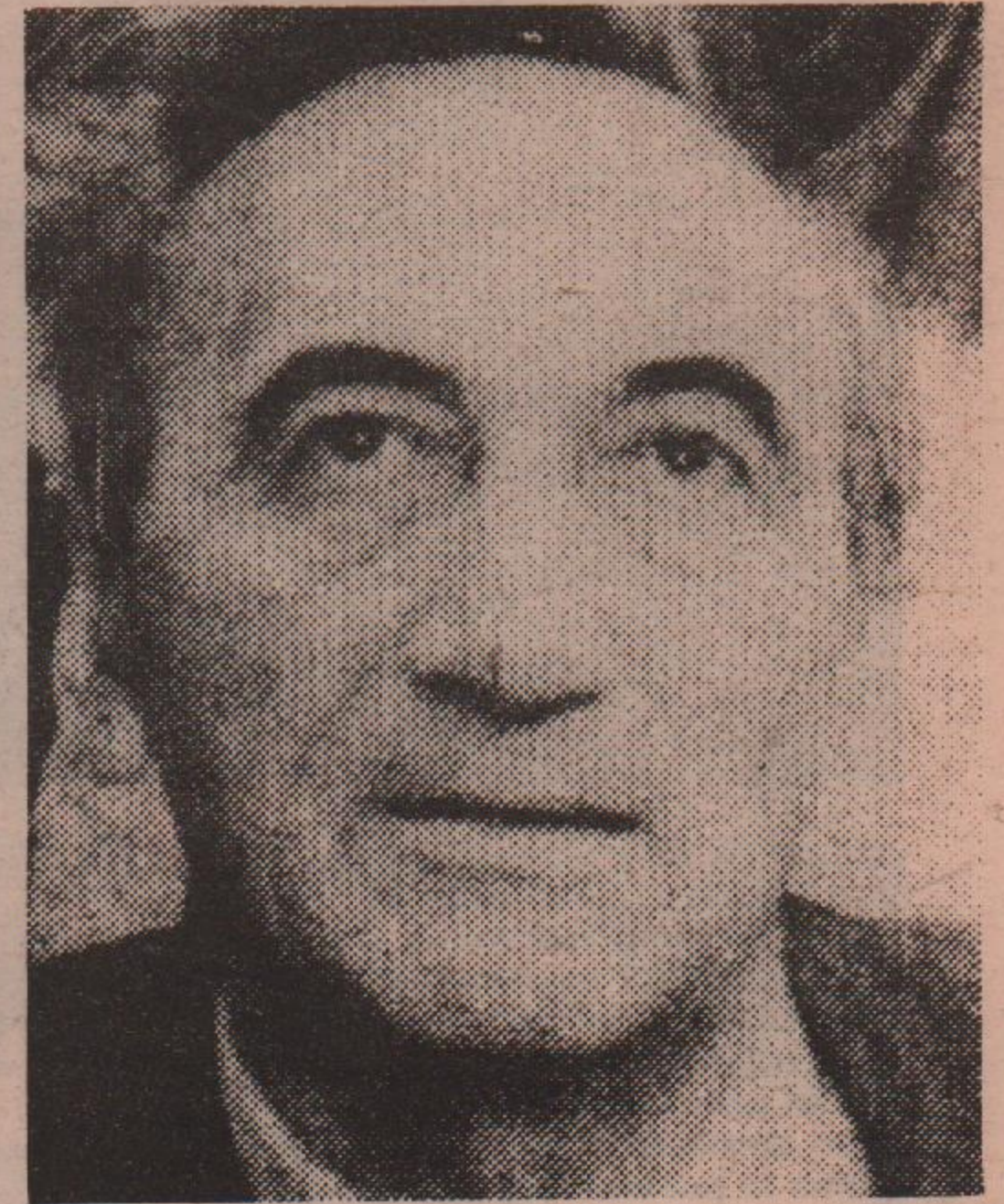


# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

More on  
Poland:  
pages 4-5

# Bankers and bureaucrats trap Solidarnosc



**W**ith dizzy-making speed, Solidarnosc has moved in four months from being a banned underground organisation to what it became last week, the main component of the new Polish government.

But the Stalinists will retain the key ministries, controlling the police and the army. The neo-Stalinist bureaucrats in the Kremlin retain the power to intervene forcefully in Poland, if they feel they need to.

And Solidarnosc nominees are coming into the seats of government power with economic programmes drafted by American professors and endorsed by the Polish bureaucrats, for "shock treatment" which will inflict tremendous hardships on the Polish working class.

In the longer term, the leaders of Solidarnosc are firmly committed to the restoration of the private profit system in Poland.

The Solidarnosc leaders have taken the Polish workers' movement into a trap — into a position where the *nomenklatura* still holds real power, but Solidarnosc provides it with front-men to carry through the vicious dictates of the international banks and the IMF.

But the Polish labour movement is more than Solidarnosc's

leaders. Not all the labour movement activists in Poland have been so disoriented by the horrors and incompetence of Stalinist rule that they now see the ruthless sway of the free market as a great step forward. There is another soul in Solidarnosc and in the Polish working class.

The best representatives of that wing of Solidarnosc are the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution). The tradition and ideas they represent are best conveyed by a manifesto issued four years ago, before the founding of the PPS(RD) itself, by revolutionary socialists in the Polish underground.

That manifesto, which we reprint in Socialist Organiser this week, is both a timely criticism of the leaders of Solidarnosc and a clear statement of the working-class alternative to the politics with which Lech Walesa and his friends are misleading the Polish labour movement.

It points the way to the future: for nothing is more certain than bitter working-class resistance to the programme of economic reconstruction at the expense of the Polish working class to which the Solidarnosc/Stalinist coalition is committed.



Striking miners in Silesia

## The workers' opposition

### 1. The class struggle

The political struggle that has been going on in Poland since 1980, which has been generally termed a fight between the society and the regime, is primarily a class struggle. It is essentially a struggle between the working class, which is subjected to economic exploitation and deprived of all political power, and the bureaucratic state power, which is based on the PZPR (Communist Party), as well as on the military and police machine and the economic and administrative apparatus.

Only the working class has the capacity to overthrow the

bureaucracy and it is only thanks to it that the social groups can liberate themselves from the yoke of the bureaucracy.

### 2. Self-management

The fundamental aim of our struggle is to get the working class to transform itself from an object into a subject, ie. from something on which others act to something which consciously acts to change and control its social environment. This will only be possible through a system of generalised self-management.

Such a system would involve self-management councils in the enterprises, linked together by

horizontal and vertical structures on the regional and national scale, as well as institutions of self-management organised on a territorial basis.

Self-management, a form of direct political and economic democracy, will thus become the principal factor in organising social and political life.

### 3. Political pluralism

Self-management can only function in conditions of unrestricted political pluralism. It cannot be foreseen today what will be the exact forms of the social

Turn to page 4



# Free these Chinese workers and students!

By Cheung Siu Ming

**T**hese photographs and short biographies of victims of the Chinese regime are just four examples of the brutality of the Chinese state.

The recent series of arrests after the 4 June massacre have included both worker and student union activists. Amnesty International have begun the long and difficult task of compiling lists of those detained. Their reports include the following workers:

- YANG FUQIAN, a leader of the Beijing Autonomous Workers Union, arrested 10 June. Yang is 27 and a worker at Beijing No.4 Hydraulic Plant. Chinese radio has reported that he has made a "preliminary confession" saying that he encouraged people to storm the police headquarters. Amnesty report that he was seen on Chinese TV after his confession. He was groggy and he had facial injuries. Several other detainees seen on TV that had also had facial injuries.
- Nine leaders of the recently formed independent workers union

in Shanghai, arrested 9 June. These include ZHANG QUIWANG, CHEN SHANGFU, WANG MIAGEN and WANG HONG. ZHANG is described as a "key member". The others are accused of "spreading rumours, distributing leaflets, inciting strikes and advocating the overthrow of the government".

- ZHU GUANGHUA, LI XIAOHA, GAO JINTANG: members of the Autonomous Workers Union in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. Arrested around 16 June.

- LIU QUIANG, a 26 year old worker from Beijing No.3209 factory. He is a leader of Beijing Autonomous Federation of Workers. He was seen on Chinese TV being dragged off a train in handcuffs, reportedly in Inner Mongolia, on 15 June. He was one of the three leaders of the Federation whose arrest warrants were issued on 14 June and published through the national media.

- LIU CHONGXI was arrested on 11 June. He is reported to be one of the leaders of the Xi'an Autonomous Workers Federation. The Federation is accused of advocating the overthrow of the

government. Liu Chongxi is accused of inciting strikes, spreading rumours and "viciously" criticising state and party leaders.

- LU LILING, a member of the editorial department of 'Development and Reform' in the Research Institute for the Reform of Economic Structures (RIRES). The date and circumstances of her arrest are not known.

These students are also in jail:

- ZHOU FENGUSO, a 22 year old student at Qinghua University, Beijing. On 14 June Chinese national television showed him being arrested in Xi'an. He is one of the 21 student leaders on the "most wanted list" issued by the regime on 13 June. The 21 are accused of organising "counter-revolutionary rebellion".

- XIONG YAN (25) and WANG DAN (24), students in the History Department at Beijing University, arrested on 6 July. Wang was named first on the list of 21 "most wanted"; worryingly, his arrest has not been publicly confirmed.

These are just a few examples from the thousands of people arrested after 4 June. To help win their release and to push the more general solidarity work, put this motion to your trade union/Labour Party, etc.

"This.....condemns the Chinese government's massacre of workers/students in Tiananmen Square on 4 June and the subsequent crackdown on those advocating freedom and democracy.

"We believe that the Chinese people should have basic democratic rights such as the right to free association, speech and a free press; the right to form trade unions and political parties free from state interference.

"We demand the release of all political prisoners and the lifting of martial law in China.

"We agree to take up the case of prisoner.....with the Chinese Embassy, to follow his/her case, to circulate a petition demanding his/her release and send it to the Chinese Embassy.

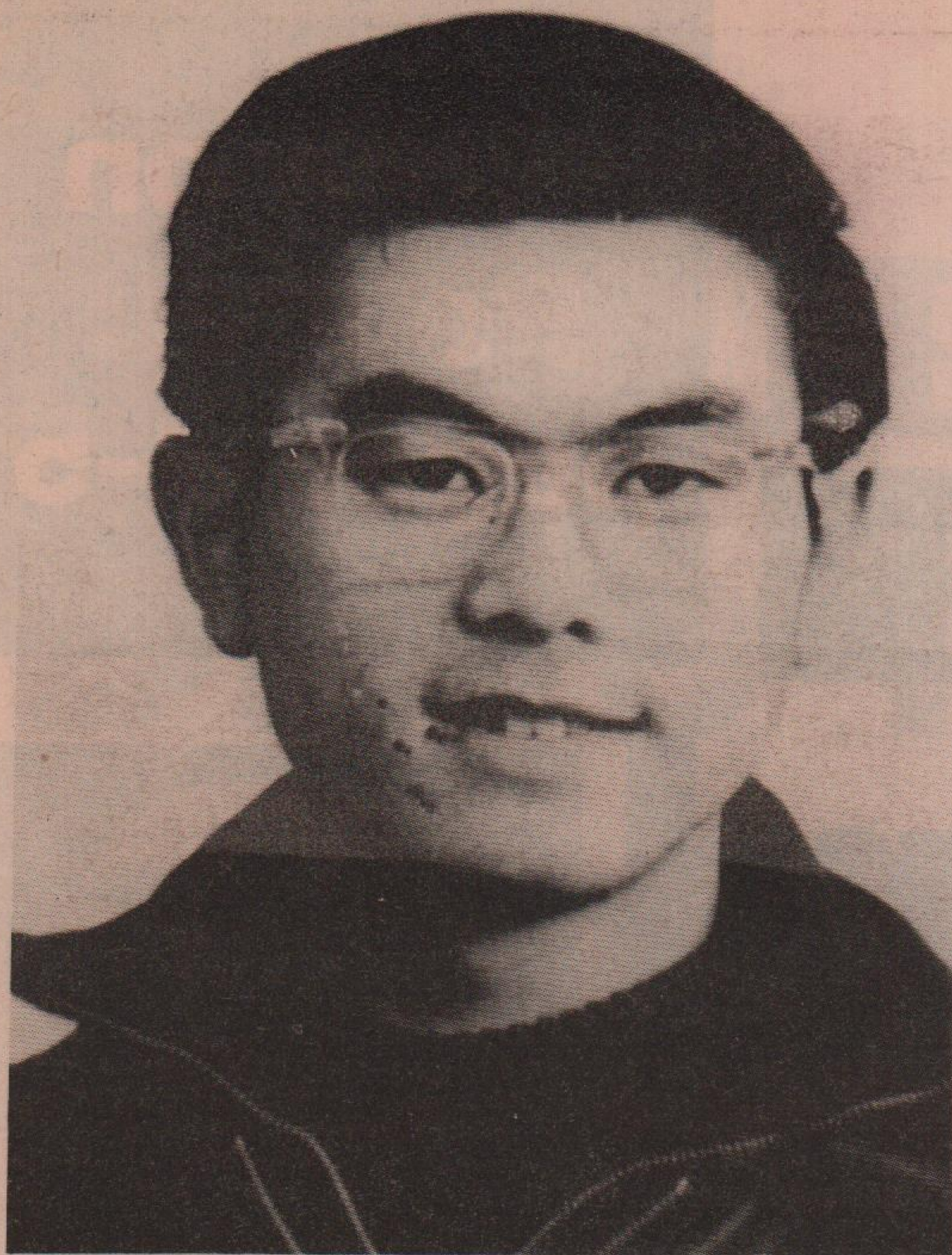
"We agree to affiliate to the Chinese Solidarity Campaign."

- Chinese Embassy, Portland Place, London W1

- Chinese Solidarity Campaign, c/o 68 Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1.

The CSC will send speakers to your organisation's meetings. Membership: £5 waged/£2 unwaged. Affiliation: small organisations £10/large organisations £20.

- Amnesty International, Easton Street, London WC1.



Yang Wei was arrested on 19 July 1989. He has already served two years imprisonment, from January 1987 to January 1989, for "counter-revolutionary propaganda and agitation". He had taken part in the large-scale student demonstrations that took place in several major Chinese cities during December 1986 and January 1987. The students were demanding reforms and democracy. He had also written articles for the New York-based Chinese Alliance for Democracy (CAD) while he was a student in Arizona in the mid-'80s.



Wei Jingsheng was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for "counter-revolutionary activity". He was editor of the unofficial magazine 'Exploration' and one of the leaders of the Chinese democracy movement of the late '70s. Wei has spent a number of years in solitary confinement; his health has suffered. His whereabouts are currently unknown.



Lobiang Chodag was a truck repair worker in the capital of Tibet, Lhasa. He was arrested in March or April 1980 for putting up wall posters in favour of Tibetan independence and membership of an underground Tibetan youth organisation. It is reported that he was brutally treated after his arrest and his jaw was broken. He was killed in the latest round of pro-independence protests in Lhasa.

## Hawke copies Reagan

Janet Burstall reports from Sydney

**A**ustralia's Labour government is on a union-bashing drive which parallels Ronald Reagan's moves against US air traffic controllers in 1981.

When the air controllers struck, Reagan ordered them all sacked. They were replaced by scabs and their union was wiped out.

Australian airline bosses and the government probably can't go that far in their current battle with pilots, but they're moving in the same direction.

Pilots on Australia's five big domestic airlines — Australian Airlines, Ansett, East-West, IPEC and TNT — voted 95% to take action for a 30% wage rise.

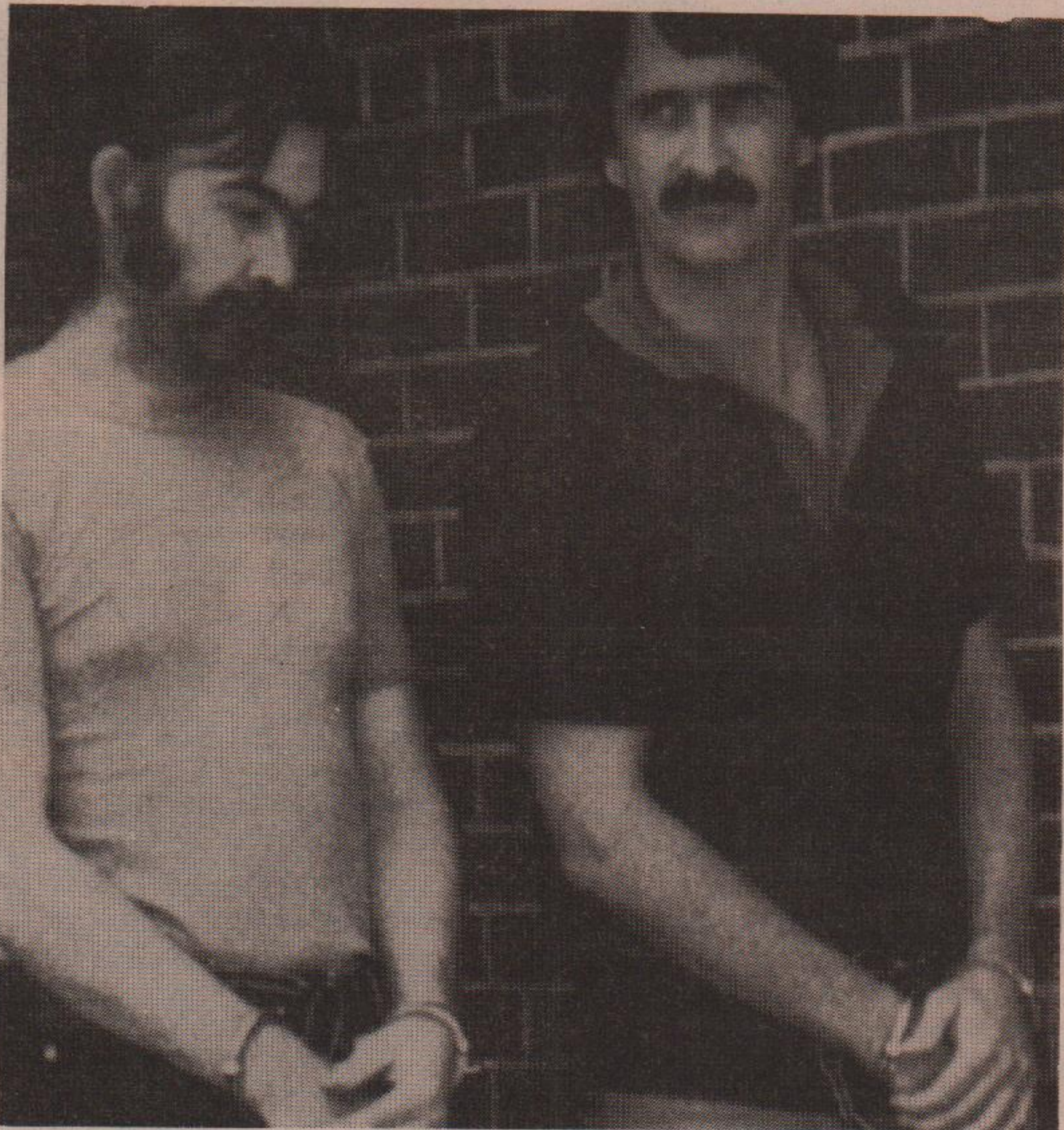
They decided to work only 9 to 5, demanding negotiations directly with the companies rather than through the government's Industrial Relations Commission, which has a 6% guideline for wage rises.

Immediately the Industrial Relations Commission cancelled the pilots' existing pay award, and the companies offered individual contracts to the pilots. No pilot accepted. The airlines locked out the pilots, cancelling even 9-5 services, and said they would sack the pilots.

All 1600 pilots then resigned their jobs and claimed their superannuation money from the companies. The companies served writs for damages on individual pilots and said they were keeping the superannuation money in reserve against those damages.

The airlines are advertising overseas for scab pilots. They say they've had a big response, though there's no evidence yet of these scab pilots in action.

The pilots' pay offer is only 8% of the airlines' costs, so the motive for their hard line can't just be economic. They are losing \$36 million a week. It looks as if the airlines have been encouraged — at the very least — in their hard line by the Labour government, anxious to protect the wage controls it has negotiated with the ACTU (Australian TUC) and the bosses



Steven Wallaert (right) and another US air traffic controller leave a court after Wallaert was jailed for 60 days in 1981 for defying the Reagan administration's back-to-work order. Now a Labor government in Australia is using similar union-bashing methods against airline pilots

under the "Accord". There is talk of the government compensating the airlines for their losses from the strike.

Prime Minister Bob Hawke has stridently backed airline bosses Peter Abels and Rupert Murdoch, and supplied air force aircraft and crews to the airlines so that they can run skeleton services. Rules have been changed so that international airlines can take domestic passengers on the bits within Australia of international flights.

The scab flights are only carrying 2000 passengers a day, while the normal figure is 30,000. The latest move by the airlines and the government is to try to charter planes and pilots from overseas companies, notably Thai Airlines, which is non-union.

The ACTU has followed the Labor government's line and op-

posed the pilots, even though a radio opinion poll has shown the public backing the pilots two-to-one. The Metalworkers' Union has made a protest against the legal action against the pilots, and the Transport Workers (baggage handlers and so on) said it would not service the air force planes used on scab flights.

Australian international pilots (working for Qantas) are in a different union, but have supported the domestic airline pilots and are refusing to take domestic passengers on their international flights. So are pilots on America's United Airlines.

According to the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations, British pilots are also refusing to scab, but there are problems with non-union airlines such as Continental and Thai Airlines.



Wang Xizhe has been arrested three times since the Cultural Revolution. Wang is a factory worker from Canton City. He was associated with the democracy movement of the late '70s. It was claimed at his trial that he was involved in "secret meetings" in Beijing in 1980 which aimed at forming a "new form of proletarian political party" with the intention of "destroying the dictatorship of one party". He is currently serving a 14 year sentence, imposed in 1982, for "counter-revolutionary activity". It is not known where he is being held.



# Why Stalin allied with Hitler

## EDITORIAL

**T**he extraordinary sight of millions of people joining arms across the Soviet Baltic republics in protest against their annexation by Stalin forty years ago, was a dramatic reminder of the Stalin-Hitler pact that precipitated World War Two.

On 23 August 1939, the governments of the USSR and Germany signed a non-aggression pact (and later a friendship treaty), following which the USSR annexed Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and invaded eastern Poland, while Hitler invaded from the west. The treaty with Stalin had given Hitler the cover he wanted, and he was able to force the hand of his European enemies. War began.

The Stalin-Hitler pact (also known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact) inevitably had dire consequences on the pro-Moscow Communist Parties. In the British Communist Party there was a fierce faction-fight, party leaders like Pollitt and Gallacher opposing both the pact and the soft line on fascism that followed it. They were ousted by R Palme Dutt, a pro-Moscow doctrinaire.

Eventually, in 1941, Hitler invaded the USSR, and Stalin had to change sides.

The whole episode is obviously very embarrassing for the pro-Moscow Communist parties. Fifty years on, they accept that the pact was a mistake, but without drawing any conclusions (the *Morning Star* comments wisely that people make mistakes) and by continuing to warp the history of that period.

The Stalin-Hitler pact was just one of numerous dramatic shifts in Moscow's policy. In 1928, the Communist International declared a 'third period' in which social democracy was 'social fascism' (worse than ordinary fascism) and the Communists could make no

alliance with it.

The *Morning Star* (25 August) claims that "throughout 15 years of the Weimar Republic [social democracy] rejected all Communist proposals for a united front against the rise of fascism". In fact, from 1928 to Hitler's victory in 1933, the German CP opposed any united front with the social democrats except as a purely propagandist recruitment technique. The united front was a policy advocated by Trotsky and his movement, denounced as 'Trotsky-fascists' by the Kremlin.

The *Morning Star* does admit that the 'third period' line isolated the CP...But why no conclusions about the people who said so at the time?

Moscow not only changed its line continually (after Hitler's rise to power, it launched 'popular fronts' with bourgeois parties), it demanded blind obedience from its different national sections and the individual members of them. Anyone who criticised was purged. Trotskyists — during the Spanish civil war of 1936-39, for example — were shot in the back of the neck.

The Stalin-Hitler pact was not an isolated error. It was signed because the Moscow bureaucracy put its own interests (and even then is interests defined narrowly and nationalistically) before the interests of the international communist movement. What it got out of the pact with Hitler was not freedom from a war with it; it got the Baltic states and half of Poland. And that is what Stalin wanted.

The pact confused and disoriented the workers' movement. Until 1941, the Comintern line was that both sides were imperialist, which for them in practice meant a soft-peddling on Nazism. Then they became fervent advocates of the Allies' 'anti-fascist' struggle, opposing strikes — including in such paragons of democratic values as South Africa.

And their 'third period' policy allowed Hitler to come to power in the first place.

As the documents are now being



published revealing the grim truth of the Nazi-Soviet pact, the labour movement must indeed remember it, and not allow the pro-Moscow

Stalinists to squirm their way out of it. And we must support the right to self-determination of the Baltic

Republics, while also supporting the rights of the Russian and other minorities in those regions.

## Behind the war in Colombia

**B**ehind the Colombian government's war on the cocaine barons stands the United States, anxious to be seen to be acting against the spread of drugs among American youth.

But this attempt to wipe out some major drug suppliers will hardly address the real issues.

Why do youth in the USA, and increasingly in Britain, turn to drugs? Why are the economies of countries like Colombia, and even more so Bolivia, so heavily dependent on cocaine production?

Drug abuse, which is to say not merely the taking of illegal drugs but becoming addicted to them with bad personal consequences, is closely related to poverty, joblessness, despair and demoralisation. In

American cities with high unemployment, there is a high level of drug abuse. Drugs like crack, which is extremely dangerous, are a problem especially in the poorest layers of society.

In Third World countries, similarly, the drug trade is linked to poverty. Bolivia was once dependent on tin production, but with the collapse of the world tin market its population now relies very heavily on growing coca leaves for cocaine.

In Colombia also, if the drug trade really was stopped, the livelihoods of thousands of people would dry up, and they would starve to death.

Neither the American nor the Colombian governments show much concern to be tackling these social issues. What has really upset the Colombian government is the political power of the drug barons

— and the growing number of assassinations of judges and politicians. The Bolivian government in the past has taken a different attitude: in 1985 it borrowed money from the country's top cocaine dealer!

Drug abuse is clearly a big problem in British as well as American cities. We cannot even start tackling the problem without tackling social conditions — creating decent jobs, decent housing, decent public services.

But in the US, especially, the problem is not just drug abuse, but the development of a huge illegal drug-dealing economy and culture. In the US, welfare payments generally stop after you have been jobless for six months. Then you starve — or turn to crime or drug-dealing.

To get the money for highly-priced drugs, unemployed kids are forced into a spiral of crime. Because their habit is illegal, they find it more difficult to seek medical help. Since they can be arrested for possession alone of the drugs, they are driven 'underground'.

Alcohol, which is legal, is also a dangerous drug, but although alcoholism is a serious and dreadful problem, it does not have all the other attendant problems associated with crack or heroin.

The possession of drugs should be decriminalised, so that addicted youth can get help without fear of

arrest. Centres should be set up to provide drugs for addicts while helping them get over their addiction — a system that exists in Holland already. Relatively harmless (and popular) drugs like marijuana should be made legal.

In Colombia, the labour move-

ment needs to find its own way of dealing with the cocaine barons, rather than rely on the US-backed government. And a real economic alternative is needed to lift the Colombian people out of the poverty they are in.

## Police behind Carnival violence

**O**nce again, there were violent clashes between the police and mainly black youth at the Notting Hill Carnival, and once again the popular press is trying to suggest that this is all the Carnival is about — the the strong implication that in future it should be banned.

Never mind that most of the 500,000 people who went to Notting Hill had no inkling of the violent clashes that happened on Monday evening.

Clashes between black youth and the police are anyway not a new occurrence in Britain. The precise facts of the 'riot' last Monday night, 28th, are unclear, but the general context is not. Black people in general do not trust the police. Why not? Not because of some

peculiar inability to think straight.

During the miners' strike, previously 'law-abiding' miners, experiencing the reality of the police at first hand, realised what life was like for black people. "We are ethnic minorities now," as one miner put it. The role of the police was to break the miners' strike.

The police force is a racist institution. The big inner-city confrontations in 1980 and 1981 followed fantastically heavy policing of black areas, and the population's patience simply snapped. It was the same story at Broadwater Farm in 1985.

The clashes that took place at Notting Hill do so because of the daily experience of black people at the hands of the police. Until local communities police themselves, such clashes, riots — and uprisings — will continue.

*'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

### How Poland's economic plan worked in Bolivia

#### GRAFFITI

The man who has drawn up Solidarnosc's economic plan, Jeffrey Sachs, was the same bright-eyed American whizz-kid who sorted out the economic ills of Bolivia.

The result? One of the world's poorest countries is now even poorer, and the working class has more or less ceased to exist.

The Bolivian economy used to be based on tin mining, and the tin miners for many years were the vanguard of a wonderfully militant workers' movement. In 1952 the working class nearly took power. Under a succession of awful regimes, including military dictatorships (Bolivia had quite a bewildering number of changes of regime), the working class kept alive its traditions of struggle.

In the 1980s the world tin market collapsed. Under Sachs' economic plan, the mines had to be closed. Despite a bitter fight, the tin miners lost. Now most of them have dispersed to the countryside. This must be a grim warning for Poland.

Poland already has some of the worst evils of capitalism.

When the 1979-80 oil crisis created long petrol queues in the USA, there were several cases of impatient drivers shooting motorists in the queue ahead of them. It was a terrible example of the inhumanity and brutality generated by capitalism.

Now we have the same sort of thing in Poland. The queues are for food, not for petrol. Several times recently, elderly or sick people have died in these queues. The queuers behind them, anxious not to lose their place, do not go for help when people collapse. They just step over them.

America, however, continues to outstrip the world in the combination of vast riches with hideous squalor.

Its education system, especially in the big cities, is declining fast. Now only one in five of 17 year olds in American schools can do so much as write a simple one-paragraph letter to a supermarket manager applying for a job. Only one in five can read a bus timetable.

And those are the ones who are still in school. In some inner-city areas, up to three-fifths of pupils drop out before completing secondary school.

If the Tories have their way, British education may soon be not much better. According to recent figures from the Labour Party, Britain's schools will be 15,000 teachers short at the start of next term.

Britain's cities are certainly on their way to competing with the squalor of

America's.

A recent article in the *Independent* notes that "London is a peculiar city, compared with Milan and Paris. Its public transport is in a state of chaos.

"Its network of battered, dirty, graffiti-smothered buses is due for full deregulation in 1993. Investment in its frightening, filthy and faulty Underground is seemingly high in absolute terms, but barely enough for essential maintenance..."

Two facts cited in the article give some of the explanation. In both Milan and Paris employers pay a tax spent directly on public transport. Property developers in Milan have to make payments towards the city's public works. "In London, low personal taxation and private profit are seen as the way to make the city work".

In Milan and Paris public transport tickets are 29% and 35% respectively of the cost of the service. In London, they are 85%. Result: crowded roads, more pollution.

### Draft programme of the workers' opposition

From page 1

organisations and representative bodies set up. We cannot say exactly what will be the role of the free elections to the Parliament that we would like to see.

But it is clear from the start that the principle of political pluralism has to govern all forms of participation in political life for the society.

#### 4. The revolutionary struggle

The transformation of the working class from an object into a subject is only possible through revolutionary changes.

The belief in the possibility of a compromise with the bureaucracy is a dangerous illusion that could prove fatal. In fact, there is no way to reconcile the introduction of a system of self-management, that is, the realisation of the interests of the working class, with the domination of the bureaucracy.

One course for the anti-bureaucratic uprising could be a revolutionary general strike turning into an active strike (ie. a takeover of the factories by the workers), supported by actions outside the factories.

It is only in such revolutionary conditions that we could expect a part of the army, primarily ordinary soldiers, to join in the uprising of the working class, when they see that the working class forces have a chance of success.

#### 5. Self-organisation

A revolutionary goal of the struggle requires a revolutionary strategy, that is, a strategy based on consistently advancing the self-organisation of the working class.

Such self-organisation is the common element in all the phases of the development of the workers' struggle, from the present fight for partial objectives to the future

struggle for a system of self-management, in which the principle of self-management will find its fullest expression.

Every battle, even on the most limited question, bears within it an embryo of the future revolution, inasmuch as it contributes to the self-organisation of the workers.

This is why the demands put forward by the workers' movement in its programmatic documents must always take into account three elements:

1) They have to correspond to the needs of the working class.

2) They have to be in tune with the level of consciousness of the workers at the time.

3) They have to make possible, in the struggle itself and on the basis of its success, to raise the level of self-organisation of the working class and of the other social groups allied with it.

#### 6. The independence of the workers' movement

Today, the existence of an independent workers' movement is the main form of self-organisation and the main pre-condition for the struggle of the working class.

The fight against the bureaucracy entered a qualitatively new phase in 1980, when the strikes opened up the way for the formation of Solidarnosc, the first national independent structure representing the workers that we have seen in the history of the bureaucratic system in Poland.

Today, building and strengthening workers' organisations in the plants independent from any organisation or institution outside the working class remains the principal task.

#### 7. Pluralism within the workers' movement

Pluralism is necessary within the workers' movement in order for it to be able to develop politically. The right of the workers to organise freely in clubs, groups, currents and political organisations has to be defended. Open politicisation of the workers' movement, based on clear principles, can only strengthen it.

Attempts to smother this process, under the pretext that it 'weakens the union' is 'factional' activity, or 'provocation' on the other hand, can only undermine the movement, or in fact divide it and they involve all the characteristics of provocation.

#### 8. Self-determination

Understanding the class character of social relations in Poland involves rejecting the nationalist imagery that reduces our fight to a struggle against the Soviet Union for independence. The basic dividing line in our nation is not a schematic opposition between patriots and traitors but one of opposing interests among different social groups.

This is why national independence, as an effect of the struggle of the working class for social liberation, represents, from the standpoint of the working class, the full achievement of the indispensable right to self-determination.

#### 9. International workers' solidarity

The Polish working class is not isolated in the struggle. It has friends and allies abroad. They are the workers of the entire world.

The Polish workers' movement can and must draw on the strength of international solidarity. The differences between East and West cannot hide the fact that the workers of both camps are linked by common interests, by a common



struggle for a common end — the transformation of the working class from object to subject — against common enemies.

The question of international solidarity is one of close cooperation of the various national contingents of the revolutionary workers' movement; it is one of interaction between the development of the class struggle, for example, in Poland, the Soviet Union and Great Britain.

#### 10. Socialisation

The indispensable precondition for the liberation of the working class is for it to lay the economic foundations of its liberty, that is, the socialisation, outside of the state and in the framework of a system of workers' self-management, of the means of production that are today stashed. It is in this way that the working class will obtain the material guarantee of realising its interests, as well as the legitimate interests of the other groups in society.

The aim of the revolutionary workers' movement, flowing from the essence of the social relations against which it rebels, is not the privatisation of state property or giving it autonomy, but to genuinely socialise it.

We regard the taking of political power as a means for the working class to assume economic power.

#### 11. Workers' opposition

Joint work by radical worker activists with a view toward forming a workers' opposition to the bureaucracy is essential to draw up a programme for the Polish workers' movement and to gain support for the revolutionary struggle aimed at establishing a system of self-management, a self-managed republic in the full sense of the term.

By establishing coordination among the organisations, or in the future by building revolutionary parties, we are not opposing ourselves to the workers' movement in the broad sense.

On the contrary, we want the revolutionary current, which is a component of this movement, to be consolidated within its own structures so that it can better contribute to building an independent mass workers' movement. From that flows the basic significance of this platform.

That is, the victory of the Polish workers depends in the first instance on adopting a strategy for revolutionary struggle against the bureaucracy. In practice, the advance to social self-management has to be based on a revolutionary political identification by the workers. It involves the workers becoming conscious of their social and economic interests, as well as the independence of the political-organisational institutions of the working class. This is why it is the responsibility of those who share the ideas expressed in this platform to unite their forces in the struggle for the common cause.

Wolny Robotnik  
no.30, June 1985

### Trotsky's theory was temporary

#### LETTERS

In no.411 you carried a page article with the weary "orthodox" Trot case, accusing you of failing to understand basic Marxism.

While assuredly constant repetition of the fallacy gets boring, a new reader might be taken in by the superficially authoritative case.

Your "orthodox" correspondent, as is usual, made significant omissions. He quoted from 'Permanent Revolution' but neglected to state that the arguments quoted were an attempt to show that Stalinism could not last a full generation; and that Trotsky made it quite clear that he was producing a temporary theory to meet a temporary situation and that if Stalinism did last, then his theory would have been proved to be wrong, and should be thrown in the dustbin of history.

Your correspondent also omitted all reference to Trotsky's view in 1938 that Stalinism would be overthrown in the course of a world revolution at the end of the war then beginning, and that, if it were not, this would prove that the analysis that he had produced as a temporary assessment of the class nature of the USSR had been wrong and must be abandoned.

But it is not only Trotsky whom your "orthodox" comrade revises. The term a workers' state, and the associated concept of a state that is neither capitalist nor socialist, but is transitional between the two (a state

that, as Trotsky said, can only be short-lived) had for Lenin a very definite meaning.

Lenin's initial coining of the term was spelt out in detail. He described Russia (on several occasions) as "workers' dominated (through the soviets) state capitalism in transition to socialism" — adding at the time of the trade union controversy — "but with severe bureaucratic deformations".

That was a conscious reference back to Marx's favourable comments on Lassalle's "Qu'est-ce que c'est qu'une Constitution?" in which the latter said that it is possible during a revolutionary situation when the citizenry is armed and

vigilant for a ruling class to be overawed and a transitional society be imposed. If the transition is not completed, rapidly; if the citizenry lose their vigilance and their power to impose decisions that conflict with the underlying class system; then inevitably the ruling class will reimpose its power.

Does your "orthodox" comrade really believe that the Soviet citizenry did retain through the Stalinist years the power to overawe the controllers of industry? If so he revises both Marx and Lenin. If not his argument is meaningless.

Laurens Otter  
Wellington, Salop

### Australian left realigns

Australia's Socialist Workers' Party (linked not to the SWP in Britain, but to *Socialist Action*, though it is now too Stalinist even for SA), has just applied to the Electoral Commission to change its name to the Democratic Socialist Party. No mention has been made of this in the SWP paper *Direct Action*.

Perhaps it is designed to allow them to amalgamate with the official Moscow-line party, the SPA, and have the name DSPA.

A few weeks ago, the Communist Party of Australia — which split

from Moscow long ago, pioneering 'Eurocommunism' — and the Association for Communist Unity (former SPA members who supported the Accord between the Labour government and the unions to control wages, and are still a bit unsure about Gorbachev) held a New Left Party Conference and plan to formalise their relationship next year.

Meanwhile, Labour Treasurer Paul Keating has just delivered the budget with a \$9.1 billion surplus! Interest rates remain at 17.5%, and yet Labour still look a reasonable bet to hold on at the elections scheduled for later this year or early in 1990.

Tony Brown  
Sydney, Australia



# What's wrong with Walesa's strategy?

By John O'Mahony

In Poland a coalition government is being formed in which the Stalinist organisation, the so-called Communist Party, will, for the first time in over 40 years, have only a minority of ministers.

The main other force in the government will be Solidarnosc, the political organisation based on the working class which has its origin in the great strike movement of August 1980 and the ten million strong free trade union which grew up between August 1980 and its suppression under martial law in December 1981.

This is the most important development in Eastern Europe since the rise of Solidarnosc nine years ago.

To understand what is happening and put it in perspective we need to look at the origin of the Stalinist system in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe. What is happening in Poland now has many parallels with what happened at the birth of Stalinist power in Eastern Europe in the mid '40s, except that the evolution may be in the opposite direction, from Stalinist power and pervasive Stalinist state monopoly in society to capitalism — what Lech Walesa mistakenly calls the first ever journey from socialism to capitalism.

In 1944 Stalin's Russian army beat the Germans and overran the countries of Eastern Europe. By 1948, a hard-line Stalinist system built strictly according to the Russian model had been installed everywhere.

In the years between 1944 and 1948 coalition governments ruled in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, etc. In all these coalitions a Stalinist party — under varying and changing names — was the dominant partner, surrounded by other parties, or splinters of other parties, mainly old Social Democratic and peasant parties, which increasingly became mere satellites and puppets of the Stalinist organisation.

Invariably the Stalinists in the coalitions controlled certain key ministries, those which controlled the army and the police — in other words, the ministries which controlled the State. The Stalinists used the state machine as a private monopoly, chopping away at and manipulating their opponents and their coalition partners. Rakosi, the Stalinist boss in Hungary, described the process as the 'salami tactic', taking the opponent a slice at a time.

The essential framework within which such things were possible, and without which they would all have been impossible, was provided by the Russian army and by militarised Stalinist secret police forces.

According to the wartime agreements between the USSR, Britain and the USA the East European countries were within the USSR's recognised 'sphere of influence'. Yugoslavia and Albania were exceptional because local Stalinists took power there without the Russian army, but everywhere else the Russian army and KGB either were in occupation or (as in Czechoslovakia) had arranged things for the local Stalinists and then withdrawn to the borders.

The bourgeoisie had either been discredited by collaboration with the German occupiers during World War 2, or pulverised and destroyed by them, or both. Vast swathes of industry were statified at the end of the war. In comparatively developed Czechoslovakia, for example, 75% of industry was nationalised in 1945.

The Russians and their allies

commanded both great prestige and great power to terrorise and control. The local Stalinist parties were weak except in Czechoslovakia and (partially) East Germany, but stronger parties were quickly created by the occupying forces and their local agents and collaborators, clustered round the new state apparatus.

Not only old Communist and Stalinist militants joined these new ruling parties. So did careerists, splinters from old socialist parties, and people who had served the pre-war dictatorships or even the Nazi occupiers.

By 1948, all industry had been nationalised. Agriculture had been forcibly collectivised, and Stalin's system of rule had been replicated everywhere.

As soon as the process of Stalinisation was complete, in the late '40s, the newly-forged ruling Stalinist parties were purged. Public trials, modelled on the Moscow Trials of 1936-8, were organised, in which CP leaders confessed to being 'imperialist spies' or 'Zionists'.

Invariably the victims of these trials were the people who had been in the old Communist Party, before the Russian police reformed it as an instrument of Stalinist state power. The secretaries of the Hungarian and Czech parties, Rajk and Slansky, for example, were tried, confessed and were hanged.

The new political regime in Poland looks from a distance very like what the Polish government looked like in, say, 1946. The coalition prime minister is not a Stalinist, but the Communist Party will hold the key state-controlling ministries, as it did then. The Stalinists still hold state power — a monopoly of the legal means of violence against the people.

The civilian state apparatus is still held by the CP, as are the key positions in running industry. And the might of the Russian army still gives the Kremlin the right to say to the Polish government: thus far and no further.

But it is the differences between now and the beginning of Stalinist rule in Poland that will determine what happens. Then, the Stalinists were confident in their state-monopoly system, saw the historic future as theirs. Now the rulers of that system have had their self-confidence shattered everywhere from Moscow to Beijing, and, looking for solutions to their impasse, turn to market mechanisms.

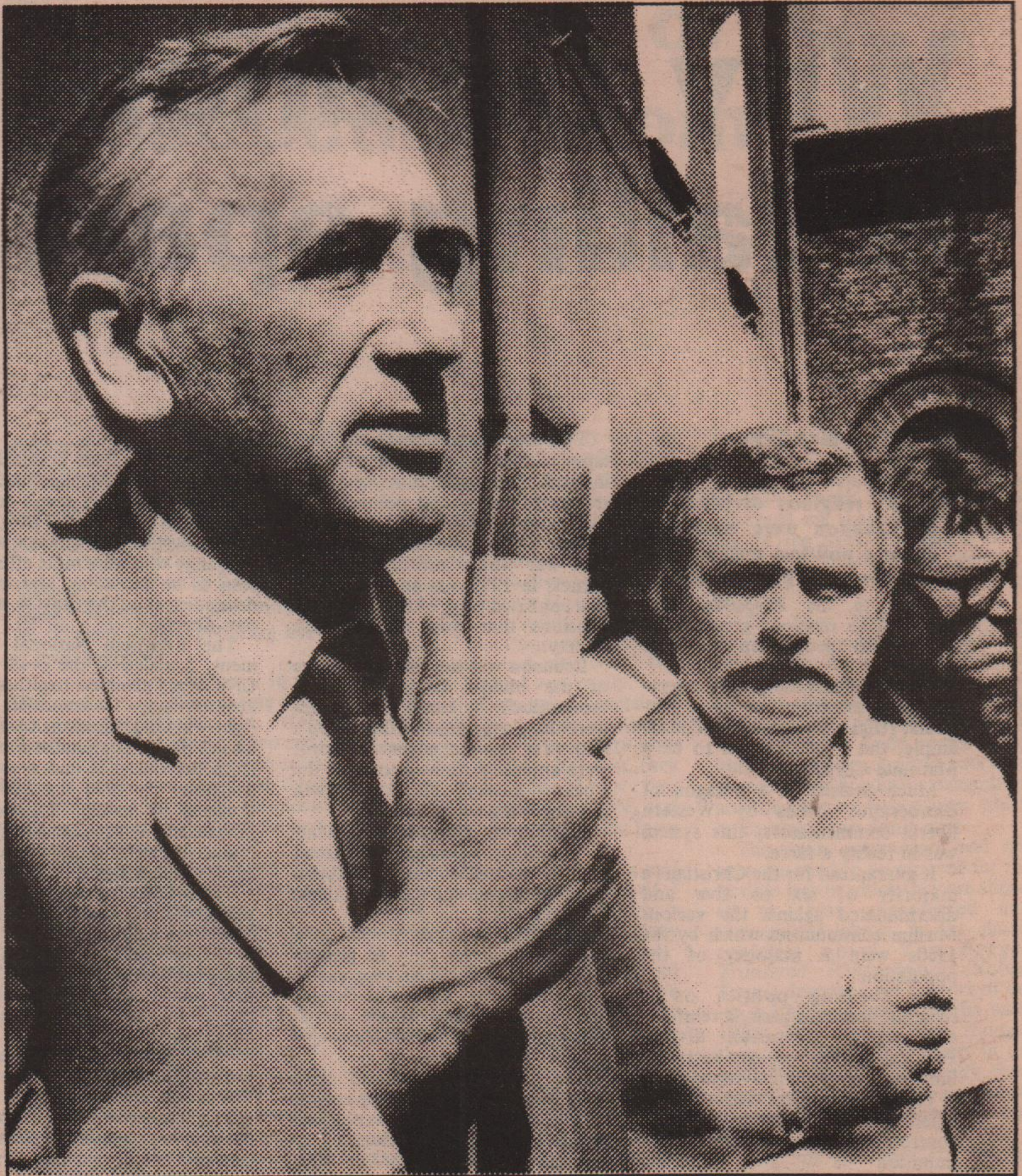
In Poland, both the Stalinist bureaucrats and the leaders of Solidarnosc are in agreement that the economy must be subjected to 'market discipline'. As long ago as 1970, the Polish bureaucracy, which then ruled almost unchallenged, opened up the economy to the capitalists of the West and tried to use huge, and ultimately crippling, loans from Western banks to develop it. Twenty years later they have drawn the full conclusions and want to internalise the market.

They do so in a political climate determined by Gorbachev's attempt to shake up the Soviet Union. And the Polish Stalinists have been publicly rejected and humiliated in the June election.

It was far from fully democratic. But the Polish people took the chance to show what they feel about their rulers — even despite the deal the Stalinists had made with Solidarnosc.

And then, much to the surprise of the rulers, their long-time puppets, the Peasant and Democratic Parties, took on a life of their own and combined with Solidarnosc to form a government in which the Stalinists were reduced to a minority.

The role of Solidarnosc here has been decisive. Solidarnosc is by now not the mass union it was in 1980-1, but a smaller, more compact labour



Mazowiecki at Walesa's right hand

movement, a political selection of people, led by a group which is avowedly committed to the restoration of capitalism in Poland.

Lech Walesa is wrong that he is trying to organise the move from socialism to capitalism. That system never had anything in common with socialism. We do, however, have before us the terrible spectacle of a labour movement leadership deliberately and knowingly trying to create conditions for the capitalist exploitation of the working class it represents.

Solidarnosc is a labour movement which has been shaped in the peculiar Polish atmosphere of bitter resentment at their national oppression by the Russians, who 50 years

**'Lech Walesa is wrong that he is trying to organise the move from socialism to capitalism. That system never had anything in common with socialism'**

ago next month joined the Nazis in an almost genocidal war to invade and partition Poland. That resentment expresses itself in an intense renewed commitment to Polish Catholicism as the expression of Polish nationality.

Solidarnosc came into being in a Poland, in 1980, where previous working-class struggles had largely benefited other classes. As a result of the movement spearheaded by the workers' revolt in Poznan in June 1956, agriculture had been decollectivised, recreating a powerful independent peasantry. The Catholic Church had been given a great deal of freedom at the same time, and so had the intelligentsia. But the working class still felt the heavy hand of Stalinist police-state dictatorship, under which it was forbidden to organise free trade unions or political parties.

Then, in 1980, the great mass strike wave welled up and broke the banks of the Stalinist structures,

forcing the bureaucrats to legalise Solidarnosc for 16 months. The working class found itself at the head of a great Polish national resurgence.

At the same time, everything — its nationalism, its Catholicism, its hatred of its rulers and of the Russians standing threateningly behind them, its unfamiliarity with genuine socialism after decades of Stalin's counterfeit socialism — conspired to bring that working class under the influence of a powerful block of priests and intellectuals who were fundamentally in favour of restoring capitalism and were also willing to do deals with Moscow's Polish satraps, trading working-class militancy across the counter.

Lenin wrote long ago: "To say that ideologists (conscious leaders) cannot divert from its path the movement created by the interaction of the environment and the (material) elements is to ignore the elementary truth that consciousness participates in this interaction and creation. Catholic labour unions are also the inevitable result of the interaction of the environment and the material elements. The difference, however, is that it was the consciousness of priests... and not that of socialists that participated in this interaction".

One does not have to have sympathy with or illusions in the Polish Stalinist system to find the behaviour of Lech Walesa and his friends obscene and disgusting. *Socialist Organiser*, which has always vehemently supported Solidarnosc and never hesitated to call obscene the Stalinism of Arthur Scargill (Walesa's mirror image in the West) or the letter from Tony Benn's Labour Party to "comrade" Gorbachev, has a right to call Walesa's behaviour obscene now.

The Stalinists have given Solidarnosc and its friends a majority in the government. But Solidarnosc has agreed to give the Stalinists its active support in ramming through a viciously anti-working-class programme.

On behalf of a sort of vast international Grand Coalition, which

ranges from the international bankers to the Polish Stalinists to the Kremlin, Walesa and his friends have undertaken to get the Polish working class to accept a savage programme of economic reconstruction which is likely to decimate the working class itself.

Most likely the Stalinists expect to use the credit Solidarnosc will bring to the government in order to push this programme through, and then also to benefit from the discrediting of Solidarnosc's leaders that must follow this collaboration in economic reconstruction at the expense of the working class and especially at the expense of the steelworkers and miners who have been the heart and soul of Solidarnosc.

It is good that the Stalinists' political monopoly is broken. The Polish working class must learn from its own experience and from the mistakes of its leaders.

Right now it is paying the price for the years of Stalinist rule which pushed sections of the working class into the politics now articulated by Walesa. In a way the best place for the leaders of Solidarnosc is where they now are, trying to push through policies which will bring them into conflict with sections of the working class base of Solidarnosc — and thus allow those workers to learn from experience that capitalism is not the answer to Stalinism.

Socialists in the West must continue to support Solidarnosc against the Polish state, which is still Stalinist-controlled, and against the always-present threat of Russian intervention — that is, support — against the Stalinist state — Solidarnosc's unconditional right to exist and function, as distinct from supporting the policies and activities of its leaders in government and in support of the government.

Solidarnosc is no monolith. It contains socialists and others who condemn Walesa, as socialists in the Labour Party condemn Kinnock, or Wilson or Callaghan. Their influence will grow in the period ahead.



# Why Lebanon is falling apart

By Clive Bradley

**T**he religious divisions in Lebanon were enshrined in a political system, called the National Pact, in 1943.

Seats in the Assembly were allocated to religious groups supposedly in proportion to their numbers.

Particular positions were reserved for representatives of a particular religious community. For example, the President was to be a Maronite Christian.

Much praised as a paragon of democratic virtues by Western liberal commentators, this system was in reality a farce.

It guaranteed for the Christians a majority of six to five and discriminated against the various Muslim communities which by the 1960s were a majority of the population.

By deciding politics on a religious-sectarian basis, it reinforced society's sectarian divide. Political parties on non-sectarian lines were more or less impossible.

Traditional leaders vied with and allied with each other to maintain control over their respective communities.

Such control was organised in an elaborate system of patronage based on traditional family or clan lines, and reinforced by mafia-like gang leaders.

In this situation the Lebanese state was extremely weak and regularly broke down.

In 1958 US Marines intervened to protect the Maronite Christian government of Camille Chamoun who was eventually replaced by President Shihab. Shihab attempted to strengthen the state apparatus, largely by strengthening the secret police, the Deuxieme Bureau.

But with a weak state, real power tended to fall into the hands of various sectarian leaders.

The capitalist class itself spanned the religious divide, but its power depended on the preservation of the old traditional loyalties.

Two main factors caused the collapse of this system. First were the internal contradictions, the extremes of social and political inequality upon which the system was based. There is no doubt that the civil war which got underway in earnest in 1975 was an expression, in a confused way, of the deep class divisions that exist in Lebanese society.

Lebanon was the financial centre of the Middle East, dominated economically by banks. Its beaches were the playground of the region's rich. Yet on the edges of Beirut were appalling slums known as the "belts of misery". Financial growth did not bring social equality.

Second was the presence of nearly a million Palestinian refugees, and in particular the Palestinian guerrilla movement based on those refugees.

The Cairo Accords in 1969 gave the guerrillas the right to possess arms and control their own camps and after 1970, when the Palestinian resistance was driven out of Jordan, Lebanon became the major base.

The resistance developed close links with some of the more radical mainly-Muslim Lebanese political groups that had been influenced by the rise of Arab nationalism after World War Two. These groups were trained by Palestinian guerrillas.

Politically, Lebanese society polarised on the issue of the Palestinian presence. The Christian Maronites tended to be opposed to it, many Muslims were in favour of it.

In addition, many of the social tensions were increased by an influx of Lebanese Shi'a Muslims fleeing the Israeli raids in the South.

By 1975 the economic crisis and social unrest were deepening.

The causes of the outbreak of violence included the suppression of a fishermen's strike in Sidon by the army, and shortly after, a revenge attack by Phalangists on a Palestinian bus. By July 1976 the situation had worsened to all-out civil war in which some 50,000 people were kill-

ed.

To maintain their political base, sections of the Muslim leadership identified with the revolt and attempted to gain control of it.

Amongst the Christians it was the Phalange who were most effectively seen to be defending Maronite independence, as they saw it, against pan-Arabism.

The Lebanese National Movement, founded at the peak of the Civil War, grouped together Arab nationalists, Communists, and right-wing organisations such as the Syrian Social Nationalist Party. So from the outset it had a sectarian overtone. By 1976 the LNM had dropped its secular anti-sectarian programme in the face of the communal degeneration of the conflict, from which it saw no way out.

The conflict had degenerated into a sectarian bloodbath. People were often shot only because their names betrayed their religion (the Maronites tended to have French first names as a result of their historical connection to French colonialism).

Nevertheless, by 1976 the LNM was on the verge of partial victory. The neighbouring Syrian regime saw a victory for the LNM as a dangerous possibility, a destabilisation that might provoke Israeli attack.

It intervened to curtail the LNM and the more radical Palestinian organisations. It did this first by proxy through the pro-Syrian Palestinian groups and then directly by occupying parts of Lebanon.

Lebanon had been rapidly divided between competing groups — an Israeli-dominated south, a Palestinian-dominated central-southern area, the Syrian-controlled east, and various areas under Maronite control.

This situation persisted until Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. Israel had been bombarding Lebanon in an effort to destroy Palestinian bases since 1968, and had launched a full-scale invasion in 1978. By 1982 Israeli leaders had decided that their only option was to smash up the guerrillas in Lebanon once and for all.

The invasion caused untold havoc, as the Israeli army swept up to Beirut, imposing a ruthless siege in order to starve the guerrillas into submission. Eventually, thousands of Palestinians agreed to leave Beirut and the siege was lifted. Shortly after, Israel allowed Phalangists into the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Chatilla, where they massacred thousands of unarmed Palestinians.

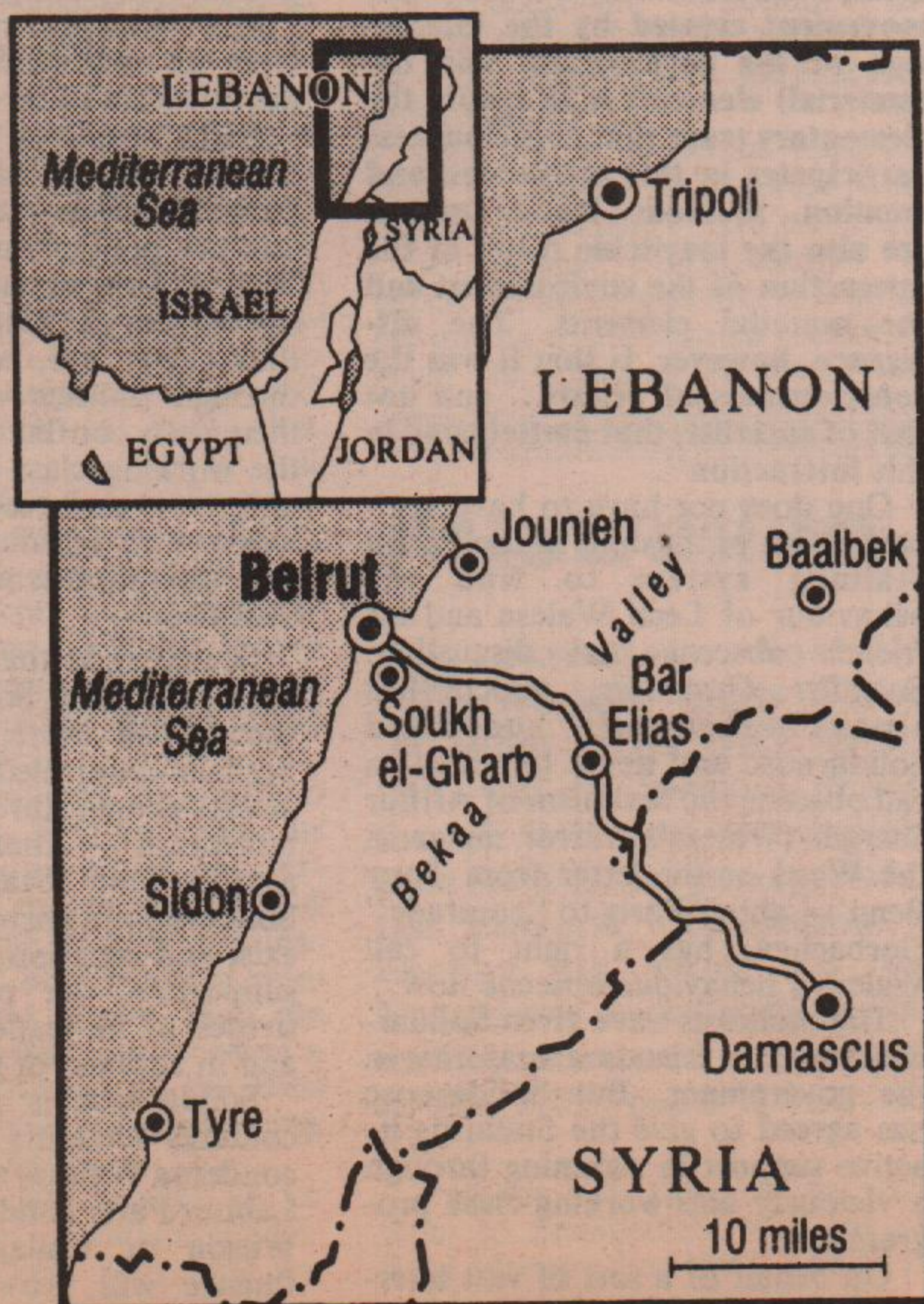
As Israel withdrew to the south, and a US-dominated 'multinational force' went in to 'protect' the Lebanese people (which it did by blowing up their villages in the summer of 1983), the Phalange party were left in shaky control of what remained of the central government. Syrian and Israeli troops remained in parts of the country.

Nobody, including the multinational force, which ignominiously retreated in early 1984, had any answers to Lebanon's ruin. Ten years of sectarian slaughter had resulted in a society in a state of collapse. Moreover, the dominant political actors by the mid-to-late 80s were quite different to those in the war's early stages.

Most of the old Maronite factions have disappeared. The Phalange was dominant by about 1981, but now it is a pale shadow of



In an underground shelter in Beirut



its past self. The current Maronite nationalist government of General Aoun, which came to power in a military coup, represents a break from the old factions (part of Aoun's philosophy is to unite the Maronites, mainly against Syria).

But perhaps the most striking difference is the role played by Lebanese Shi'a Muslims. In the 1970s, the Shi'as, who tend to be the poorest section of Lebanese society, were the civil war's victims. Driven out of southern Lebanon by Israeli raids, Shi'a refugees around Beirut were nevertheless solidly anti-Palestinian. It was among this community that Islamic fundamentalism sank roots.

A 'Movement of the Dispossessed' existed in the '70s, out of which grew Amal, the Shi'a militia which has had a long-term alliance with Syria (against Israel and against the PLO groups). More extreme, and a growing force in the mid-'80s was the Hizbollah (Party of God), heavily funded by the Iranian government.

Over recent years, much of the most destructive fighting has been

between Shi'as and Palestinians, or between these two Shi'a groups. It was the Shi'a militias that forced Israel to reduce massively its presence in the south of the country (ostensibly withdrawing, after very high casualties; in fact Israel continues to control the south by proxy and through frequent military incursions).

Aoun's anti-Syrian nationalism provoking the recent bloodbath which has been ferocious even by Lebanese standards, is an attempt by the Maronite military establishment to reassert itself. Completely unable to rally even those Muslim who are hostile to Syrian occupation, Aoun has only inflamed further the sectarian hostilities.

For socialists, Lebanon is one of the most depressing places on earth. Fifteen years of civil war, in the early stages of which there was a lot of socialist rhetoric on the main Muslim side, have led to a situation of social atrophy in which difference internal and external forces are competition — purely and without qualification reactionary competition. Even were anybody able



# The seamy side of the construction boom

**Alan Fraser describes how exploitation has got worse on the building sites**

**R**ecently I have been looking for a few months work on the building sites in Southampton.

I worked in the industry in the '70s, and in those days getting a job was fairly straightforward. Walk round a few sites, phone a few contacts, and fill in the odd application form. Usually you could get fixed up without too many problems unless you were on the blacklist as a known activist.

I soon realised that much had changed. The main contractors no longer recruited labourers direct. Every time I went onto a site, they gave me the same answer: "all labourers are taken on through the agencies".

At the agency they told me that all labourers are on 25% or self-employed. What they meant, in effect, was that I would get no sick pay, holiday pay or any other rights you get when you are directly employed and on the cards.

Very soon I found out that the labourers from the agencies are treated like sub-humans, pushed around from job to job depending on the whims of the main contractors. In the last six weeks, for example, I have been on six jobs, and in that period I have been sacked three times for the crime of insisting that the men be treated with some dignity and that they should be entitled to protective clothing and decent facilities. Every time I have made these points I have been sacked or moved on. "By the way, we won't need you in the morning. Report to the agency".

The use of agency workers means that all the main contractors get a constant supply of cheap, unprotected and unorganised labour. The standard rate is £3.56 an hour. These workers have no rights and the main contractors have little responsibility towards them.

Workers keep their heads down and conform or else they don't last long. Many of the labourers are either young lads who have no experience of belonging to a union or men, usually from the North of England and Scotland, who have come to Southampton because they thought they could earn good wages here.

In fact many of them are lucky to get a full week's work. Despite the myth of the affluent South, Southampton has low wages in many industries. There is a large pool of unskilled workers and the construction employers are using it to their full advantage.

My experience of being moved from job to job is not unique. Bob McSereny, 41 years old and an ex-seaman, has been on six or seven jobs in the last two months. He has been sacked or moved on several times.

As Bob explained to me, all he ever asked was that his fellow workers on the job had some decent rights and conditions.

Last week Bob and his mate Willie Naismith were sacked for leaving the job half an hour early on the day before. I witnessed the sacking, having just started the job that morning. When I started to have a go at the foreman about how

it was unfair, he promptly told me that I had better go as well. I had been on the job ten minutes.

We left the job and Bob told me that last week he had complained to one of the foremen who had sacked a young black lad. The foreman told him that he sacked him because he had "no fucking brains".

The health and safety on the job, Bob said, "is a disgrace. There are no safety rails and men could fall 80ft to the ground very easily."

Willie, a Glaswegian, explained that the toilets were in an absolutely disgusting state. "There were only three toilets for over 200 men, they had not been cleaned for two weeks. The smell was horrible, and they are only a few feet away from the canteen."

"I complained several times and was told I could clean them if I wanted to. I am 47. I've been a railworker and trade unionist all my life."

"At the moment I feel like an old donkey ready for the slaughterhouse. They treat the labourers like pieces of shit. There is no feeling for the men at all."

On another job I met Danny, a young Scots lad. One day on the job we were having a chat when the ganger came up to me and said: "Alan, the foreman has told me that you and Danny are sacked."

I asked why, and he said I was talking too much. The previous week I had a go at the foreman because he had sacked a labourer for crashing a dumper. Obviously he felt I had too much to say.

Danny had told me afterwards that on his last job many of the men were paying the foreman a tenner a

week.

I spoke to the regional organiser of the building workers' union, UCATT, Derek Shepherd, and he informed me that there is not one site in the area that has a shop steward or an organised presence. The only organised job is at Fauley refinery.

With over 20,000 injuries and deaths in the construction industry every year, there is an immediate need for all jobs to be unionised. A positive campaign by the union leadership for health and safety and workers' rights could enable many building workers at grassroots level to respond and fight for recognition and negotiating procedures which in Southampton don't exist.

The main contractors and the agencies need to be exposed for the terrible way in which they are allowed to treat unprotected and unorganised labour. In the classic socialist novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist* Robert Tresselt described the horrors of being a building worker in the early 1900s. Who would have thought that many building workers in the 1980s face the same insecurity, fear, misery and exploitation that those workers faced eighty or ninety years ago?

It is not all doom and gloom. Bob, Willie and Danny are living proof that workers will continue to fight back despite enormous pressures. The priority in Southampton is for the building unions to mount a vigorous campaign to ensure all building workers are unionised and that the main contractors are forced to employ labour direct.



There are over 20,000 injuries and deaths on the sites each year



win, socialists should desire nobody's victory.

In 1975-76, most socialists supported the Lebanese National Movement. The Phalange were regarded as fascists, backed by Israel. The Muslim/Christian divide was seen, more or less, as an expression of a class divide.

The picture was not completely false, but it was too simplistic. The Maronites were no less prisoners of the 'consociational' (sectarian) set-up than their enemies and the Phalange's role cannot be understood by an analogy with fascism. Conversely, many socialists had gross illusions in the Druze faction dominated by the Jumblatt family, which was no less a product of the patronage and power-politics of the Lebanese system than the Phalange was.

Is there a solution to Lebanon's crisis? In isolation, no. Lebanon is so caught up in various broader Middle Eastern conflicts that an end to its agony will depend on settlements in the wider area. A solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict; the overthrow of the Syrian regime;

the overthrow of the Iranian regime — these are all necessary to relieve Lebanon.

Even then, the underlying question of Christian-Muslim relations would remain. Is this a matter of national divisions requiring resolution on Israeli-Palestinian lines ("two states in Lebanon")?

There are not two nations in Lebanon. The divisions — and they are not just Christian/Muslim, but divisions between different Muslim and Christian sects, too — are the product of pre-capitalist structures preserved by a warped political system and now aggravated by years of sectarian conflict. They are purely sectarian-communal divisions to which socialists should give no quarter.

There have been small rays of sunshine: an anti-sectarian general strike in 1986. But it would be wrong to believe such actions will escalate in the near future.

Lebanon's turmoil is likely to continue until a socialist movement makes its appearance on the wider Middle Eastern scene.



# How many frame-ups?

By Mike Shankland

**F**ollowing the disbandment of the West Midlands police's Serious Crimes Squad, official plans are to reinvestigate cases dealt with by the squad — but only back to 1986.

This conveniently will not include the case of Martin Foran, framed by the West Midlands force for robbery on two occasions, and now chronically ill in Frankland Jail and being denied medical treatment.

It will also rule out the Birmingham Six, and the four men jailed in 1979 for the killing of Carl Bridgewater on very suspect evidence.

The police investigation will have to include Detective Sergeant Michael Hornby, named by the *Guardian* as one of the officers facing disciplinary hearing for the attempted framing of Ronald Bolden. Hornby is also named by Chris Mullin in his 'Error of Judgement' work on the Birmingham Six as being behind the obtaining of a 'confession' from Hughie Gallagher of the Birmingham Six.

Furthermore, Hornby can be linked to the conviction of the Carl Bridgewater men. One of the prosecution witnesses against them was a local criminal, Anwar 'Spider' Mohammed, who had worked closely with Hornby. (See Paul Foot's book, 'Murder at the Farm').

Martin Foran named Hornby as long ago as 1983 as one of the officers behind his first false conviction. Douglas Hogg admitted to Chris Mullin recently that Hornby had been the subject of 'many' complaints over the years, though only once had he faced disciplinary hearing, and that was in 1980.

The inquiry should also deal with Detective Inspector Paul Matthews, who as a detective constable at the time of the Birmingham pub bombings of 1974 claimed to have got a statement from Paddy Hill of the Birmingham Six, one Paddy Hill has always denied. Martin Foran named Matthews as the main officer behind his second false conviction — and one who was also involved in the first framing.

Paul Matthews was a Detective Constable in 1977 and had risen to the rank of Detective Inspector by 1984. He has gone missing from the force since 1986, following allegations of pyramid selling.

It is hard to predict exactly how the whole affair will turn out. Possibly a few officers will be made examples of, while many others will escape notice. Perhaps Hornby will be scapegoated.

The disbandment of the squad was forced by a growing weight of evidence. There had been a whole wave of allegations of police malpractice, especially in altering statements which suspects have made in police custody.

In June Reginald Bolden, who had spent 22 months on remand, was acquitted of robbery when it transpired that a 'confession' he was meant to have made had been altered by detectives. In July Keith Parchment, who had been sentenced to five years imprisonment in 1987, had his conviction quashed. Again it was found that a 'confession' he had signed had been altered by detectives.

Chief Constable Geoffrey Dear has confirmed that a number of key documents concerning a number of disputed convictions have gone missing. The *Independent* covered Reginald Bolden's case and, in an article printed on 23 June, gave details of eleven cases of police malpractice in recent years which could be traced back to members of the Serious Crimes Squad. Clare Short MP has said that she has received letters from 50 prisoners and ex-prisoners alleging that evidence against them had been contrived and altered by police officers from this force.

But the police will oversee the inquiry into the activities of their fellow officers. So far four officers have faced disciplinary hearings, but the police are quite simply setting the terms of any investigation themselves.

Meanwhile the prison system is using its usual tricks on Martin Foran. At first they said that Martin could stay at Frankland Jail and receive treatment from an outside specialist. The governor admitted to me and Valerie Foran that Martin's health had suffered from being moved around all the time. As soon as Martin finds a specialist to treat



West Midlands Chief Constable Geoffrey Dear has disbanded the Serious Crimes Squad. But now other police will investigate its cases — and only back to 1986

him they tend to move him. The governor at Frankland said that the local specialist would not treat Martin, so the only thing was for him to be moved to a London jail and get on the waiting list for St Mark's hospital there. The most likely jail would be Wandsworth, which has a poor record in dealing with the health problems of prisoners.

In fact Martin's lawyer has found a specialist who will treat Martin, and he lives in nearby Stockton, so there is no real need to move Martin at all. The real reason is that Martin is suing, the prison doctors at Frankland for negligence, so they want him away from the place.

There are plans for a day of action calling for Martin's release on Monday 11 September. There will be a press conference in Birmingham.

Martin's supporters are trying to expose some of the police evidence. The police claim to have arrested Martin at 3.05pm on 10 September 1984, held a conversation with him, charged him, arrested him, and got him to the desk of the station, all in 7 minutes after 'proceeding slowly' to the station by car. The time is significant, as they allege Martin was on his way to meet a co-defendant in the case.

# No way to kill a cat



## LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

**W**hy are cats said to have nine lives? Their death rate on the roads would appear to belie this\* but, as Jared M Diamond, Professor of Physiology in the University of California Medical School, points out, their almost magical reputation derives from their ability to survive falls from heights that would probably kill other small animals such as dogs.

Professor Diamond, writing in the science journal *Nature*, was commenting on research carried out by two vets at an animal hospital in New York. There, skyscrapers and unyielding concrete ground provide a supreme test of the cat's fabled longevity.

The vets accumulated data on 132 cats which had fallen an average 5½ storeys (over 80 feet). After eliminating 17 cats (their owners couldn't afford the hospital fees and had them 'put to sleep'), there were 115 cats in the study. 90% (104) survived, the 11 others dying of chest injuries or shock.

This is a remarkably light toll. As might be expected, rates of death and injury increased with height of fall but only up to 7 or 8 storeys (120 feet). Higher falls were less dangerous. Indeed, a cat (Super-cat?) which fell 32 storeys (480 feet) suffered just a chipped tooth and a mild chest injury. Rates of fracture decreased from an average of one per cat at 7 storeys to nearly zero above 9 storeys. These findings certainly take some explaining.

Diamond highlights some differences between humans and cats in the results of falls. Humans have a higher death rate from falls of all heights with 100% of adults dying after 100 foot falls onto concrete.

Patterns of injury differ, too. Humans generally die of head injuries and internal bleeding. Broken legs are more common in adults and arms in children. Cats suffer roughly equal rates of breakage of fore and hind limbs. So what factors influence injuries from falls? Firstly, height of fall determines velocity of impact (up to a point — see below).

Secondly, the degree of 'give' of the ground determines force of impact. Survivors of falls from aircraft have landed on mud, tree branches or snow, not concrete.

Thirdly, there are the properties of the body itself: the greater the mass of the body, the greater the impact force; the greater the surface area hitting the ground, the less the strain felt by the body (landing feet for head first is worse than landing on all fours); the thickness (or rather the cross-sectional areas) of the bones determines their strength;

soft tissues may protect vital parts; flexing of muscles and joints dissipates force of impact.

There are two main reasons why large animals suffer more in falls. First, the mass of the body increases as the cube of the height, width or length. Hence, doubling the height will generally result in an eight-fold (2 cubed) increase in mass. But the cross-sectional area (and therefore the strength) of the bones only increases four-fold (2 squared). Thus, even a small drop will break an elephant's leg.

Second is the air resistance experienced as a body falls through the air. The force of gravity depends on the mass while the air resistance depends on the area of the body. As we have already seen, surface area increases at a slower rate than mass, and so air resistance is less effective at slowing a body's fall for a larger animal.

But air resistance also depends on the square of the velocity of fall. Eventually, it increases to equal the force due to gravity and the body has reached its maximum speed or terminal velocity. For an adult human, this is about 120mph, while for a cat it is about 60mph. For a mouse, it is lower still and a mouse is unlikely to suffer any injury at all from a fall.

There is a third factor peculiar to cats: their righting reflex, based on their superb system of balance. However it falls, a cat will quickly right itself so that all four feet are downwards. The impact force is thus spread over all four limbs. In contrast, falling humans tend to tumble. Adults land most often on their feet. Babies, with relatively heavier heads, land head first with arms reflexly outstretched.

So far, we have seen why cats survive better than humans but not why they suffer less harm from falls of greater height.

The answer is in the distance of fall to reach terminal velocity. For a cat, this is about 100 feet or seven storeys. While accelerating, a cat extends its limbs rigidly. At terminal velocity, it may relax, bending its limbs slightly. Impact force is then dissipated by the bending of the joints and through the softer tissues (as in trained parachutists). The righting reflex and the relaxation of the limbs, developed throughout the cat's evolutionary history as a tree-dwelling creature, seem to explain its extraordinary advantage over similar sized creatures.

\* Incidentally, this is said to be because when a cat sees a vehicle approaching it does not perceive it to be approaching but just getting larger.

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# Nicaragua ten years after

**Maureen Tucker, just back from Nicaragua, continues her report on ten years of the Sandinista revolution. (Part 1 was in the last issue)**

**P**rogress was largely halted by the outbreak of the war the US fought by proxy against liberated Nicaragua. The US strategy was that of low-intensity warfare, in which political and economic pressure are used to support a military assault by proxy forces.

The economic and human costs of the war have been huge, and between 1983 and 1987 Nicaragua survived on a siege basis, with massive military spending and the US-organised economic blockade preventing any recovery taking place. Even now the ruined economy continues to cause havoc to the possibilities of post-revolutionary Nicaragua.

The collapse of the Nicaraguan economy intensified throughout 1987, and by early 1988 inflation was running at an annual rate of 2,000%. An economic package was introduced in February 1988, which included a change-over of currency aimed at the momentary holdings of speculators and the Contras.

Large incentives for producers were included in the package, which also introduced the protection of wages through a consumer price index. The anti-speculator measures were popular and led to demonstrations against speculators and attempts by UNAG farmers to sell directly to the public rather than through middle men.

These popular mobilisations didn't survive the continued fall of real wages, however, and unemployment rose to 300,000.

In June 1988 a second, more radical, economic package was launched. Wages and prices were deregulated, neighbourhood basic-goods stores (which had provided essential items at fixed costs) wound down, incentives to large producers increased, and the currency was devalued.

The net effect of this austerity programme was a further decrease in the living standards of workers and peasants, to the benefit of private capitalists. The package was similar to those imposed by the IMF, but since Nicaragua is not a paid up member of the World Bank the usual IMF loan cannot follow.

The transfer of resources from small to large producers consequent on this package was an illogical move since the former are considerably more effective competitors in the export market, and more efficient domestic producers.

In early 1988, for example, milk came at 20 cordobas a litre from the small producers, at 30 cordobas from the large producers, and at 40 cordobas from the state projects. Similar considerations apply to sugar, cotton and tobacco production.

Before the June economic reforms the informal economy of Managua accounted for three quarters of household income, ie. formal wages only provided one quarter, and most people had informal ways of obtaining goods and services. The informal economy was essential since salaries were not adequate to cover a minimum diet.

After June this informal economy dwindled; yet for some people now the cost of travelling to and from work is greater than the wages they earn each day.

The conservative business leader Ramiro Gurdian, a long-time bitter critic of the Sandinistas, announced

that he "supported and applauded" the austerity measures — and did more to harm the popular image of the FSLN by this declaration than he had ever done by his condemnations. The pro-Sandinista magazine *Envio* declared that there should be a "more equal charge for the right to be Nicaraguan".

While the main effect of the June measures was to encourage large private producers, shortly afterwards the government nationalised the San Antonio Sugar Refinery, which had fallen to a very low level of productivity. This reflects the pragmatic adaptation of policy by the Sandinistas which has been a trademark of their administration.

The decline in living standards for the workers did not pass without resistance. After the February reforms a construction workers' strike, led by a union affiliated to the PSN, pressed demands for higher wages and the abolition of newly imposed work regulations.

A mechanics' union, affiliated to the Maoist Nicaraguan Communist Party, also went on strike, and the government declared both actions illegal. Workers in the CST, the Sandinista federation of unions, scabbed on the strike and physically attacked strikers.

Similar scenarios were played out in the private Tona brewery, at a sack factory, and at the San Antonio Sugar Refinery. Strikers not intimidated back to work were fired, and Jaime Wheelock, the minister of agrarian reform, announced that "we will chop off the hands of those who raised the strike banner".

Regional FSLN committees put up notices saying that strikers are "deserters from the workers' front and patriotism" and "deserve the weight of the law and the hatred of the people".

In October 1988 Hurricane Joan devastated Nicaragua in a way even the Contras hadn't managed. \$800 million dollars — virtually one year's GNP — of damage to the infrastructure was done, nearly 200,000 people were rendered homeless, and a large proportion of banana, maize and rice crops were destroyed.

The Sandinistas' rapid and energetic response to the tragedy, in sharp distinction from Somoza's money-grubbing reaction to the 1972 earthquake, gained much popular approval, as did the large and quick Cuban aid efforts. Despite the huge effort from the FSLN and Cuba, the hurricane further accelerated the economic decline.

In January 1989 the latest batch of economic measures were announced by Daniel Ortega, signalling a continuation on the road to a mixed economy. The abandonment of land redistribution, a decrease in public sector employment, and the freeing of banks from controls were the most important new measures.

Drastic reductions in numbers of government employees — including the army, education and health services — increased unemployment, and wages fell even further. In continuing with the tradition of pragmatism, the government reversed its policy on land nationalisation in June when three large farms which had been deliberately kept unproductive were taken over.

A poll carried out in Managua in mid-1988 showed that only 27% of the respondents "identified" with the FSLN, but their nearest rival, the Liberals, received only 3% of such support. Elections will be held in February 1990 under the new electoral law, which will not affect the standing of the already existing parties but will make it almost impossible to form new parties. It seems likely that the Sandinistas will



Support for the Sandinistas will not continue if poverty goes on growing

obtain the largest numbers of votes cast, but abstentions will be numerous.

If living standards for the peasants and workers do not improve the Sandinistas will not be able to rely on their current level of support for very much longer. Opinion polls show that while the war against the Contras is seen to be one reason for the dismal economic situation, government mismanagement is thought to have compounded this.

With the war virtually over, anti-American hatred will wane and the Sandinistas will be seen as more and more to blame.

The combination of US aggression, the hurricane, and economic mismanagement has reversed some of the gains of the revolution, with education, health and social services suffering severe setbacks. Illiteracy is reputedly on the increase, sporadic cases of polio have appeared, and there are diarrhoeal disease and malaria outbreaks.

The 250,000 people who turned out for the tenth anniversary demonstrated continued popular support for the FSLN, but that sup-

port has decreased since the first anniversary when over 600,000 — one quarter of Nicaragua's population — celebrated in the Plaza de la Revolucion. This is reflected in the decline in the mass organisations, which are no longer functioning in many areas.

An independent report conducted for the FSLN in June indicated that Nicaragua's national income was now the lowest in the Western hemisphere, \$300 per capita. It is even lower than the \$330 in Haiti, traditionally the poorest country in that region. Soviet economic aid delegations are reportedly holding talks with right-wing private business men, as a way of avoiding having to deal with the allegedly inefficient Sandinista organisations.

The next year is clearly going to be crucial in determining the future course of the Nicaraguan revolution. Whilst it is possible that the US will reactivate the Contras if the February elections do not produce the desired result, it is more likely that internal problems will come to the fore.

Some observers have suggested over the years that confronted by

imperialism on one side, and the power of the mass organisations on the other, the FSLN would be forced to go beyond its intentions and expropriate the bourgeoisie. This now seems increasingly unlikely, as does the opposing notion that Nicaragua is moving towards (or already represents) Stalinism. The mixed economy, and an attempted advance to a breed of 'parliamentary democracy' (with continued FSLN victory), is the road the Sandinistas will continue to follow.

In May Daniel Ortega told his Swedish hosts: "we are social democrats". The tragedy of this is that his wing of the FSLN would like it to be true (the FSLN declares it aspires to be a mainstream member of the Socialist International), and don't recognise the impossibility of building social democracy in a poor part of Central America, against the huge might of US aggression.

Nicaragua's fate lies with that of Central America. Developments within the region may lead to a fresh assault on US domination. If this happens then the Nicaraguan revolution may again begin to go forward.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Wednesday 30 August**

Cardiff SO: 'China: Tiananmen Square and after'. Speaker John O'Mahony. The Comet, Moira St, 7.30

**Wednesday 30 September**

Manchester SO: 'Why we defend the French Revolution'. Speaker Martin Thomas. Manchester Town Hall, 7.30

**Wednesday 30 August**

South London SO: 'Where now for socialists?' The Two Eagles, Austral St, 7.30

**Sunday 3 September**

Socialist Movement 'National Poll Tax Coordinating Meeting'. PCL, Marylebone Rd, London W1, 11.00

**Thursday 7 September**

Canterbury SO: 'Gorbachev the Great?' Speaker Geoff Ward. Canterbury Tales pub, 7.00

**Sunday 10 September**

North London SO: 'Stalin's Heirs

Face the Workers'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, N1, 7.30

**Thursday 14 September**

Leeds SO: 'Labour's Policy Review'. Speaker Alan Johnson. Coburg pub, 7.30

**Friday 15 September**

'Labour's Socialist Alternative'. Pre-conference rally at Sheffield City Poly, Totley Hall Lane, Sheffield, 7.30. Organised by CLPs Conference and supported by Campaign Group.

**Saturday 16 September**

Pre-Conference Briefing for CLP delegates. Sheffield City Poly, Totley Hall Lane, Sheffield, 10.30. Contact CLPs Conference, Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Prom, Merseyside L44.

**Sunday 17 September**

North London SO: 'In Defence of the French Revolution'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

**Monday 18 September**

Isaac Deutscher Memorial Lecture: 'The Importance of being Marxist', by Boris Kagarlitsky. New Theatre, LSE, 7.30

**Sunday 24 September**

North London SO: 'Solidarity with China's workers and students'.

Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

**Sunday 1 October**

North London SO: 'Social Democracy goes Thatcherite'. Angel & Crown, Upper St, 7.30

**Sunday 1 October**

Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign: 'Sandinista Sprint', sponsored run and dance for Nicaragua. Brockwell Park, Brixton, SW9, 11.00. Details from NSC, 23 Beviden St, London N1 6BH (253 0246)

**Saturday 7 October**

Socialist Lecturers' Alliance: 'NAT-FHE 1989 Pay Claim Action Conference'. New Imperial Hotel, Birmingham. Details from Barry Lovejoy, 25 Philip Victor Rd, Birmingham B20

**Friday 3 November**

History Workshop Conference 1989. Salford University. Contact Helen Bowyer, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4UX (061-736 3601)

**Saturday 11 November**

Socialist Conference 'Building the Left in the Unions'. Sheffield Poly Student Union, Pond St, 10.30. Credentials £6 waged, £4 unwaged from Socialist Conference, 9 Poland St, London W1



# Batman meets 1990s capitalism

## CINEMA

By Trudy Saunders

Seeing 'Batman' leaves you feeling that there's very little hope left for the human race.

The latest film is a far cry from the 1960s 'Batman' series, where the good guys win and the bad guys get a punch or two on the nose.

'Batman' is set in a Gotham City where capitalism is fast turning into barbarism. Death and evil seem to lurk on every dark corner.

Big crime runs the city hand in hand with the police. And it rains all the time.

Against this starkly real picture of how rotten capitalism will become unless we smash it appears Batman himself.

Seemingly, Kim Basinger (who co-stars in 'Batman') was turned on by the sight of Batman in his wet-look gear. For my money Batman in or out of his rubber all-in-one leaves a lot to be desired.

Gone was the 'good but rich' Batman who wanted to save the world of the TV series. Instead, the latest Batman is nothing more than a nasty, violent yuppie with sexual hang-ups and the desire for revenge on the murderer of his parents.

The murderer is, of course, Joker (played by Jack Nicholson). Joker is a particularly obscene character, who having had his own face mutilated, sets about to do the same to the rest of Gotham City.

He has the hots for Kim Basinger and spends a lot of time trying to kidnap her. For her part, Kim, after a one night stand with Batman, spends the rest of the film sitting by

the phone waiting for him to ring!

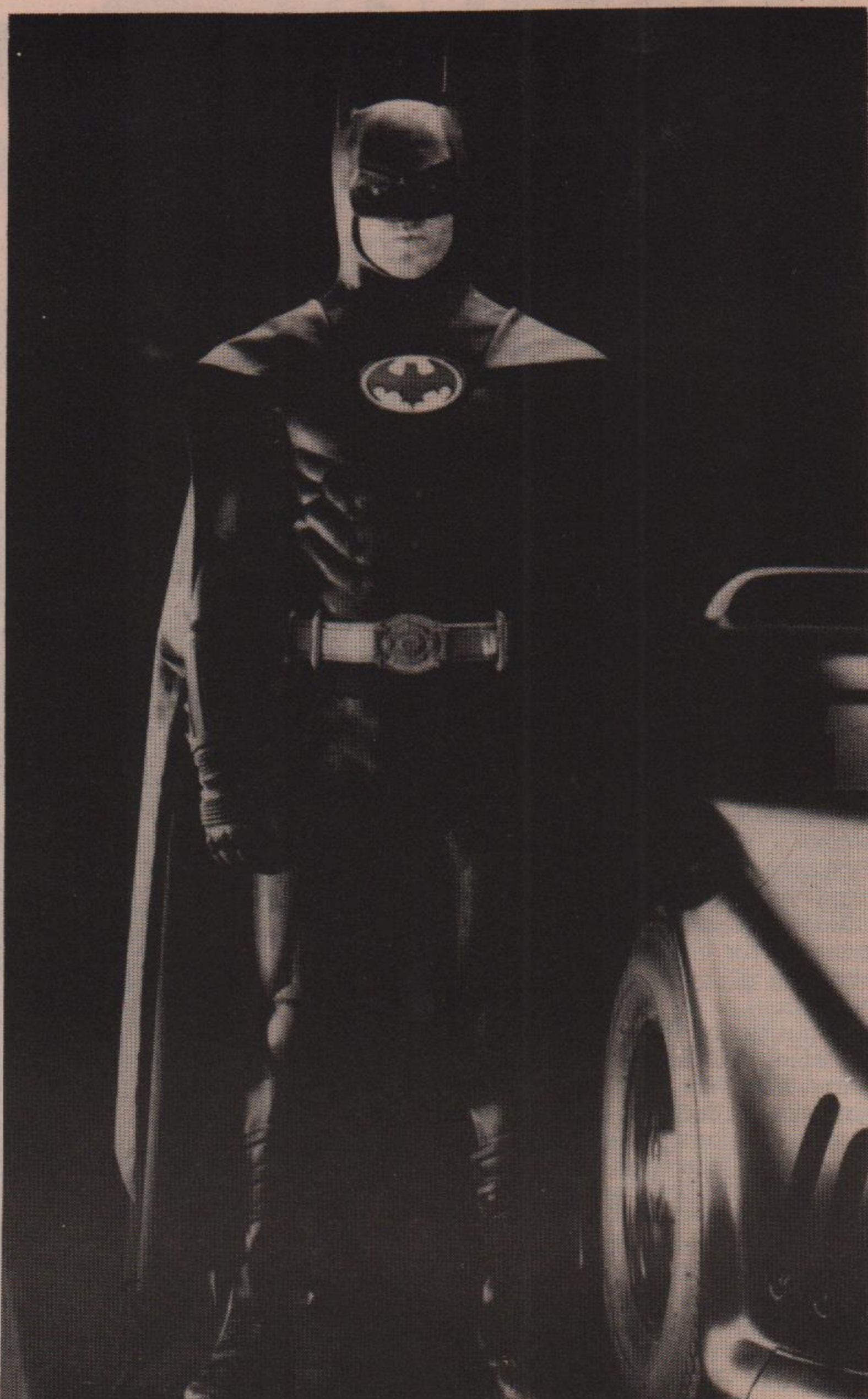
Call me old fashioned, but I do like a film with a plot. 'Batman' just hasn't got one. Like a lot of films, violent scenes are substituted for a story. Batman is as violent as Joker. At times it's hard to distinguish the two. I felt more sympathy for Joker. At least he had to kill for his money — Batman simply inherited his!

It could be argued that this 'Batman' is more honest about the world, whereas the old TV series might have led the poor unsuspecting viewer into thinking the police are good and that a caped crusader will come to their rescue in his Batmobile. But all 'Batman' says (if anything) is that the world is hard, violent, vicious (and rainy), and that only the most brutal survive. The world is fought over by two men while the masses accept their fate.

And as Batman fights mainly for his own personal reasons (to save his girl and get revenge for his parents' death) you end up having very little sympathy for him.

Those of you who watched the TV 'Batman' series will remember Catwoman, the feline criminal who gives Batman the runaround.

In 'Batman' the film, the main women characters are pathetic — victims of Joker and Batman. Jerry Hall plays Joker's 'moll' and wanders around looking fabulously slinky until Joker decides to disfigure her face. Kim Basinger gets Batman in the end — but you never understand what she's doing in the story in the first place. Despite being a journalist she behaves like a real bimbo — screaming, tottering on high heels and wearing gross American



Batman for the 1990s?

designer outfits.

To put it in a nutshell, 'Batman' does nothing to advance positive images of women.

All in all, 'Batman' is violent,

depressing and boring. Jack Nicholson is, as ever, brilliant — but he doesn't make up for the rest of the film. And, worst of all, there's no Robin.

# Small town nostalgia and big city blues

Belinda Weaver reviews other recent films

'Splendor' is a film buff's treasure trove, the filmic equivalent of train spotting. This film about a cinema in a small Italian town is an elegy to film making, but a rather premature one, since films as lively and robust as 'Splendor' are still getting

made.

In the film, director Ettore Scola pays tribute to some of the great films and directors and actors of the past, and he also mourns the decline of the cinema as the centre of a community.

In the later parts of the movie, people sit, semi-catatonically, at cafe tables, hardly speaking, and Scola presents this as a picture of a community's atomisation. Yet cinemas are only seemingly 'communal'. For the most part, people sit alone and interpreting them in their own way, weaving them into

their own private dream worlds. Hardly a blazing example of community spirit.

Scola seems to be mourning something that isn't dead, or even moribund. Film takings are on the increase, and art houses are doing better than ever. But for all that, 'Splendor' is watchable and enjoyable, if only for the incidental pleasures of identifying the movies and faces we see.

We go from small town nostalgia to big city blues with 'Slaves of New York'. This dramatisation of Tama Janowitz's loose, almost plotless,

collection of stories, pulls the threads together into a coming-into-selfhood picture. Janowitz's basic idea was that with New York rents so high, especially in the East Village artists-in-lofts milieu she satirises, people were forced to stay in dead relationships where they ended up as semi-slaves, doing the cooking, walking the dog, and other chores for people they no longer cared for. Hat designer Eleanor is one such slave, a humble, self-effacing innocent whose good nature is exploited by the self-centred artist she lives with, Stash.

In her battles with Stash, and with the supremely conscienceless Daria, a remorseless self-publicist and go-getter, Eleanor realises she wants out of the competitive, ruthless, dishonest world she's been living in, and that only by standing up for herself can she ever escape to a room of her own.

'Licence to Kill' has been a bit of a flop at the box office, not doing as well as either 'Batman' or 'Lethal Weapon 2', the summer's other 'big' movies. Is Dalton dull? Should he be replaced? That seems to be the big question.

I don't think so, and I don't think Timothy Dalton is the problem. If there is a problem, it's with the whole Bond formula, which is really rather tired. If anything, in 'The Living Daylights' Dalton gave Bond a new lease of life. He didn't camp it up like Roger Moore, and he didn't lay every woman in sight for a change. He was human; he was Bond as the new man.

But 'Licence to Kill' junks that new direction and goes back to the Bond basics — girls, guns, gadgets, amazing stunts and a big bang at the end. I enjoyed it, but it all felt rather familiar. But with its topical (and successful) attack on drug barons, perhaps it'll get a second wind at the US box office.



Tama Janowitz (left) and Bernadette Peters as two 'slaves' of New York trendiness and high rents

# Fight for the right to study!

By Steph Ward

The Tories are trying to take away students' rights to grants, housing benefit, and Income Support and replace them with a loans system.

Students will be the first group ever to be denied the right to claim the state benefits we need.

And our rights to organise in a National Union are being threatened by plans to introduce voluntary membership of the National Union of Students.

In order to defend education we need a strong and vocal mass campaign of opposition. However, all we have had from NUS is a refusal to call a first-term national demonstration and mutterings about festivals, referenda and small lobbies of MPs.

The main problem with this strategy is that it doesn't involve the mass of students. And the NUS Loans Campaign so far has been solely against loans for Higher Education students rather than demanding grants for all students, including Further Education students.

At NUS Summer Convention a few Higher Education college sabbaticals were informed about how to campaign against loans and voluntary membership. We have got to wear T-shirts saying "Student loans are a ridiculous idea".

Well, thank you very much, NUS, but personally I do not really believe that this will cause the Tories to make a U-turn and suddenly give us grants and stop attacking our union.

We need to get students involved in their student unions — by running active and broad campaigns against loans. In the first few weeks of term we need to make sure that every student is aware of the arguments about student loans.

From the moment students arrive back at college they should be involved in the anti-loans campaign. This can be done through introductory meetings, hall stalls, the spreading of information through course-reps' networks, meetings in departments, petitions, mass pickets of local MPs' surgeries, and leafleting in town centres — to name just a few ideas. All these activities should be organised through activists meetings — rather than just by the Union Exec and friends.

When loans and voluntary membership are announced in the Queen's Speech we should be ready to respond with direction action — such as occupations and shutdowns — in conjunction with education workers.

The other major attack that will hit students this year is the poll tax. The fight back should be linked to the loans campaign. But it is important to realise that students can not beat the poll tax on our own. We must get involved in the community-based anti-poll tax unions and open up student union facilities to these groups.

All this might just be more effective than a few Exec members being involved in T-shirt wearing against the Tories. The way to start this activity in your college is to start building for the Manchester Area NUS (MANUS) demonstration against loans, voluntary membership and the poll tax on Wednesday 18 October.

Start this year as you mean to go on — fight for the right to study!

**Fight for the right to study!**  
Manchester Area NUS  
Wednesday 18 October  
Assemble 1.30, All Saints,  
Oxford Road, Manchester  
Details, posters, camera-ready  
artwork —  
phone 061 736 3636



# TUC ducks the issues

After an eventful summer of industrial struggle, it should be an eventful TUC. But it won't be.

Wage victories by railworkers, Town Hall workers and others have got the bosses seriously worried. They could lay the basis for a major revival of trade unionism.

A report prepared for the TUC Congress shows that the 1980s' trend for trade union membership to fall is strong. The reason is not that workers have become hostile to unions, but that the structure of employment has changed fast, and the unions have not kept up.

In the London Docklands, the report found, many companies don't recognise unions; in those that do, only 40% of workers are unionised. Most of the companies which don't recognise unions said they had never been asked.

A campaign based on the evidence of recent wages struggles could unionise those workplaces. But the TUC Congress agenda gives no hint of that.

## Clashes coming in the post

Postal workers have voted against the reintroduction of Sunday collections.

A special delegate meeting in Bournemouth voted heavily against proposals drawn up by management and the UCW union executive. Sunday services were withdrawn by management in 1976.

There seems little doubt that Post Office bosses will try to push through their plans anyway. Stamp prices are due to rise to help pay the extra costs and offices (Newcastle upon Tyne, Edinburgh, Cardiff, Darlington and Northern Ireland) have been picked for a trial scheme in October. Management are "totally committed" to the scheme.

October is also the deadline for this year's pay deal. The union is committed to a claim "above inflation". Pay is a perennial issue, with most postal workers relying on overtime to make up their basic wage.

So with pay, Sunday working and an outstanding London weighting claim, industrial action is once again on the cards in the postal industry.

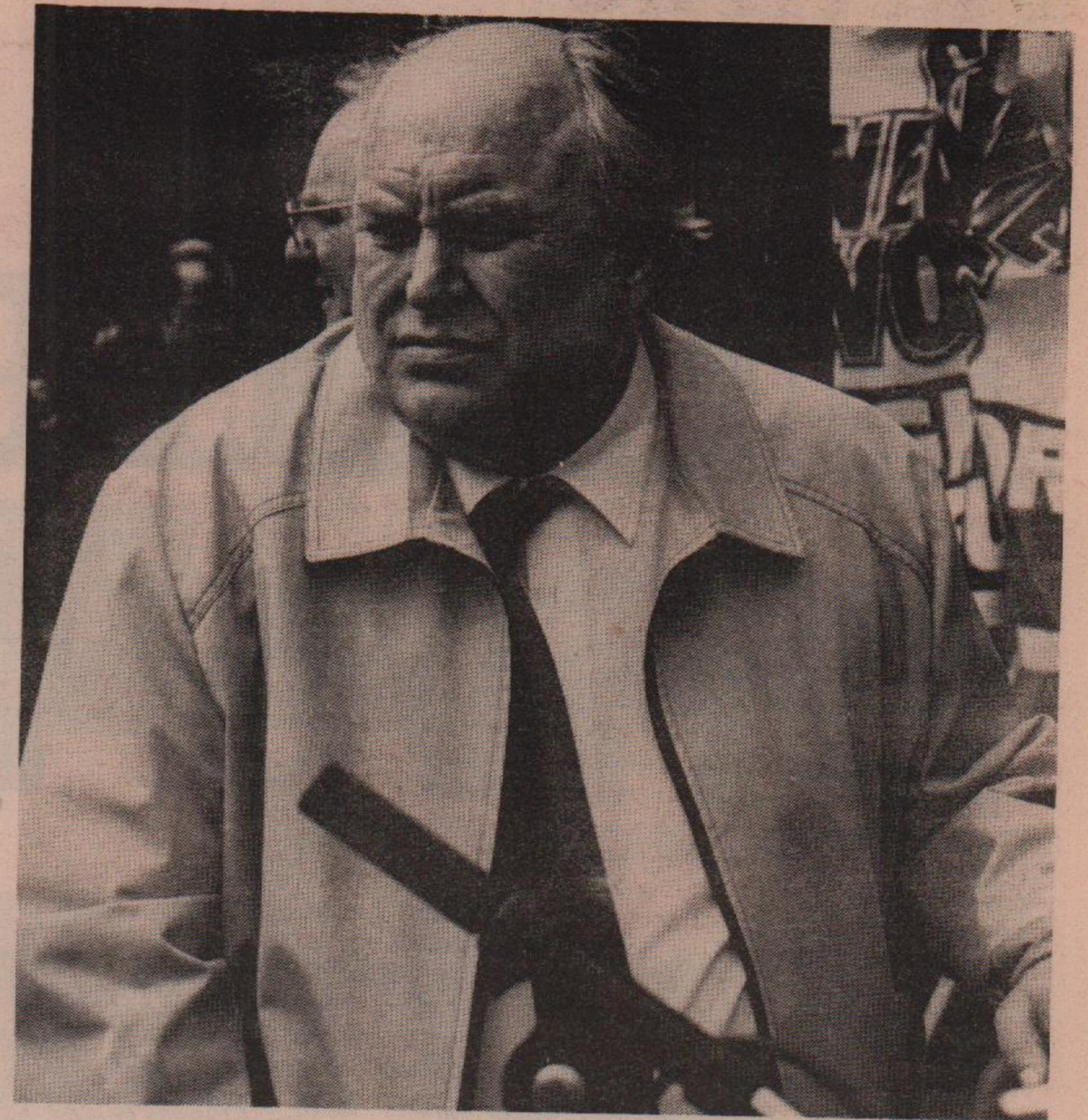
Nor does it show any serious attempt to come to grips with the terrible defeat the movement has suffered on the docks — the precedents that will set for other bosses, and the problem of how to avoid being crippled by the law.

The biggest block of resolutions for the Congress agenda is on the environment. The statement from the General Council notes that "trade unions have been at the forefront of action such as ending the dumping of low-level nuclear waste at sea and campaigning for more investment and regulation to prevent such awful tragedies as Zeebrugge and Clapham ever happening again." It does not propose anything, however, to keep trade unions in the forefront, noting coyly only that workers will "inevitably"

take action on environmental issues.

The main arguments will be on inter-union issues. A NALGO proposal to change the make-up of the General Council by reducing the representation of smaller unions is likely to be stymied by a compromise proposal to be moved by Norman Willis.

The CPSA will propose that the TUC's rules on "poaching" be modified to allow workers in a workplace to choose by secret ballot which union will represent them. Although the motives of the right-wing CPSA may be to open a loophole for the EETPU, the democratic justice of the proposal can't be denied. It highlights the problem that the TUC moved against the EETPU members not for scab-herding but for



breaking inter-union rules.

The EPIU, the small union formed by electricians who broke away from the EETPU when it was expelled from the TUC, will be applying for TUC recognition. Major unions like the GMB and MSF will argue against recognition, using the

spurious argument that the EPIU is not yet financially independent.

The agenda does include proposals on 1992 and the internationalisation of capitalism — but nothing more decisive than the setting up of a TUC office in Brussels.

## Ambulance crews fight poverty pay

Ambulance workers across the country are balloting for industrial action over pay.

Other emergency service workers, police and firefighters, have their pay linked to the rise in average earnings — so the police were given a 9¼% pay rise this year. Ambulance crew have been offered 6.5% — nearly 2% below the current rate of inflation!

An element of the claim is to link future rises to average earnings.

Firefighters' pay was linked to earnings after their national strike in 1977.

Ambulance workers will have to flex their industrial muscle to win parity with the other emergency services. The ballots organised so far are for overtime bans and action short of a strike. Many workers rely on overtime to survive — basic starting salary is only £7,330 — so a ban would have an effect. But striking, with emergency cover, would put more pressure on management.

## IN BRIEF

Talks over pay for **Post Office Counters** workers broke down at ACAS — PO bosses have only offered a 7% rise in basic pay.

3,000 manual workers at **Rolls Royce**, Bristol, have accepted an 8.9% pay rise.

7,000 menswear workers in the **Burtens** chain are balloting on a 9% rise.

**Channel 4** workers have been offered 8.3%.

**British Telecom** bosses have offered 8.9% to their 150,000 workers — the union claim is for 13.5%.

The **Manufacturing Science and Finance** union, MSF, is to ballot workers in West Gorton, Manchester, after management **derecognised the union** and imposed individual pay rates.

A survey by the London Chamber of Commerce points to **shortages of skilled** manual workers —

especially in engineering.

Three councils (Cleveland, Leicester and Mansfield) have pulled out of running **Employment Training (ET)** schemes — they say there is not enough money for the schemes, so proper training is impossible.

## College lecturers to meet on 7 October

Despite appalling offers from the employers to this year's pay claim, little or no action has been organised by the leadership of the college lecturers' union NATFHE.

This is incredible even by their own standards, given the present rising levels of militancy in other trade unions, and wage offers around the 10% mark.

The **Socialist Lecturers' Alliance** has therefore decided to organise a national conference for rank and file activists on 7 October, in Birm-

ingham. The purpose will be to bring activists together to discuss how we can achieve effective industrial action and how we can put pressure on the union leadership to organise such action.

This is a vital task given that there is no official national meeting planned until November National Council.

We are asking branches, liaison committees, regions and individuals to give their support for this conference. Contact: Barry Lovejoy, 25 Philip Victor Road, Handsworth, Birmingham B20 2QB.

## Air bosses try to copy the docks

Striking **British Airways** cabin crew workers stopped all UK shuttle services and around half of European flights last Friday, 18 August.

BA bosses provoked the strike by sacking a stewardess for allegedly pocketing money from an inflight bar.

BA bosses responded by deman-

ding written assurances that cabin crew workers would work normally — suspending people who refused.

They took a calculated gamble on intimidating people back to work — reminiscent of the type of management tactics used by port bosses during the docks strike.

UK flights over the following weekend were badly hit as crew members held TGWU union meetings and decided to stand up against BA bosses. Their resolve forced management to withdraw

the ultimatums and reinstate suspended workers. They also agreed to pay wages over the weekend despite the disruption.

However, they have still point blank refused to take the stewardess back, whatever the result of her claim for unfair dismissal.

BA have been beaten back in their management by diktat. But the original dispute over the sacking is still unresolved — and their tactics this time round suggest another test of strength in the near future.

## Action against agencies

By Mark Serwotka, CPSA Merthyr Tydfil branch

The government wants to turn the civil service into a number of separate 'Agencies'.

Their aim is the break up of the civil service terms and conditions, which the Tories have wanted for years.

At the same time the Department of Social Security has announced that Livingstone computer centre has been privatised, something that CPSA General Secretary John Ellis said Agency status would prevent. Ellis and the right-wing National

Executive are doing nothing to prevent the wholesale destruction of our jobs and conditions, so my branch decided to try and bring together all the branches who want to fight Agency status.

We mailed every branch in the union, inviting them to get involved in a campaign to defeat Agency status. We want to call a conference of interested branches, and call on branches to sponsor the conference and get involved in organising it.

To date over 30 branches have sponsored the conference, despite a virtual boycott by the Broad Left. On 19 August a number of the sponsoring branches met to plan our next move in light of a decision by Ellis and the National Executive

to attack the conference and threaten disciplinary action against the Merthyr branch officers for calling the conference.

It was agreed at the meeting to continue with the conference, whilst at the same time demanding a Special Delegate Conference under the union's rule 7.2.

Branches are urged to demand the Executive drop any action against the Merthyr branch, pass motions of at General Meetings to demand a Special Delegate Conference under rule 7.2, and sponsor the rank and file Agency conference.

More information from Mark Serwotka, Organising Secretary, 44 Glan Road, Aberdare, Wales.

## Nottingham organises

By Steve Battlemuch

According to the government guidelines, Nottingham's poll tax should be £247.

However, local councillors have stated that the figure will be nearer £350 if services and jobs are not to be savagely cut.

Meanwhile, anti-poll tax activists are stepping up their campaign. Local poll tax campaigns are being set up on the major estates in the city.

One of the largest groups is the Forest Fields/Hyson Green cam-

paign, which has recruited 400 members in eight weeks by leafletting and stalls at the local shopping areas. Regular public meetings have been held.

2 September sees the first meeting of the Nottingham Anti-Poll Tax Federation, set up from a conference held in July. It is to be hoped that the committee will be open and democratic.

On Friday 8 September a lobby of the District Labour Party has been planned when it is due to be discussing the poll tax rate for Nottingham. Meet at 7pm outside the T&G office, Mansfield Road, Nottingham. Bring banners, placards and your friends.



# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

## Labour ranks organise to counter Policy Reviews

The Constituency Labour Parties conference, a rank and file link-up between CLPs, has organised a briefing conference for CLP delegates to

this year's Labour Party conference.

The briefing conference, on Saturday 16 September in Sheffield, is organised jointly with the Campaign Group of MPs, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the Socialist Movement, and the North-West Campaign for Socialism.

Its aim is to enable Labour's rank and file to organise as coherently as possible to get its say. Without such organisation, the Labour leadership's Policy Review will simply steamroller all rank and file opinion.

On the evening before the conference, Alice Mahon, Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and Audrey Wise will be speaking at a rally, organised by the CLPs Conference and the North-West Campaign for Socialism and sponsored by the other groups involved in the conference.

All CLPs have been mailed about these events, and the job for socialists in the next two or three weeks is to make sure that information about the conference and the rally gets from CLP secretaries to conference delegates and that every CLP considers being represented in Sheffield.

The CLPs Conference was launched in 1988, from a fringe meeting at the Chesterfield Socialist Conference, and provides a framework for CLPs to organise together, exchange information and combine to defend their democratic rights.

For more information, contact the CLPs Conference, c/o Lol Duffy, 11 Egremont Promenade, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG (051 638 1338).

# Drive for 35 gathers pace

By an engineering  
shop steward

The engineers' campaign for a 35-hour week is building up steam.

Mass meetings and shop stewards' conferences up and down the country have been voting to back the campaign and the national levy launched on 14 August.

The national levy — of one hour's pay per week — is designed to provide enhanced strike pay for a series of selected indefinite strikes in key companies.

The Confed (Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Union), which is organising the action, draws together 14 unions and over one million engineering workers. The national agreement between the Confed and the Engineering Employers Federation affects, in one way or another, the



British Aerospace workers in Bristol vote to back the campaign

wages and conditions of over two million workers in manufacturing.

The Confed claim, dating from 1988, involves:

- 35-hour week with no loss of earnings;
- A substantial rise in MTRs

(minimum time rates);

- Unskilled rate to be 80% of skilled;
- Extra holidays and a cut in overtime;
- Increases in shift, holiday and overtime payments.

The cutting edge of the campaign has so far been the demand for a 35-hour week.

This campaign has the potential to generate a level of solidarity among engineering workers not seen for decades. If the strike action is opened up at a wide enough level then this campaign could radically

alter the feeling in every engineering factory.

Any initial problems in collecting the levy can be overcome by co-ordinated efforts at district Confed level. Regular local Confed stewards' meetings should be held to do this and to consider ways of drawing in wider forces in solidarity action including unsubsidised solidarity strikes.

The rank and file need to seize the initiative in this dispute. Democratic control of the action is needed, with regular recall national Confed delegate conferences to oversee the action.

## Don't trust Confed leaders!

By an engineering  
shop steward

Most engineering workers must be delighted to hear the militant noises coming from Bill Jordan and the Confed leadership.

But it should not be forgotten that only six months ago Jordan was proposing a very different course of action. He advocated, and nearly signed, a potentially catastrophic 'flexibility' package.

Union leaders don't plan to announce until late September how many workers and which plants of the 12 initially targetted companies they will be balloting for strikes. By that time they expect the money raised by the levy to have levelled off. They will then decide the level of enhanced strike pay and how many strikers they can afford to support in that way.

There are problems in this strategy:

- The levy will be starting 7 weeks before any action is due to begin.
- Engineering workers will be donating the equivalent of a day's pay before the action starts.

Enhanced strike pay will make it easier to win majorities for action in those plants ballotted; but it will be very difficult to draw wider layers into the action if all strikers must receive this strike pay.

What will happen in the event of lay offs? Will laid-off workers be subsidised from the strike fund? If not, how will divisions be avoided?

In the IG Metall strike which the Confed leadership hold up as a model, within two weeks there were 10 workers laid off for every striker.

- What if the bosses' response to the



strike is to offer local deals? How will national levy payers feel about paying for strikes that win local settlements without any headway on the national claim?

On the other hand, how will it be possible for union organisers in a striking factory to sustain a strike in the face of pressure to accept a local offer? It will be difficult to keep groups of workers out on strike, once they have won a local deal and the vast majority of engineering workers nationally are not on strike but remain at work.

However, these problems can all be overcome by maximum rank and file involvement and a drive to escalate the dispute as quickly as possible.

Comparatively long-term small scale subsidised action has its obvious attractions, but a national strike could bring the bosses to their knees in a matter of days.

With full order books and skill shortages, now is the time for such a fight.

## Danger from local deals

At present the overwhelming majority of engineering workers are united by sharing the same normal working week of 39 hours.

It would seriously fragment the unity of engineering workers if wide variations were allowed to open up.

Militancy on the wages part of the national claim is already difficult to generate because of the wide variation in local pay deals.

Before the dispute started the

employers' federation had already made it clear that they wanted to see an end to national bargaining to prepare the way for local flexibility deals.

According to the *Financial Times*, the Engineering Employers Federation are even considering altering their constitution to allow companies wishing to withdraw from national agreements to retain affiliation to the Federation.

Engineering workers must maintain the unity that national agreements make possible. Local deals on hours would obstruct it.

## Shorter hours demand can unite workers

At present the UK has the highest average weekly working hours for men in the EC. The figure stands at 42.4 hours per week.

A cut in the average working week to 35 hours would quickly cut unemployment.

But the bosses don't like it. Reduced working hours would mean reduced profits for the bosses — unless they could cut pay drastically at the same

time.

The TUC should take up this initiative of the engineers and campaign for a 35 hour week and an end to overtime working, linked to a serious fight for a minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average manual worker's wage.

At the moment the engineers are in the front line of the battle for a shorter working week. The labour movement as a whole should take up this cause and make it central to a crusade against the Tories.

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