight for a framework in which the Irish working class can unite.

There is a Leninist and Marxist tradition on this question. Where there are national antagonisms or

communal antagonism, socialists don't respond by saying one side, one people, one community or one fragment of a nation (however you define it), is bad, the other is good, and we take sides with the good. Instead of that, democrats and socialists argue for consistent democracy.

They argue for working class unity on the basis of workers in both communities guaranteeing each other democratic rights; guaranteeing each other that neither will oppress the other; guaranteeing that they will fight together against any oppression of one section.

That is the only way forward to unite the working class. I don't put it forward as something that can be done tomorrow, but in order to even begin to do it you've got to take account of the reality.

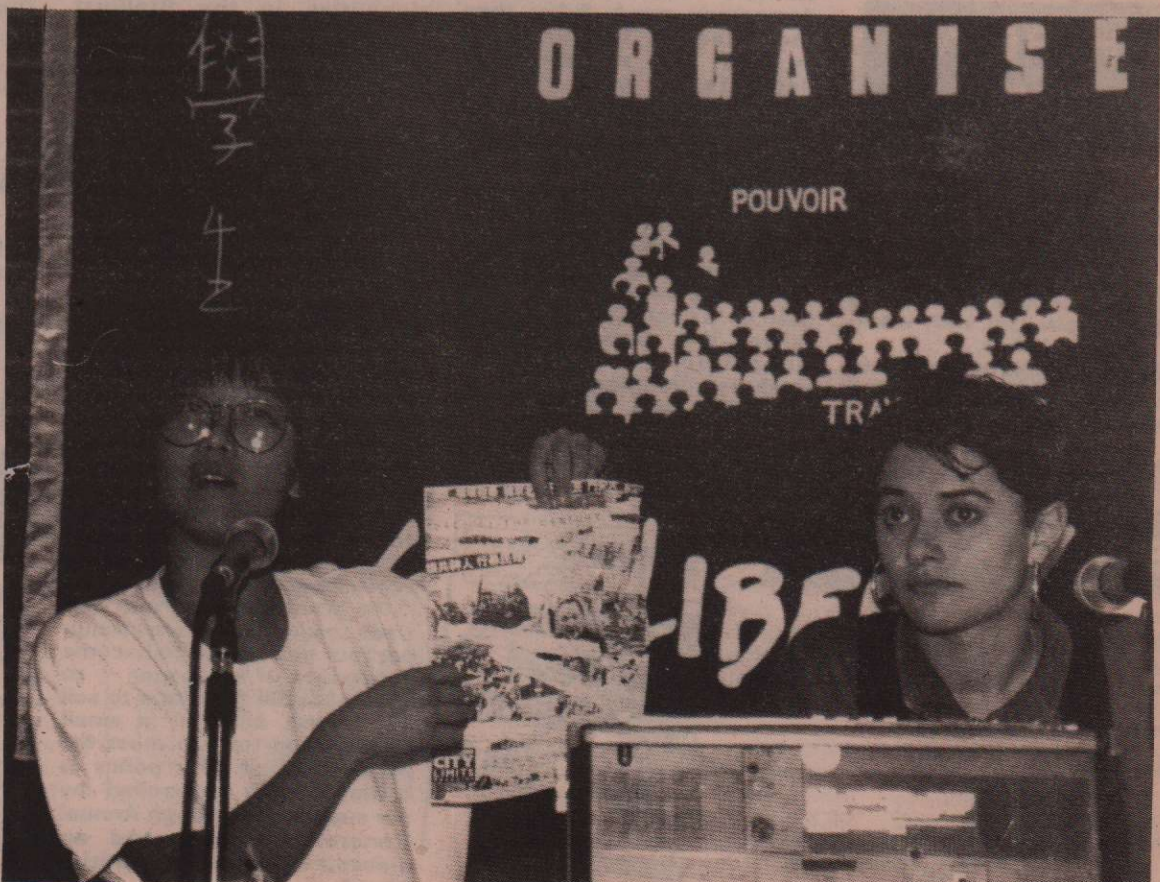
There are different segments of the Irish people. Wolfe Tone's objective has not yet been realised, of a sinking of the different identities into the common name of Irish, or a commonly accepted definition of Irish.

We need a democratic programme — that is some variant of a federal Ireland. It will have to be negotiated in its details — it would be utterly futile to try to discuss details now.

If the workers in Ireland, or a segment of them, were to accept such a programme, then the possibility would exist for the workers to relate to each other as people who will guarantee each other democracy, not as people who either threaten or oppress.

At present the Protestants feel threatened, and the Catholics in the North are oppressed. We have to change that.

I doubt it's even possible to conquer the Northern Protestants. But I don't think it's desirable, even if it's possible. The notion of conquering the Protestants is the notion of substituting for one half million oppressed a million oppressed. That's no way forward.



Sui Wai from the Chinese Solidarity Campaign addresses Workers' Liberty 89

# The Emperor's New Policies

By Darren Phillips

Long ago there lived a leader of a political party who only cared about becoming Prime Minister.

He was never seen championing the same policies from one day to the next. His only thoughts were for electioneering not extending democracy, power not peace, world leadership not the workers.

The party was quite large, its membership went about their business and all in all they were contented. One day however two new members joined the party who were very different from the other party members.

They set up shop as political advisors and put about their tale: they could, they said design the perfect national leader with policies of the most marvellous quality, which were also special in another way: they could only be seen by the cleverest of people. To those of lesser intelligence they would remain invisible.

The word soon spread around the party and as would be expected, the news soon reached the party leader.

"Ah! those policies I would dearly like to see," he thought "I shall be able to see who amongst my membership is clever and who is stupid".

Straight away he sent for the political advisors. Money was no object, he would have to have some policies prepared for himself without delay, and he paid the advisors handsomely in advance for their services.

They asked for Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament, Public Ownership, nothing was denied them, although these ideals were never seen again. The advisors set up an office and began work.

The leader waited and waited. "When will they be completed?" he moaned, but despite his impatience the thought of ultimate political power to him made the wait worthwhile.

However, the thought of not being able to see the policies bothered him greatly. "If I can't see it, I will be thought stupid and that will



never do. I must send someone else to find out how things are going".

He summoned up his Deputy, instructed him of his duties and sent him on his way. The Deputy did as he was bid, but when he inspected the document he found them to be empty, "but where are..." he stammered, but managed to stop himself just in time. He dared not say another word for fear of being thought an idiot and thrown out of office. He blinked, rubbed his eyes and looked again, but to no avail the documents were still empty. He was by now so confused he just stood there with his mouth open wide.

"You may well gasp," said one of the advisors "Aren't they marvellous, aren't they the finest set of policies you've ever seen?" The deputy leader was by now so confused he could only pretend. "They are the best policies I've ever seen," he said. "The Leader will be delighted".

More time elapsed and once again the leader sent for news of progress. This time he sent a member of his National Executive.

When the Executive member entered the room he saw both the advisors in the corner of the room drinking and shouting merrily. One of the advisors caught sight of the Executive Member and went across to greet him thrusting a document into his hand.

"Aren't they without doubt the finest policies you've ever seen?" The National Executive member unable to see anything chose to remain silent. Then recovering his composure said "Of course, without question they are absolutely superb!"

The Executive member left as quickly as he could to report his finding, thinking to himself "Can I really be so stupid? I couldn't see a thing."

At last word came that the documents were completed and these marvellous policies became the talk of the party and the leader went to see the policies for himself taking with him all his National Executive and shadow cabinet.

The Deputy leader was the first to break the silence in the advisors office. "What do you think, aren't they superb?"

The Leader gulped "Are my eyes deceiving me?" he thought, "I can't see a single policy based on principle, surely I can't be so foolish — I must pretend I can see some logic. No one must know any different, otherwise I may be replaced as leader."

The advisors stood hands behind their backs "What do you think?" they chorused. "They're wonderful", he exclaimed and the rest of the crowd gathered forward, seeing nothing but each believing that the other could extol their virtues. "They must be presented to the membership" the Leader said.

The day of the policy launch came and the great procession started, heading the way was the Leader and his Deputy followed by the National Executive and Shadow Cabinet. The new manifesto felt as light as a feather.

The crowd cheered, none of them could see the policies, yet none would voice their opinions for fear of being thought stupid.

"Bravo!" they shouted, then a voice was heard from the back of the crowd "there's not a single policy contained in this document!" at first they hushed the voice but then realised they had all been tricked, but by then it was too late.

*Moral: Don't let Kinnock turn this fairytale into a reality, vote against the policy review.*



## Free the jailed Chinese trade unionists!

The following independent trade unionists are known to have been arrested in China. Resolutions demanding their release should be sent to the Chinese Embassy, Portland Place, London W1, with copies to the Chinese Solidarity Campaign, c/o CIAC, 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1

Bai Dongping, a Central Committee member of the illegal 'Beijing Autonomous Workers' Union'. A 26-year old Beijing railway worker. Accused of inciting protestors and engaging in counter-revolutionary revolt, he fled to Chengdu on 4 June and was caught

on 17 June at Chengdu. Liu Qiang, one of the three leaders of the Beijing Autonomous Workers' Union, was arrested in Inner Mongolia.

Liu Huanwen, male, aged 28. Worker at the Capital Steel Works and leader of the Beijing Autonomous Workers' Union picketing group. Arrested on 13.6.89 in Shijiazhuang, Hebei.

Li Jiang, member of the Beijing Autonomous Workers' Union death squad. Said to have surrendered to the authorities on 11.6.89, and confessed his involvement in burning three army trucks and a tank on 4.6.89.

Gao Jingtang, Zhu Guanghua, Li Xiao hu, these three are leaders of the Hangzhou Autonomous Workers' Union and were arrested on 10 June.

## Workers' Liberty

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

Karl Marx



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### 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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### ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Thursday 13 July Leeds SO: 'A Summer of Discontent?', speaker Rob Dawber. The Cobourg (opp. Merriem Ctr), 7.30 Friday 14 July Wages for Housework Campaign meeting: 'Refusing Nuclear Housework'. St Barnabas School, Albany Rd, Bristol, 7.30. Meeting to prepare for Bristol sessions of Hinkley B inquiry Sunday 16 July South London SO: 'Why We Need a Revolution', speaker John

O'Mahony. The Station pub, Camberwell New Rd, 7.30 Sunday 16 July North London SO: 'Why We Need a Revolution', speaker Martin Thomas. Angel & Crown, Upper St, N1, 7.30 Thursday 20 July Workers' Ireland Forum: 'The Protestants of Ulster', debate with Geoff Bell and John O'Mahony. Lucas Arms, Kings X, 8.00 Thursday 20 July Nottingham SO: 'A Summer of Discontent?', speaker Rob Dawber. ICC, Mansfield Rd, 7.30 Wednesday 26 July Bristol SO: 'Socialism, Europe and 1992', speaker Neil Stonelake. Shepherds Hall, Old Market, 7.30



# Poland: socialists and the reforms

## Jack Allison reviews a debate with Polish socialists

**W**hat was the significance of the recent elections in Poland? And how should socialists have related to them?

These were the issues discussed at a recent public meeting organised by the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) [PPS-RD] Support Committee.

Chris Ford, a recently returned eye-witness to the Polish elections, described a surprisingly low level of interest, especially in working class areas. He pointed out the undemocratic method by which Solidarnosc had selected its candidates, through 'citizens' committees effectively controlled by Lech Walesa and his supporters.

This theme was also taken up by Tadeusz Rachowski, chair of the PPS-RD, who pointed to the undemocratic actions of the Solidarnosc leadership and the total lack of power for the newly elected Solidarnosc representatives.

Tadeusz supported his party's call for a boycott of the elections, welcomed the low turn-out in the elections (only 62% overall and lower in large cities) and argued that a proportion of these non-voters could be drawn to the ideas of workers' self-management, that the PPS-RD puts forward.

The PPS-RD are the most advanced political party in Poland and probably the whole Eastern Bloc. Their belief in socialism, and their struggle to overthrow the Stalinist despots in Poland and replace totalitarianism with workers' self-government, makes them central to the future of the Polish working class.

However, I believe that the PPS-RD's policy over the elections was wrong. Let's look at the issues point by point.

- The elections were in no way democratic. Free elections were held only for members of the effectively powerless senate and 35% of the Sejm (Lower House) which will elect a massively powerful President.

All this is true. Such is the nature of reforms: they always leave effective power in the hands of the ruling class, and in this case the 'Communist Party' (PZRP). Any reform that leaves the Polish Stalinist state in place, crucially the army and the bureaucracy, is less than full democracy.

## Why the radical left called for boycott

**The Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) boycotted Poland's elections last month. We think they were mistaken to do so, but we print their statement explaining their position**

**T**he radical wing of Solidarnosc, principally the PPS(RD) and Fighting Solidarnosc, have declared that they will boycott the elections to the Sejm and the Senate.

The elections to the Lower House, or Sejm, are being carried out on a united list, with 35% of the seats offered for contest to the Opposition.



Walesa campaigning: socialists should have run against his hand-picked candidates

There is indeed a vast difference between a full parliamentary system of government and the current system in Poland. Polish workers still lack civil and democratic rights that Western European workers have won. The demand for a totally free election in Poland is a revolutionary demand.

But then the question, simply put, is this. Do we only involve ourselves in the final victory? Or do we need to be involved at every stage, pushing every small victory on towards the final victory of revolution? Every reform within the system is less than full democracy and temporary, but we can not ignore our victories; they must be used to build on.

The round table talks started as a response to a wave of strikes last summer when the Stalinists realised they could not crush Solidarnosc. The talks ended with a major victory — the first free elections in the Eastern Bloc for over 40 years — and a major defeat, the involvement of the leaders of Solidarnosc in an economic 'deal' with the

Stalinists which includes a wage cut of 20% over a year. Socialists should always fight the defeats and extend the victories.

- The Solidarnosc slate was carved out by Lech Walesa with no democratic procedure. Candidates were not democratically selected. They are a new bureaucracy.

However bureaucratic and undemocratic Solidarnosc is, it is not a ruling totalitarian bureaucracy. It has no army, no state, no power other than the support it gets.

The PPS-RD still looks to it as a movement, as do all the most advanced workers. 62% of the Polish population came out and voted almost unanimously for Solidarnosc as the opposition.

That is why the PPS-RD has a definite and correct policy of staying inside Solidarnosc to rebuild it as a workers' movement.

Solidarnosc leaders may have learnt from the anti-democratic methods of the ruling class, they may even share some interests with them; but they are not leading a

savage Stalinist state, they are leading Solidarnosc.

The election was a victory for the Polish people who support Solidarnosc and a disaster for the Polish ruling class.

- Those parties who really want change, the overthrow of the system, could not stand. The election was not truly free.

Given the totally undemocratic control of Solidarnosc selections, the PPS-RD should have stood against the 'official candidates' in as many areas as possible to put across the PPS-RD's ideas and build their support. It could be done. In Cracow a KPN supporter stood against the 'official' Solidarnosc candidate. The KPN are right wing but they are not favoured by the government. Both KPN and PPS-RD have faced repression, but the real block on PPS-RD candidates standing seems to have been the PPS-RD's decision for a boycott, not anything the government did.

- The round table talks were a disaster, a sell-out of the strike wave. They gave no real democracy — only 35% democracy in return for a wage cut. The bureaucrats co-opted the Solidarnosc leadership into the state, making them like the other front organisations for the 'Communist Party'. We can not give this package credibility by supporting the elections that have come about as part of the talks.

If we wait for reforms which are not accompanied by any ruling class attempt to recoup, we'll wait a long time. Socialists should not accept the agendas set by others in this way. Faced with 'deals' or 'packages' from our rulers, we must attack the sell-outs all the way, but support and push forward the gains however small.

The leaders of Solidarnosc are not the same as the front organisations of the PZRP! Solidarnosc is the opposition in Poland. It was founded by a working class revolt in 1980. The front organisations of the PZRP are state-funded, set up under the direct control of the police state machinery.

There may come a time when Solidarnosc is so bankrupted that it becomes an agency of the Polish state, but whatever you think of the left, they are not that now. They remain independent of the state.

They may share some interests but fundamentally they have different interests. The Solidarnosc leadership have refused to join a coalition with the Stalinists.

The logic of the round table deals does lead down a very dangerous path, but it does not make the Solidarnosc leadership at one with the regime.

- The vote turn out was low, only 62% showing the lack of belief in the reforms and great potential for the PPS-RD with its policy of boycotting the elections.

There certainly can be occasions when socialists would boycott an election — if the elections are totally discredited as a cover for a hated regime and we can propose some better system as an immediate alternative. That was not the case in Poland's recent elections. Most of the non-voters do not represent a base for socialist ideas. A very small minority were directly involved in the boycott campaign but the vast majority of those who did not vote were less political, more cynical about any change by any method, more defeatist, less defiant, in other words further from socialist ideas, than those who did at least vote to show their anger against the Stalinists.

All this said, the PPS-RD remains the best socialist current inside Poland and retain a real belief in working class self-liberation, showing they are the true heirs of the Solidarnosc of 1980-81. The tactical argument over the boycott is secondary. Tadeusz Rachowski ended his speech by saying that the workers in Poland are now living at subsistence level, and that the further attacks proposed by the Stalinists on the working class will be met by the united response of the workers in strikes. I have no doubt that he is right.

But the workers can only win if they are led by clear politics. The position of leadership must be won from the current leaders of Solidarnosc both in the political and economic spheres.

The PPS-RD are determined to stay 'inside' Solidarnosc — and they should not abstain from the non-industrial politics of the opposition. They should combine their own full demands with support and use of reforms won by the whole of Solidarnosc.



Boycott the sham elections



## The best Indiana Jones yet

### CINEMA

The summer holidays are here, and so is the new Indiana Jones film — adventures for children of all ages. We sent Thomas P Carlyle to report on Indiana Jones III. Batman is expected to come roaring in on his Batmobile any time now. Watch this space.

I loved 'Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade'. This is the third Indiana Jones film, and by far the best.

The comedy has been stepped up greatly, and the special effects are very good indeed.

This film also answers some of the intriguing queries that have made the Indiana Jones films so successful. It shows dramatically where some of the main points of his personality come from. We see an early adventure in which the young Indiana gets his characteristic hat, whip, and life-long horror of snakes.

The racism — or rather racial and national stereotyping — has gone, and that's a big improvement on the two earlier films. The voodoo-hoodoo mumbo-

jumbo has also disappeared.

I think that one of the reasons this third Indiana Jones film is so much better than the earlier two is that it doesn't have a proper love interest. This gives an opening for action and comedy.

The film gives young children a taste of Hitler's brutality, but it's not made too horrible.

There is admirable acting by all the cast, especially from Sean Connery as Indy's father. The father and son relationship is extremely funny.

You have probably gathered by now that I really liked this intriguing, action-packed, hilarious film. It's a must for everyone except snake and rat phobists — whose flesh will creep!

## Women for Rushdie

### TV

By Vicki Morris

I've seen documentaries about certain pornographic films — 'snuff movies' — in which women are bound and masked, only to be killed seconds later for the delectation of whatever sorts of low-life scum get their thrills out of that sort of thing.

Without wishing to be overdramatic, that's what stills of Iranian women wearing the chador reminded me of in Joan Bakewell's 'Heart of the Matter' last Sunday night.

The subject of the programme was a group called Women for Rushdie, at a time when the events around 'The Satanic Verses' are prompting developments in the Islamic community which confuse white liberals as to whose side — Salman Rushdie's or the Muslim fundamentalists' — they should be on.

Joan bravely contended that British opinion as a whole — the 'liberal consensus' — too often looks favourably on cultural minorities autonomously, keeping themselves free from interference by British state agencies, without considering that sometimes aspects of those cultures are foul, for example their treatment of women.

Some members of 'Southall Black Sisters' developed this argument, explaining how the 'hands off' approach of state institutions is sometimes no better than negligence.

The police, for instance, not

renowned for weighing in on scenes of domestic violence, are even more likely to leave an Asian woman to her fate. And social services hardly ever see it as part of their task to help find refuge for such women: they are directed 'back to the community', which of course traditionally supports the rights of the husband.

Black autonomous organisation is something that white liberal types hardly dare to criticise, but they sometimes forget that black groups are not monolithic. The programme pointed this out, and made the essential point that Muslim women's experience is diverse and not monolithic.

An Egyptian journalist, educated at an English public school, gaily regaled the audience with descriptions of Saudi women-only banks and of the respect afforded professional women in Saudi Arabia. A radical feminist paradise?

However, the programme concentrated on the more representative experiences of women in Southall — for instance, a woman who found that she could not live with the man chosen for her as her husband.

As a punishment, her husband's family put her out of her home and abducted her children, taking them to Pakistan where she can have no contact with them.

The woman who reminded me most of those porno films was an articulate devout Muslim who explained how being swathed from head to foot in the presence of men she doesn't know made her feel free. Free from being ogled, maybe, or from the tiresome effort of attracting men's attention.

But this woman also explained how she felt threatened by men. This woman was controlled by fear — and shame about her sexuality.

The programme gave a balanced account of different Muslim women's attitudes. I could say that I wish the fundamentalist woman wouldn't 'internalise her own oppression', or whatever the trendy phrase is. But really, what she thinks is her own funeral/business.

The problem is for women who don't conform to the norms of their community, and who are punished as a result.

Joan knew whose side she was on. And her programme correctly attempted to give a voice to those progressive women whose voices are often stifled, supposedly for the greater good.

As the Rushdie issue stirs up racism, leaders of the Muslim community put pressure to be silent on any group which threatens to divide the community — or, more correctly, to draw attention to the divisions already existing.

The programme also served to remind white liberals that, while they are correct to support the fight against racism by ethnic communities, they have ignored the progressive struggles of groups within those communities. And that Women for Rushdie need their unequivocal support.

## To know or not to know



### LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Top biological and medical scientists met recently in Switzerland to discuss a project which has been compared in cost and, by its critics, in futility, to the US moon landings of twenty years ago.

The project is to map or sequence the entire human genome, to find out the exact order of the letters, words and sentences in the book of instructions that tells our cells how to grow into humans and not into, say, armadillos or tomato plants.

The genome, a collection of genes which are the codes for making individual proteins, is made of pairs of chemical sub-units called deoxyribonucleotide bases. These are arranged like the rungs of a ladder, supported on backbones of other chemicals which are like the sides of

the ladder. The ladder is not straight but spirals. The name of the entire chemical is deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and its shape is the famous double helix.

The human genome is organised in 46 sub-units called chromosomes. Each is on average 4cm long, an incredible length for a single molecule. Every cell in our bodies contains a set of these 46 chromosomes, amounting to about 2 metres of DNA. We have so many cells that all our DNA, if stretched out, would reach to the moon.

To find out the order of the base pairs in our DNA is not all that difficult technically, but it would be very time consuming. Ordering one million base pairs per day, it would probably take 20 years to finish the job, occupying hundreds of workers.

It might be possible to reduce the amount of work though. About 98% of the human genome seems to consist of DNA that doesn't do anything (or doesn't seem to do anything). It is known as 'nonsense' DNA.

Many scientists argue though that unless we sequence that too we can't know that it does nothing. One idea about it is that it contains mutating copies of genes which could perhaps come back into the 'sense' part of the DNA, producing a new protein which would represent an evolution of the species.

Having sequenced the whole lot, we would then have the details of all the genes that make up a human (the one whose DNA was sequenced). We would need to sequence the DNA of several humans in order to investigate the variation between individuals and to get an idea of the degree of diversity between us. We might also want to compare our DNA sequence with that of our closest relatives, the great apes, whose DNA seems to be 97% identical to ours.

What could we do with this information? It would greatly help in understanding how we grow and how the various functions of our bodies are co-ordinated. It could enable us to identify the genetic fault underlying several inherited diseases. Such diseases include cystic fibrosis, Huntington's chorea and Duchenne muscular dystrophy, devastating and ultimately fatal diseases caused by a change in a single gene (and possibly by a change in a single base pair).

The potential value of this can be seen by looking at the case of sickle-cell anaemia, one of a few genetic diseases whose cause is already known. SCA is a devastating illness causing great suffering to its victims though carriers suffer no ill effects and, indeed, are at an advantage over 'normal' people in areas of the world afflicted by malaria.

In SCA, the genes coding for haemoglobin, the red stuff in the blood which carries oxygen, has a single changed base pair. This results in a change of a single sub-unit of the haemoglobin which changes its properties enough to cause changes in the shape of red blood cells at low oxygen levels. This causes the blood to clog up the small blood vessels, resulting in a sort of internal suffocation.

Knowledge of the cause of SCA enables tests to detect carriers who can then be counselled about having children. Tests can also be done to detect embryos with SCA which can then be aborted. It is also hoped that it may be possible to develop treatments, perhaps drugs, that can counter the tendency of sickle-cell haemoglobin to cause clogging of the blood vessels.

More far-fetched is the idea of gene therapy. This could take the form of trying to 'infect' the victim's cells with a 'normal' copy of the faulty gene. This would only be

suitable for certain types of genetic disease. SCA might be one of these. Failure to produce certain hormones, like insulin, might be another case. Gene therapy has been tried, unsuccessfully, in the case of another genetic disease whose basis is understood — thalassaemia. The experiments were unauthorised and could actually have harmed the patients. The scientist responsible was severely censured and lost his research grants.

Another type of gene therapy would be to insert the normal gene into an affected fertilised egg. But, having detected such an egg, it would be a lot less trouble and safer just to discard it and look for an unaffected egg.

Many other diseases seem to have genetic components but also environmental components. Even here, though, it might be useful for an individual to know that they run an increased risk of, say, heart disease. They could then reduce the environmental component of that risk by giving up smoking or cutting down on fatty foods.

Some participants in the discussion in Switzerland were worried that this information, if not kept confidential, could make it more difficult for people to get jobs or insurance.

Fears that knowledge of our genetic make-up could be used to 'construct' more 'beautiful' or 'intelligent' human beings, or perhaps stronger or more athletic ones, were generally discounted. Such attributes, in so far as they can be defined, depend on a variety of genetic and environmental factors. It would be far easier to improve 'intelligence' by giving children secure but mentally stimulating up-bringsings than to fiddle around with their genes.

But is it worth it? Well, it's better than making nuclear bombs!

### HOW TO BEAT THE POLL TAX



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# The working class is on the move!

# Reject this offer!

**M**rs Thatcher has brought the present wave of industrial unrest on herself.

She's screwed workers so much that they are now rebelling. It's not just the traditional militant trade unionists like dockers and railworkers but the health service, NUPE, NALGO, all those people.

It only needs one to break through and that will give a tremendous boost to everyone else.

I'm not sure if we are going to see the knives out in the Tory hierarchy, but certainly the Tories have got themselves in a mess and the working class is beginning to look up.

I'm sure that the miners will give every assistance we can to these struggles. Last week, at our annual conference, NALGO declared a picket line on the Spa. Of course the miners refused to cross the picket line. They called the conference off for a day, and turned up at that picket line to assist and give solidarity. It was well received.

But we also went up on Wednesday morning to the railway station at Scarborough to join the NUR lads, and they were very grateful to see us.

The lads finished up getting visitors tickets and coming in to the NUM conference where they were very warmly welcomed.

## WHETTON'S WEEK

A miner's diary



It's that sort of solidarity and mutual understanding that is bound to raise the consciousness and enthusiasm of workers.

**A**t the conference itself, Arthur Scargill, in his Presidential address, reiterated the same message he has been

giving for some while now.

It is time the miners got off their knees, stood up and fought again. While we sit back and accept pay rises being imposed and all the restrictions being placed upon us, it's only going to get worse.

The longer we leave it, the harder it's going to be when we actually do make that decision to fight. I think that is 100% correct.

In the NUM we have had our membership drastically reduced by this Tory government, but yet we are still there and still fighting. To try to say that the NUM is finished is a load of bunkum.

You need to go to the pits and see the mineworkers taking industrial action or refusing to kow-tow to management.

The NUM, although greatly diminished in numbers, is not diminished in stature. The NUM has been the inspiration for many a struggle in the past and will continue to be so.

At one time I used to regard the *Guardian* as a quality paper, but their correspondent at conference wrote a scathing attack which was more fitting to the *Sun*.

Instead of actually reporting what was said at conference, the *Guardian* printed a total misrepresentation of Scargill's speech and Scargill's reception at conference. You had to be there to experience it, the feeling of solidarity and the fact that we will continue to fight on.

Don't take any notice of the media. The NUM is not finished, far from it!

**M**erger with the T&G was mentioned. It's obviously a sad day if the NUM has to talk about merger.

But when you think that we're going to finish up with something like 50,000 members it makes sense from an organisational point of view that we should merge with the T&G.

Once we become one national union instead of a federated union, then we can become part of the T&G, the same as many other unions have done. I don't think that's necessarily bad.

**T**he South Wales and Scottish Areas played their usual trick of sniping at Scargill at every opportunity, but the conference was much bigger this time.

It was sad to see areas of traditional militancy resort to such tactics. They were exposed to many of the other delegates present.

I believe that eventually, once all the bitterness and acrimony of sorting out the various Areas has died down, we will be one national union, and we'll all pull together. It's got to come.

I'm sure the Area leaderships will recognise that and put their full weight behind the national union.

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

## STA: setback shows need to build

By Tim Peacock

**D**oug McAvoy, the candidate of the right supported by the CP-Kinnockite 'Broad Left', has won the vote for general secretary of the National Union of Teachers (NUT).

He had 49,000 votes, 65% of those voting, and 25% of the NUT membership. The left vote totalled over 25,000 but was unfortunately split between two candidates, Ian Murch of the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CDFU) with 15,000 and Bernie Regan of the Socialist Teachers' Alliance (STA) with 10,000.

The STA met on 8-9 July to draw the lessons.

The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) line was that the result was a good one. The 10,000 who voted for Regan are the 'militant minority' and we should orient exclusively to them. Murch's 15,000 votes were merely 'negative protest votes'.

The *Militant*, on the other hand, saw the result as a 'major setback' for the left. SO teachers argued that the result was a setback, but it did show a solid base of support on which to build. We must address the question of how to build the STA into a national rank and file body inside the union.

We are still a very long way from this. Very few functioning local groups exist, and many STA members are simply passive magazine readers.

The majority agreed on the need to build a national campaign, to relate our policies to NUT members' concerns, to work more closely with the CDFU and to try to agree a joint slate for the for-

thcoming National Officers' elections.

But the STA conference then went on to effectively scrap regional convenors, whose job is to develop the STA regions and encourage the growth of local groups!

Blame for this lay mainly at the door of the SWP. It almost looked as if they had only turned up to push their current political hobby horse, 'Time To Go'!

So what are the campaigning priorities for building opposition to the NUT leadership? The main attack facing teachers and all other school-based workers is LMS (Local Management of

Schools).

The STA is now committed to building school committees of all trade unions and working for stronger links between unions and between schools.

The national union now has a policy won by the STA at conference this year to back action in areas where members' conditions and jobs are threatened by LMS. The STA needs to campaign for the Executive to carry this out.

On pay, the STA will continue to push for a Special Conference to launch a national pay campaign. There were disagreements over the kind of opposi-

tion possible to the national curriculum and testing; although a policy of campaigning for non-implementation was adopted it remains to be seen whether teachers are prepared to take a stand on this issue.

Important matters such as poll tax were deferred to the next national committee meeting. SO teachers will be there arguing for support for anti-poll tax unions and continuing to explain the importance of building the STA into a combative rank and file body.

## Fighting Moodie

By a Notting Hill DSS CPSA member

**T**he fight against the relocation of London Department of Social Security (DSS) offices to other areas of Britain took a significant turn last Friday, 6 July, when CPSA members at Ealing DSS voted 31 to 7 to take one week's unpaid, unofficial strike action.

Ealing is the first office to be affected by the 'Moodie' relocation plans. Workers there are working in appalling conditions while management force through the steps necessary to relocate work.

The strike in Ealing will undoubtedly boost the official strike ballot currently being held throughout London DSS of-

fices. This is particularly vital in the face of active opposition from the right-wing Section leadership to strike action, and in view of the fact that 75 DSS offices are being balloted when only 21 are affected by Moodie — a deliberate attempt by the Section Executive to lose the ballot.

On Monday 10 July the London DHSS Repts meeting puts its full weight behind winning the official strike ballot. However, only Socialist Caucus supporters argued for a plan of action after the ballot result is out next Tuesday, 18 July.

There is a genuine problem in that

## Fight agency status!

By Steve Battlemuch

**N**ot content with closing down the union's largest branch (Newcastle CO), the right-wing bureaucrats of the civil service union CPSA are now leading up to an attack on one of the union's best organised and most militant branches — DHSS Merthyr Tydfil.

The 'crime' of the branch is to have written to all branches in CPSA calling for support for a broad-based conference to discuss Agency status. ('Agencies' are being set up in most civil service departments as a way of breaking up civil service national terms and conditions, and weakening the union as a national organisation.)

The conference is vitally needed because of the refusal of the right-wing union Executive to mount any sort of campaign against Agency status, despite clear national conference policy on the issue.

The reaction from general secretary John Ellis has been swift. He has issued an 'All Members' circular denouncing the conference and threatening disciplinary action against Merthyr branch secretary, Mark Serwotka.

Mark is a well-known activist within the union who has been a thorn in the side of the bureaucrats for years. They

clearly relish the prospect of taking him on.

Activists in CPSA need to react to these events quickly by:

1) Ensuring their branches sponsor the conference. As we go to press, around a dozen branches have done this. The more branches that sponsor the conference, the harder it will be for Ellis to attack it.

2) Send letters to Ellis and the Executive condemning Ellis's actions and demanding no disciplinary action against Mark Serwotka and the Merthyr branch.

More information about the conference can be obtained from Mark Serwotka, 44 Glan Road, Aberdare, Mid Glamorgan.

## IN BRIEF

**BBC unions staged their ninth walkout over pay last Friday, 8 July.**

Management imposed 7% in May. Since then they have offered a marginally better offer including a £200 lump sum payment. The unions want a bigger lump sum and next year's settlement date brought forward by two months.

The Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions has

By a London busworker

**A**fter two months of pretending to lead a strike and having gained only 1% extra on our basic pay, the London Bus Conference voted in favour of accepting the new deal of 8%.

The garages will be holding a ballot on Friday 14 July and are being recommended to accept. This is also the day that the new inflation figures are to be published, so we will be able to see that the offer is even more of a pay cut than before!

If the members do accept the deal, it will not be because they are happy with it. Who gives thanks for a pay cut?

It will be because, after weeks of being messed around, they have lost any confidence in their leadership to put up a fight.

After many years of demoralisation and unwillingness to fight, the membership showed an anger and determination to claw back some of the things that have been taken away from them for a change. And if ever there was a time to fight and win, now is it.

The docks have started a national strike, the rail and tube workers are continuing their action, and local government workers are on their first ever national strike. Oil rig workers, building workers and many others are coming out.

And our leaders are telling us to go back before we've even tried.

We urge all members to vote against the deal and force the London Bus Committee to put up a real fight, linking up with the other workers in dispute.

## Tubes: unity needed

**L**ondon Tube workers staged another successful one-day strike last Wednesday, 5 July.

Their strike, alongside BR workers, caused severe congestion into the capital. As more people tried to get into work, tailbacks stretched for miles — despite token attempts to create car parks out of London parks. Another strike is planned for this Wednesday, 12 July.

It is vital to build on this new-found unity in action. Station staff are resisting plans by management to rip up all their old conditions and channels of promotion in a scheme called 'Action Stations'. Drivers, and guards, are fighting for a £6.43 hourly rate for one person operated (OPO) trains and increased differentials for guards.

Unofficial action by Tube drivers earlier this year put Tube bosses on the defensive and boosted the confidence of station staff.

Tube bosses have the same plans for all their workforce in the build-up to privatisation.

A drivers' strike has been called by ASLEF for Tuesday 18 July. It is not clear, as we go to press, whether this is a move away from striking alongside railworkers and NUR Tube workers or a move towards stepping up the strikes to two days a week. This can only lead to confusion.

Strike action should be co-ordinated. It should be stepped up towards all-out action. But this must be organised clearly and openly by the unions hammering out a joint strategy. A return to isolated actions by ASLEF and NUR members would be a disaster.

identified 12 companies to ballot for all-out strike action, for a 35-hour week with no strings. The claim will affect the conditions of around two million engineering workers.

The construction company UK Structures has broken ranks from the national bosses' organisation, the National Engineering Construction Employers Association (NECEA), with its increased pay offer to striking London steel erectors.

The five construction companies building the Channel Tunnel are to be prosecuted by the Health and Safety Executive over the death of a worker in February.

## WORLD BRIEFS

### US miners battle

**A** police van, carrying arrested miners who had been picketing in the current US miners' strike, recently found that no nearby petrol station would sell it fuel when it ran out.

The incident highlights the wide support won by the strike. Half the miners' union membership has walked out on unofficial solidarity strike with miners at Pittston Coal, where hardline bosses have tried to bust union agreements and rescind pension and health care payments.

**A**nother sign of revival in the battered US labour movement was the conference called on 19-21 May in Detroit by *Labor Notes*.

One thousand trade unionists attended, including 200 carworkers. So alarmed were the leadership of the carworkers' union (UAW) that they sent some of their supporters to mount a picket of the entrance to the conference.

Speakers at the conference included Tony Mazzochi, secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical and Allied Workers Union, Glen Berrien, president of the Mail Handlers' Union, Diana Kilmury, co-chair of 'Teamsters for a Democratic Union', and Sam Giordino, assistant to the president of the Canadian UAW.

*Labor Notes* is a newsletter produced by socialists, some of whom are members of *Solidarity*, the group which publishes the bimonthly magazine *Against the Current*.

# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Soviet workers move towards free unions

**T**he working class in the USSR is beginning to stir and organise independently for the first time in sixty years.

According to Jonathan Steele in the *Guardian* (10 July), "workers from more than 70 Soviet cities

voted [on 9 July] to set up a nationwide information centre which could pave the way for an independent trade union movement on the pattern of Poland's Solidarity.

"Their decision came at the end of the first conference of the new 'workers' unions' and 'workers' clubs' which have sprung up over the last year...."

Organisers declare that "The present union structure is a monopoly. We are fighting against monopolies," and called for the conference to set up a strike fund, an independent workers' legal centre and press centre, and coordination in the elections for the official trade unions.

They called for the new Soviet law on strikes to be amended to cut the required period of warning from 30 days to three days or less; attacked changes in labour law which give managers more authority; and demanded that each workforce should be able to hire their own management and call them to account.

Some of the workers present were against forming a free trade union on the model of Solidarnosc because it would "split the working class" or because they wanted to be more cautious. The conference held the second day of its proceedings in a hall owned by the official trade unions, and probably some of those involved have close links with the official structures. But the direction of the new initiative is clearly towards workers organising independently.

After the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the trade unions played a big part in the running of industry. They were weakened by the emergency regime and the collapse of industry during the Civil War against counter-revolution, but a big debate in the Bolshevik party in 1921 established the policy that the trade unions must keep their independence and be able to protect workers even against their own state.

Until the late '20s the trade unions kept some real independence and some real clout. But in 1927 Stalin finally pushed the Left Opposition, which had fought for workers' democracy, out of the party. In 1928-9 he turned against Bukharin's Right Opposition, which included many trade union leaders in its ranks.

In the 1930s Stalin's bureaucracy — created by the degeneration of a section of the revolutionaries of 1917 and their fusion with elements of the old Tsarist bureaucracy — gained totalitarian power. The trade unions were reduced to being agencies of the state, unable and indeed unwilling to resist the fifty per cent cut in real wages Stalin imposed on the workers.

Today the official unions function partly as government welfare agencies, partly as personnel departments for workplace managements. They control access to holidays, sports facilities, housing and other benefits, and almost all workers join them; but their role is to help spur workers on to produce more, not to defend workers against exploitation.

There is no usable legal right to strike in the USSR. But there are, and long have been, many strikes.

Under Brezhnev the bureaucracy perfected a technique for dealing with strikes: grant the workers' economic demands, arrest the strike leaders and send them to mental hospitals, and make sure that workers elsewhere do not hear about the concessions.

With *glasnost* that technique is no longer usable. Strikes have increased markedly, and the official press has begun to report them.

Perestroika — Gorbachev's programme of economic reform — has speed-up, attacks on job security, and wage cuts for many workers at the heart of it. The workers are fighting back. Their needs and interests will drive them towards creating a movement like Solidarnosc. When they do, then we will see a real revolution in the USSR.

## Railworkers: stand firm!

### Now is not the time to back down!

**A**s we go to press, British Rail has agreed to talks at the government arbitration service ACAS.

This is a climbdown from their previous position. But they are still insisting that pay is discussed through the Railway Staff National Council. They are still insisting on separating the issues of pay and of the Machinery of Negotiation.

The NUR must stick by conference policy to settle both issues together.

BR are on the defensive because industrial action has been stepped up. The overtime and rest-day working ban by the drivers' union ASLEF caused cancellations of up to one in four trains! NUR leaders have talked about stepping up their strikes to two days a week. And, of course, the dockers have begun their national strike.

In 1984, during the miners' strike, NUR general secretary Jimmy Knapp blustered about being ready to fight but settled for crumbs on the back of the workers.

Once again the danger for railworks is a shoddy sell-out deal. Rail unions must demand that BR settles the two issues together. They should demand that BR stop talking about talks and put some money on the table — more than the measly 8.8 per cent suggested by last week's pay review.

Clear targets should be set so that the membership know what they're fighting for: to maintain the right to negotiation and to win a pay rise of fifteen per cent with no strings.



## NALGO: we can win

**By Tim Cooper (Notts NALGO), Roy Webb (Southwark NALGO) and Nik Barstow (Islington NALGO)**

**N**ationally, the picture of response to the first day's action was magnificent. All areas reported an excellent response to the strike call, with 99 or 100% turnouts in many branches and whole districts. The story of closed libraries, Town Halls kept open by handfuls of Chief Officers and two scabs is the

same from almost everywhere.

The national negotiations broke down after 10 minutes with employers pretending to be completely united in refusing to offer more than 7% and insisting on the strings.

But there are cracks behind the facade. The East Midlands employers, for example, are saying drop the strings, offer more and some flat-rate too. Other employers are 'wobbling' too.

It's the government who are pressurising them to 'stand firm'. We've got to put pressure on the other way — both by keeping up the action and through pressure in the Labour Party to get Labour Councils to budge. Remember, it's Labour Councils who are now the majority on the employers' side.

Who said this strike's not political! Thatcher has decreed a 7% 'pay norm' — notice how our 'offer' is almost exactly the same as the railworkers? She's set up a cabinet sub-committee to decide how to co-ordinate the government's response to the present strike wave. Shouldn't we do the same?

Mind you, we can't wait for the TUC to do it — we need to set up local meetings now that bring NALGO members, NUR and ASLEF members and other workers like the dockers together to fight together.

Socialist Organiser supporters in NALGO have argued for some time that only an all-out strike could guarantee that we win this battle — that at the very least we have to prepare for it and convince the employers we mean it if we're to get them to budge.

It's clear that many NALGO members who didn't agree with that view before the 6th now see the sense in it.

Of course the first job we've got is to make sure that the strike action this week and next doesn't just stay solid, but grows; that we involve more members on the picket lines, that we really close down the councils.

But the employers are determined to sit it out as long as they dare — and we've got to have answers for the future.

We need to call on the National Local Government Committee to meet and decide before the next negotiations at the end of the month that we'll ballot on all-out action before we finish the current action. That's the only sensible reaction to the talks breaking down on the 6th. We have to keep the pressure up and show them that NALGO members are really serious about this claim — and that's the way to start doing it.

## It'll be all out before we win

**A Manchester railworker spoke to Sarah Cotterill**

**T**here's been a lot of coverage in the press about the dispute over the last week or two, and virtually all of it has said that it's a pay dispute, which is a real misleader.

There is a pay element to it because we do want to have a double figure rise rather than 7%. But the real thing is that the management want to get rid effectively of union recognition, by getting rid of the collective bargaining machinery and weakening it down to area bargaining with no requirement that the reps be union

members. So, ultimately, it's a union recognition dispute.

I've felt all along that without actually having an all-out strike we're going to have a job winning. But I think we've got to work towards that by winning the membership with us.

The fact that we've won the ballot and we've now had two successful one-day strikes is a sign that things are hardening up. Certainly my department is absolutely solid, and I had my doubts about some people there, so it is strengthening. The mood's getting better all the time.

I think we've now got to start looking at some degree of escalation and I think it will be an all-out strike before we win.

Locally we've already been pressing head office to prepare a ballot

to escalate the dispute, so that we don't end up wasting three weeks while we have another ballot. Then we can call a strike very quickly indeed, and if we have to go on all-out strike we can do it without all the legal tangles or delays. If there's delays, everything loses momentum; people lose a bit of heart.

The press keep talking about a summer of discontent, but let's see it happen first, let's see it happen.

Our railway electricians voted to come out, and they're out with us today officially. ASLEF is voting at the moment. So, on the railways it's getting more solid, with more unions getting involved. There's the news about NALGO yesterday; there's obviously the situation on the docks.

It bodes well — I think we need footstools here as well!