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Saturday 27 January
ULU, Malet St,
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Kremlin troops won't bring peace!



It may be that the people in the Kremlin who sent the tanks roaring through Baku with their big and little guns blazing indiscriminate death in every direction last week really thought that was the way to quell Azeri nationalism.

If they did think that, then they belong to the political equivalent of the school of firefighting which tries to quench fires by pouring petrol on them.

They have not quelled but stimulated, energised and embittered the Azeris. A million people defied the curfew to march in the funeral procession of the Russian Army's victims.

One small area, Nakichevan, an-

nounces that it has seceded from the USSR, and the Azeri parliament threatens that it will call a referendum to get a mandate for secession unless the Russian Army is withdrawn.

As we go to press, the Kremlin has stopped denouncing the Azeri nationalists as 'extremists', and proposes to negotiate with the Azeri Popular Front.

Without any immediate warning the Army launched a clumsy and inevitably brutal drive to reconquer Baku from its people. It behaved as that which the Azeris now see it as: a conquering foreign army.

The Kremlin plainly lies in the old Stalinist style when it says that fewer than a hundred civilians were killed. In a wild military assault like that, hundreds at least are certain to

have been slaughtered.

Gorbachev's explanation for the all-out crackdown and the massacre is that he had to stop the anti-Armenian pogromists, who were also making a challenge to "Soviet power". The massacre can have had little to do with controlling pogromists. That is Gorbachev's "good reason" for public consumption at home and abroad.

The real reason was the need to make a bloody demonstration against secessionists or potential secessionists "who threaten Soviet power". The Azeri civilians in Baku were the immediate target of the murderous fire power of the Russian Army tanks. But the message was surely aimed at all the disaffected nationalities in the Soviet Union: there is a limit beyond

which you do not go without terrible consequences.

The massacre came only a few days after Gorbachev appeared to concede the right of the people of the Baltic states to secede. Was it in part aimed as a warning to them?

It is possible, however, that the Baku massacre was not a finely calculated warning to the nationalities, but a desperate, perhaps reflex, lashing out by Kremlin leaders who face one crisis after another. They behaved as they and their predecessors have behaved for 60 years — except that "glasnost", with its comparatively free reporting of events, places Stalinist-business-as-usual reflex action in an entirely different context and ensures a radically different outcome.

In an airtight totalitarian state,

savage repression can work, if the state is ruthless enough. The Soviet Union is no longer airtight. The Azeris were galvanised and mobilised by the massacre, not discouraged. Across the Soviet Union there were objections to the Kremlin's action, if not from sympathy with the Azeris then from self-interest.

Mass opposition stopped the Kremlin from mobilising the Army reservists to send them to a new Afghanistan war, this time inside the Soviet Union. It is clear that vast numbers of Soviet citizens have learned the lesson from Afghanistan that millions of Americans learned from their country's bloody Indochinese war.

Glasnost has given them a chance

Turn to page 2

The real scandal

By Clive Bradley

According to Lord Denning, judges should not be homosexual. Or is it that homosexuals should not be judges? This is because, he says, a gay judge might get a crush on a barrister.

And then what? He'd come over all dizzy and hot, having to wear that wig and everything, and have simply no idea what decision he ought to make.

It is, of course, hard to credit that a man who presumably is possessed of at least average intelligence, being a top judge, can make a statement that is so transparently, unqualifiably idiotic. Or is Lord Denning admitting that he thinks that neither judges nor barristers should be women either? Or is a male judge less likely to have a crush on a woman barrister, or vice versa? Is there something exclusively

debilitating about homosexual crushes, maybe?

Lord Denning's other argument was the more traditional one, that homosexual judges are open to blackmail.

In the early 1960s, a film was made, starring Dirk Bogarde, called 'Victim', which was precisely about a successful barrister who was blackmailed following a brief and apparently unconsummated homosexual affair. It was an excellent propaganda movie, aiming to expose the pre-1967 law on sexual offences as a 'blackmailers' charter'. One of the arguments behind the passing of the 1967 Act was that it would remove the threat of blackmail against high-ranking people who were homosexual by making it legal to be so.

Twenty three years on, and the legal establishment doesn't seem to have noticed.

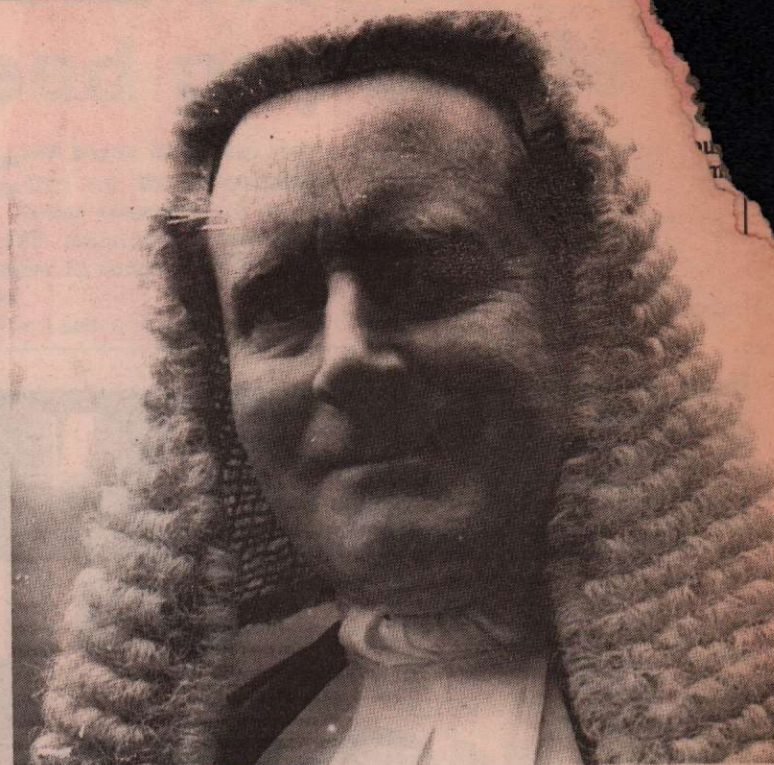
It is of course true that a homosexual judge can be blackmailed — if his sexuality is a secret, and if the establishment con-

sider it in some way discreditable. It is Lord Denning, and those who believe as he does, who put his colleagues in danger of blackmail. If nobody gave tuppence whether judges were gay or not, and if therefore all gay judges could be open and relaxed about it, no one would be able to blackmail them.

So the scandal about Lord Dervaird, who resigned last week, is not that he is gay, but that he has had to resign for this reason and that he had to lie about himself beforehand.

And Lord Dervaird is by no means the first. A couple of years ago, revelations about a 'spanking judge' led not only to his resignation, but to the psychological torture of his lover, who was hounded by the press and came close to committing suicide as a result.

The Dervaird affair tells you a lot about the narrow-minded, and indeed childish mentality of the judicial profession. It is terrifying to think that these people are trusted with making important deci-



Is he or isn't he? Why should we care?

sions, formulating as well as interpreting law. Someone who can stand up in public and suggest that gay judges might have cloudy

judgements because there's a hunky barrister around shouldn't be trusted with looking after a car park.

Protestant politics shifts

NORTH AND SOUTH

By Patrick Murphy

The founding father of Ulster Unionism, Edward Carson, once declared that the only real threat to the Union would come from the disunity of the Unionists.

Ever since, this fearful prophecy has been the spur to keep Unionists formidably unified, and nationalists and their sympathisers consistently frustrated. Protestant solidarity has been maintained since 1921 largely because of its dogmatic portrayal of the Irish Republic as an alien and hostile state.

These articles of Unionist faith have appeared more vulnerable in recent months than at any time since Brian Faulkner agreed to power-sharing in 1973. Ulster

Unionists are rethinking their entire strategy, and edging towards the idea of doing a deal with the hated Irish Republic, led, what's more, by the old Fenian Charles Haughey.

Anyone who doubts the seriousness of the shift in Irish politics today should consider this sequence of events. In November, Haughey invited Unionists to talks on Northern Ireland. Such an invitation would normally be considered an insult or affront.

Paisley treated it just so, but the Official Unionist MP John Taylor

welcomed it and suggested that talks with the Republic could be useful.

Ian Paisley then attacked Taylor for treachery and at the DUP conference announced that a four-year pact between his party and the Official Unionists was over. There would be open conflict in every seat at the next election.

The two main Unionist parties have had a pact to demonstrate their joint opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement since 1985.

Shortly after Paisley's outburst, however, his deputy leader, Peter Robinson, revived the idea of talks between Northern Irish parties to find a settlement. The usual condition was imposed: that the Agreement be suspended. A new element was introduced, however: that the talks be set a time limit after which, if no agreement had been reached, the Anglo-Irish Accord would be reimposed.

At the end of November, the inter-governmental conference set up by the Accord met, and decided that there would be no further meeting for two months. It was heavily suggested that this time should be viewed constructively by the 'constitutional' parties.

In early December, Peter Robinson declared that two months should be well enough to test the possibility of agreements between Northern Irish parties.

All these shifts provide the background to last week's mating ritual between prominent Unionists and Irish prime minister Haughey. This time, Unionist party leaders offered talks with Dublin if replacement of the Anglo-Irish deal could be considered.

Haughey immediately responded positively and clearly. "If there can be agreement on some new structure, there is absolutely no objection to breaking the Accord".

This may all seem undramatic, the cautious manoeuvring of politicians, especially when compared to the dramatic events in Eastern Europe. There is no mistaking the trend, however.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement has lasted the course, and is beginning to produce the results intended. The Unionists are re-examining their relations with the Northern minority and with the Irish Republic in an entirely new light.

The immediate reasons for this shift must be found within the Protestant community. On 15 November, the anniversary of the Hillsborough Agreement, the Unionist parties promised a massive

demonstration in which 300,000 people would form a human chain around Northern Ireland.

In the event there were a few hundred. The demonstration was a remarkable flop compared to the huge anti-Accord demonstrations of 1985-6, and indeed by any standards.

The next day the Ulster Conservative Party came second to the DUP in a council by-election at Castlereagh. The Tories outpolled both other Unionist parties combined. They are threatening to stand in every seat, despite appeals from some British Tories to protect certain Unionist seats.

They will seriously worry the Official Unionists, and possibly destroy the Alliance Party.

The Protestant community, above all its middle class, are tired of being without power or influence. They were used to having both as of right, and expected to be excluded only temporarily. Now they are turning to politics which offer a return to influence, even if shared, and an end to posturing.

It is not clear where the Protestant working class will stand in all this. They could become the raw material of a Paisleyite reaction, or they could strike out on their own again.

Certainly the one thing they have to gain from any constitutional settlement is the opportunity to forge links with the Catholic working class against their rulers, both nationalist and Unionist, British and Irish.

IRELAND: The Socialist Answer



With contributions from Sean Finn, Tony Benn, Geoff Bell, Stan Crooke, Patrick Murphy and John O'Mahony

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Child benefits: Thatcher is a hypocrite

WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

The Thatcher government's record on providing benefits of any kind for children whose parents are not wealthy is abysmal.

"Cuts" has been Thatcher's watchword, and the value of child benefits has fallen dramatically in recent years. Thatcher intends benefits to diminish even further.

Any government committed to child welfare would have raised child benefit, and income support. It would have allowed recipients of income support to supplement that income by way of employment without loss of benefit.

A government committed to the welfare of children would have ensured that educational changes were adequately funded, that the health service was adequately funded — and that there was plenty of cheap, decent housing available with access to parks, shops, transport and nurseries.

If the standard for judging this government is commitment to child welfare, then Thatcher stands condemned. The Tories fail every single test.

Yet Thatcher still talks about the rights of the child! And in so doing she is being perfectly consistent, and not only consistently hypocritical.

When the Tories talk about forcing fathers to accept their 'respon-

sibilities' to their children and promise new legislation to harass non-maintenance payers their purpose is not to see that children get a better deal but to save the state money! Thatcher is perfectly consistent — consistently piggish.

Thatcher spouts the ideology about paternal responsibility, but the Minister of State, Tony Newton, has unashamedly told the truth. According to Newton, the main purpose of the planned legislation is to save money in income support to single mothers!

In the hands of a government we could trust to do the best for the nation's children, Thatcher's proposals would perhaps make sense and maybe deserve support. But this government's overriding drive and purpose with this legislation is to stop paying income support! This proposal will not help poor single parents — it will make their lives more fraught, more difficult, more insecure and, most likely, much poorer.

Any change which takes away the basic income now available from the state, as a matter of right, and replaces it with reliance on payments from a reluctant and unreliable biological father is not likely to make life easier or more prosperous for either mother or child.

Thatcher's attitude is essentially one of apportioning blame. Analyse what she says. She blames poor people for having children at all! She blames young women for getting pregnant; she blames the father for leaving; she blames the mother for letting him go; and she blames her again for not being able to care

for her children financially. Mrs Thatcher's government has done more in the last decade to generate poverty than any other single cause: but Mrs Thatcher blames people for being poor! It is the disease carrying germ denouncing those who fall sick!

Thatcher justly pointed out that children lose out when their father leaves. She thinks "family life" is good for children. I think she's probably right. Although her conception of family life is probably very different from mine; and different too from the reality of family life as most people experience it.

But she is wrong simply to blame the "permissive society" or the individuals concerned. She cannot possibly know or understand the strain of a family life lived without enough money.

In so far as she understands that it is not pleasant, she sees this as an "incentive" for the family to better itself. But, of course, in our society poverty begets poverty. No one willingly throws themselves on the mercy of the DSS.

Responsibility to children goes much further than paying maintenance, even if you can afford it. At the same time "family life" depends on money — a roof over your head, money for food, clothing with some left over for "things" for the kids.

But Thatcher callously and deliberately ignores the desperation of many poor families to pontificate about things that every parent would love to provide for their children.

And while she pontificates, she picks the pockets of the poor.

confidence in the Kremlin!

EDITORIAL

From page 1

to flex their muscles. The massacre has deepened the Kremlin's crisis of authority, not contributed to resolving it.

But the Kremlin's Army, despite the senseless massacre in Baku, is the force standing between the two embittered Soviet Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, preventing war and even bigger massacres. The Azeris, with aggressive chauvinism, claim sovereignty over mainly Armenian-inhabited territory in Nagorno-Karabakh. Does it not follow that socialists, not wanting a bloody communal war, should back the Kremlin and its army, albeit critically? No, it does not. It cannot.

The Great Russian empire called the USSR is untenable. For many decades the Stalinists have run a regime of Great Russian nationalist oppression of the many minority nations who make up about half the USSR's population. Any lessening of repression, any development of democracy, any "openness", will inevitably ignite and revive the demands of the long oppressed nationalities.

If the Stalinists had set out deliberately to embitter and inflame relations between the different nationalities in the USSR, then they would have behaved not much differently from the way they have behaved for over half a century. More Kremlin repression — even when it justifies repression as peacekeeping — cannot be a solution.

In conditions of comparative openness, it can only spur and provoke the minority nationalities. The only solution for the national crisis in the Soviet Union is the realisation of the democratic programme of the Bolshevik Party:

- Recognition of the right of self-determination for all peoples and fragments of peoples.

- Recognition of the right of secession from the Soviet Union.

Within those principles, the Bolsheviks argued that Great Russian socialists should fight against all types of Great Russian nationalism, and socialists in the smaller nationalities should oppose their chauvinism too, advocating working-class unity and federal links between the peoples. Thus, for example, in 1919 and 1920 the Bolsheviks fought for the independence of the Ukraine, allying with honest Ukrainian nationalists, and then fought successfully for the voluntary federation of the Ukraine with the Russian Soviet Republic.

No-one in their senses would want to see the USSR explode and dissolve into the maelstrom of national and communal conflicts which now threatens it. In certain areas, moreover, it is impossible for all the nationalities involved to exercise the sovereign right of self-determination, so closely are they intertwined. There are a myriad of conflicts of rights between intermeshing peoples. One people's self-determination is frequently another people's oppression.

It is the sort of situation that exists between Protestant and Catholic in Northern Ireland — multiplied and even more complex. Similar situations exist in many countries of Eastern Europe.



things that East European and Russian socialists long ago advocated not only self-determination but also such ideas as a Balkan Federation, a Transcaucasian Federation, local autonomy for smaller communities embedded in an alien population, equal rights for all languages and all individuals. Those are the principles on which the looming catastrophe of national conflict which threatens to engulf the peoples of the USSR can be averted.

The Kremlin does not promote such principles. The massacre in Baku — calculated, Stalinist reflex, or panic action, whatever it was — shows how far the Kremlin is from such principles. Only a socialist working-class movement could adequately fight for the old Bolshevik programme so monstrously perverted and trampled on by Stalinism.

To back the Kremlin as the "lesser evil" in Azerbaijan and Armenia would imply backing it indefinitely — that is, maintaining the status quo. The parallel with British troops in Ireland is apt and instructive.

British troops out without a political settlement would mean civil war and bloody repartition. But socialists cannot give support to the British Army for that reason. We advocate a programme of working-class unity across the communal divide, and Catholic-Protestant conciliation on the basis of mutual recognition of rights.

Still less can socialists give support to, or advocate trust for, the

Kremlin. Not for 200 years, since 1798, has the British state done any single act against the people of Ireland comparable to the Baku massacre. No, no confidence in the Kremlin!

Some commentators speculate that the new deepening of the crisis brought about by the massacre will force Gorbachev to respond to his critics by embracing a full programme for the immediate reorganisation of the Soviet Union on a genuinely federal basis. We

don't know and can't know. Right now the Kremlin has just acted with typical Stalinist brutality, killing innocent Azeris, inflaming and embittering Azeri nationalism, and maybe preparing the way for a new clampdown before the demonstrating women who opposed the drafting of their reservist sons and husbands for an "Afghan" war in the south made Gorbachev reconsider.

Now as before: no confidence in the Kremlin!

Uncover the Stalker affair!

The sudden dropping of fraud charges against Kevin Taylor, sixteen weeks into his trial, is the latest solid evidence for John Stalker's claim that there has been a conspiracy against him.

It was Stalker's connections with Taylor, alleged to be a shady businessman, that were used to justify attempts to discredit Stalker, who was suspended from the Manchester police force in 1986.

Stalker had been leading an investigation into the Royal Ulster Constabulary's 'shoot to kill' policy in Northern Ireland. In 1982, the RUC shot dead six IRA suspects, five of them unarmed. Stalker was concerned to see the 'rule of law' upheld, and was set to produce a

report that would be sharply critical of the RUC.

He had discovered the existence of MI5 recordings of two men being shot dead by RUC men, and was recommending the suspension of eleven RUC officers.

Then came the allegations that Stalker was personally connected with criminal elements, via his friend Kevin Taylor, against whom fraud proceedings were begun. In light of this 'connection', Stalker was suspended from duty. The RUC was subsequently whitewashed.

Many MPs, and of course Stalker and Taylor themselves, felt that this was the result of a 'dirty tricks' campaign against them by the 'security services'. That the charges against Taylor should now be dropped after a cost to him of two million pounds — leaving him financially ruined — and a cost to the state of one million pounds, points to only one possible conclusion. The charges were deliberate fabrications, dreamed up with the express purpose of discrediting Stalker and aborting his report on the RUC.

Taylor was the innocent victim of the state's resolution to get rid of Stalker.

Taylor has had a very raw deal. But at least he's alive — unlike Tighe, the non-political 17 year old youth shot to death in a barn by the RUC, whose death was one of those Stalker investigated.

We need to know the exact truth about the Stalker affair. The people who stitched up Stalker and Taylor and covered up for police murderers in Northern Ireland should be brought to justice themselves.

After Henry

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

Towards the end of last year I began to feel that this column had run its course.

Perhaps *Press Gang* should be allowed to slip peacefully into oblivion, mourned only by an editorial team in London who have spent years trying to convince me that my weekly (well, almost) pontifications on the Fourth Estate were what gave their sad lives real meaning.

This was not merely the result of boredom, indifference, or the dreaded "block" that afflicts most scribblers from time to time. No, it went deeper.

There were worrying signs that the very lifeblood of this column — the lying, bigoted, prurient loathsomeness of most of the British press — was drying up. The *Sun* had appointed an ombudsman to look into complaints, and he immediately pre-empted my scorn by finding *in favour* of the first couple of complainers.

The saintly Andreas Whittam Smith persuaded all but one of his fellow editors to sign a 'national newspaper code of practice' that promised a new age of responsible, accurate, and squeaky-clean journalism. (The exception, by the way, was Sir Geoffrey Owen of the *Financial Times*, but then the pink 'un is not noted for either sleaze or downright lying).

Perhaps the most significant of all those straws in the wind was the sacking of Ms Wendy Henry from editorship of *The People*. I even felt a twinge of sympathy for Ms Henry, who, having built her reputation on making up interviews with war widows and publishing photos of people with extreme physical deformities, was given the push by Cap'n Bob for publishing a harmless pic of a junior Royal having a slash.

The cause of all this high-minded zeal was not difficult to fathom. 1989 saw two private members' Bills aimed at curbing the excesses of the tabloids. Both Bills failed, but attracted enough support inside and outside Parliament to put the wind up the press. A stern Home Secretary warned the newspaper industry that it was "on probation" and set up a committee to look into things.

Meanwhile, sales of the tabloids were falling, with the *Sun* and the *News of the World* suffering the biggest drops (though it has been mischievously suggested that this might be precisely *because* they began to tone down the material).

So it was that the British Press entered the new decade on its best behaviour. Lurid revelations of bizarre and/or illicit sexual goings-on gave way to jolly show-bizzy stuff about the likes of Jason and Kylie; blatant racism was OUT as Frank Bruno became the tabloids' favourite affable buffoon and events in Eastern Europe cast at least some Foreigners in the unaccustomed role of Heroes; even good old fashioned union-bashing eased off as the *Sun* and the *Star* threw their support behind the ambulance workers.

It couldn't last, of course. The exciting adventures of Ron Brown MP enticed most of the tabloids back to their old ways, and the Gay Scottish Judges Scandal has predictably resulted in a more or less full return to form.

It's almost a relief in a way. I couldn't have taken much more of that Jason and Kylie stuff.

Like Baku like Panama?

US president George Bush was quick to express his "understanding" of the Kremlin's action in Baku.

Before Christmas, the US had

given the USSR advance approval for any military intervention it should want to make in Romania.

Gone are the days when the leaders of "the free world" would see an event like the Baku massacre as one more chance to make "anti-communist" propaganda.

Now they look to the wobbling neo-Stalinist bureaucracies in Eastern Europe and the USSR as their partners in opening up a new area for asset-stripping and exploitation of cheap labour, and fear instability more than anything else.

Of course Bush, the invader of Panama, "understands".

Last date for reports: first post
MONday

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

Registered as a newspaper at the
Post Office.

Signed articles do not necessarily
reflect the views of Socialist
Organiser

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Karl Marx

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4 LETTERS

Even more essential for one party...

GRAFFITI

Loyalty to the party is absolutely essential." What said that? Some old Stalinist hack?

No, it was Mr Ray Formstone, one of the local opponents of Anthony Meyer, the Tory MP who had challenged Margaret Thatcher for leader of the party and was deselected last week.

Party loyalty was essential, said this Tory freedom-lover, "if you are going to run a two-party system."



Jaruzelski

The South African Communist Party has recently reaffirmed its commitment to pluralism. This, as you would expect, is the line coming very strongly out of Moscow these days.

Exactly what pluralism will mean for the South African Stalinists, who are not well-known for their glasnostic attitudes to other tendencies on the South African left, is not entirely clear.

At a meeting in Dakka a couple of years ago between the African National Congress (within which the Communist Party is dominant) and Afrikaner businessmen and intellectuals, the ANC were asked whether or not they favoured pluralism.

They had to leave the meeting and have a caucus, after which they announced that yes, certainly, they favoured pluralism.

Living standards have been steadily falling since 1988, according to Shadow Social Services secretary Michael Meacher, writing in the *Guardian* (22 January).

After rising through 1987 and the beginning of 1988 at an annual rate of 6.7%, workers' real take home pay has declined every month, and is now declining quickly because of inflation and mortgage rates.

Meacher goes on to argue that this could translate into very bad news for the government in the opinion polls. Historically, falling living standards take about six months to be reflected in the polls. According to most recent *Observer/Harris* polls, Labour is already 11 points ahead of the Tories.

The Polish Communist Party has denounced a Bill put forward by Solidarnosc MPs as "Bolshevik in spirit and method".

The Bill aims to confiscate the property of the so-called Polish United Workers' Party, which is what the Communist Party calls itself. The Stalinists have expressed their outrage at the "brutal act of nationalisation" which meant "using state power and authority for smothering the left."

The PUWP, like the Church in the past, is the largest private owner of property in Poland.

Outgoing chairman of British Rail, Sir Robert Reid, said the other day that without massive investment in the rail infrastructure, Britain would be transformed into nothing more than an outpost of continental Europe.

Cecil Parkinson stated that Sir Robert's comments could not be taken as criticism of government policy.

"We were not supposed to say that Dracula was here. We were supposed to deny that he had ever been here."

A Romanian guide, on the old regime's official policy on whether the historical Dracula had lived in a castle in Bran.

"This is a poor country. We'll just have to invite people over and cook for them."

Ambassador designate from Czechoslovakia to the USA, on plans for entertainment.

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Strike with emergency cover?

DEBATE

Yes to all-out!

In the ambulance workers article in *SO 429*, and the ambulance workers bulletin, there seems to be, at best, confusion over the question of all-out strike and emergency cover.

SO 429 baldly asserted: "We all know the ambulance workers will not, should not and cannot take all-out strike action. They have to provide an emergency service."

The ambulance workers bulletin distributed at the 13 January march and rally counterposes the correct and important need for solidarity action on the 30th to an all-out strike. Thus, "...the alternative [to solidarity action "to pile up the political pressure"] of going for an all-out strike has too many dangers."

Such a position logically means that the ambulance workers (and indeed other groups of workers) can only ever take forms of selective action which the Tories can and have sat out. Meanwhile, the strike has gone on for months and appears to be in stalemate.

The ambulance workers must take the initiative. The dispute must be escalated. Ambulance workers should go for an all-out national strike but with emergency cover provided under their control.

Given management's obstruction to workers' attempts to provide emergency cover so far, ambulance workers will need to occupy their stations and lock management out. So much the better!

This would give the initiative in the strike to the rank and file ambulance workers and that is by far the greatest pressure that can be put on the Tories.

SO was wrong. Ambulance workers can, should and (hopefully) will take all-out strike action — with emergency cover.

- Occupy the ambulance stations!
- National all-out action — with emergency cover under workers' control!

A. DSS worker

Break the stalemate!

In recent issues of *SO*, articles on the ambulance dispute have falsely counterposed strike action by other trade unionists to strike action by ambulance workers.

I agree it is vital that we mobilise other trade unionists to take action alongside the ambulance workers but I disagree with the analysis in last week's paper that "the alternative of going for an all-out strike has too many dangers".

I am yet to hear of many ambulance workers taking a light-minded attitude to the question of emergency cover. Calls for all-out action have always been linked to a willingness to operate emergency cover — even if that is conducted from picket lines.

We must not forget that in many cases ambulance workers have been willing to handle 999 cases directly but have been stopped by ambulance management who, on orders from the Tories, are in many cases locking out the ambulance workers and using the army and police.

The argument of losing public support, I feel, doesn't hold up. In the areas where action has been stepped up, public support has still been there. However, more important in my view is that if action isn't stepped up then demoralisation will



Ambulance workers demonstrate on 13 January. Photo: Geoff Ward

set in amongst ambulance workers themselves, who after 19 weeks are not looking to seal a victory in the near future, not in two years' time! We should not oppose calls for all-out action by ambulance workers — we should leave that to Roger Poole!

Steve Battlemuch Nottingham

Reply: cover is vital

The letters from Steve Battlemuch and the DSS worker both raise important issues in relation to the current ambulance dispute.

In substance, the conclusions drawn by 'DSS worker' are correct: that *Socialist Organiser* should advocate an indefinite strike with emergency cover, and occupation of the stations to ensure that cover is provided under trade union control.

However, some of the arguments used in both letters don't really stand up to investigation.

Steve, for instance, claims that: "calls for all-out action have always been linked to a willingness to operate emergency cover — even if that is conducted from picket lines."

This is quite simply not true. In Manchester in the middle of December, the local stewards did make a call for a one-day strike — without cover. At least one station in the South East, ambulance workers have walked out completely without adopting the approach of the Crawley strikers who say they will help anyone who comes down to the picket line and asks.

It would be wrong to pretend, as Steve does, that such a situation as exists at Crawley represents the kind of emergency cover we would want to impose under workers' control, which would surely involve some kind of telephone contact with the crews.

'DSS worker' takes his argument too far. He quotes from *SO 429* giving the impression that the article in question is arguing against strike action as such — with or without emergency cover — but the context makes it clear that the target of the argument is complete walk outs. Here's the passage in full, written when the idea of an all-out strike without emergency cover was first floated by a member of the national NUPE strike committee.

"This week's meeting of ambulance workers' leaders will be under a lot of pressure to discuss the idea of an all-out ambulance strike."

"Many ambulance workers are now starting to see this option as the only way to break out of the current stalemate the dispute is in."

"But an all-out strike is not the answer. Solidarity strike action is needed from other groups of workers. This could pressurise the Tories into backing down."

"Withdrawing emergency cover will only play into the Tories' hands. Management would be waiting like vultures for someone to die. Any deaths or mishaps will be ruthlessly exploited by the Tories in their dirty propaganda war."

So what attitude should socialists take to the growing calls for all-out strike action, only some of which are linked to the idea of maintaining emergency cover

under trade union control?

1. We recognise that the calls are a product of the fact that large numbers of rank and file ambulance workers are becoming aware of the impasse the dispute is in. They are tired of the lack of result from the strategy pursued so far, and are sceptical about the possibilities of solidarity action to help them win. Walking off the job seems the only option left.

2. Positively, we are for the maximum possible escalation of the dispute amongst ambulance workers. An indefinite national strike with emergency cover under trade union control would be the best way of unifying the ambulance workers and escalating the action. It would break down the divisions between those on strike, those locked out or suspended in some form and those still on full pay. A national strike ultimatum would also increase the pressure on management to concede some elements of trade union control over emergency cover.

It is vital to separate out this option from that of no cover. We advocate occupations to prevent lock-outs, and appeals to the army and police to stop scabbing (not just by walking off the job, but by arranging a transfer of emergency duties under workers' control). We are for rank and file control of the dispute and solidarity action as the key to victory.

3. Why not no cover? Tactically, it could backfire in the propaganda war, but not necessarily. Steve is right about this. However, major walk-outs would almost inevitably split the ambulance workers' ranks, as many people who are by no means strike-breakers would work to maintain some sort of emergency service.

Positively, emergency cover potentially extends workers' control in ways that a walk-out cannot. There is nothing about an all-out strike as such which makes it a higher form of working class struggle than maintaining emergency cover.

Strikes in the NHS are generally weaker, than those in say engineering, because they don't hit profits. The way to deal with this problem is not to pretend that it doesn't exist, but to look for other — very often more openly political — forms of economic leverage such as solidarity strike action to put political pressures on management. There is no point making a fetish of a particular form of action which has limited effectiveness and leverage.

The only other grounds for opting for walk-outs are "The law is so powerful that solidarity action is impossible, and all we can do is escalate the ambulance workers' own action" and "The rank and file are so weak and demoralised, and the bureaucrats so powerful, that no solidarity action is possible."

Both arguments are defeatist. If any recent dispute has presented the trade union leaders with the opportunity to call solidarity action relatively safely, then this is it. And the logic of the second argument would have meant that it was wrong to call, as Arthur Scargill did, for a general strike in support of the miners because it was never likely to happen and our own forces were too weak.

4. Under no circumstances should socialists allow themselves to appear to be giving any aid to the Tories' propaganda war against the ambulance workers. It is a question of basic class loyalty. We remain sympathetic to militant actions even if we consider them to be tactically mistaken.

Left organises in Czechoslovakia

Adam Novotny reports from Prague

The revolutionary situation continues in very contradictory ways.

In the last few days an army council has been formed of professional soldiers, with seven hundred delegates from all parts of the country, and a youth organisation has been formed in the army's many boarding schools and youth training centres.

At the same time there is growing distrust of the Coordination Centre and Civic Forum, the group which is in a government coalition with the Communist Party. It has been turning itself more and more into a political party, and even many of those dissidents who agree with the ideological positions of the Civic Forum have found this distasteful.

When challenged on television, leading members of Civic Forum said that if they weren't going to found an independent party, they would support the Christian Democrats anyway.

There are, however, areas where leftists are grouping themselves. The first of these is the "Association of Strike Committees to Renew the Trade Unions".

This initiative was started last December, with the aim of calling new trade union congresses and evicting the old Communist Party bureaucrats. However, it has run into predictable difficulties. Although individual Stalinists have



General strike 27th November 1989

been removed, the power of the bureaucracy remains.

The old unions' congress has now been put to the beginning of March, and there is clearly a much longer process ahead of winning democracy in the different trade unions. There is, however, unity among left-wing activists to stay within the official (formerly government-controlled) trade unions and to change them.

Of the 42 political parties that have now formed, six or seven claim to be on the left, although all

but one are different variants of the Communist Party. There is one genuine anti-bureaucratic and anti-free-market group called "Leva Alternativa" (Left Alternative).

This group, centred apparently round Petr Uhl and other people sympathetic to the neo-Trotskyist current led by Ernest Mandel, seems to be regrouping all those who oppose both the old Stalinist system and the free market policies increasingly promoted by Havel's "expert advisers".

It is still quite small, and is facing

difficulties. Despite the generally tolerant political atmosphere, it is already noticeable that Civic Forum is unwilling to distribute the material of the Left Alternative. Posters for the Peasants' Party and the Christian Democrats predominate in Civic Forum offices.

Material from both the Association of Strike Committees and the Left Alternative will be available at the CSWEB conference on 27 January.

Tories go off the rails

THE HIDDEN HAND

By Colin Foster

Last week British Rail chief Robert Reid embarrassed the Tory government by criticising their drive to push the railways into free market economics.

For transport, as for housing, health care, education, food, indeed all the essentials of life, the free market is a very poor regulator of production and distribution. It is so poor that even the governments most committed ideologically to the free market feel a need to intervene.

No-one argues that the construction of roads should be regulated by the free market. If it were, then few roads would be built — because any one person owning a house or plot of land on the route could stubbornly refuse to sell or demand an impossible price.

Those roads that were built would be very expensive. Tolls would be high, and vast armies of staff would be needed to collect them. You would have to pay a toll to go to the corner shop.

So every free-marketeer demands state planning and intervention. Indeed, on the whole, the more people favour the free market in general, the more they want the state to order compulsory purchases of land to build roads. Look at the big cities of the USA!

However, in big modern cities, road-building can never keep pace with the number of cars. Traffic jams are inevitable. So are road accidents.

The "free market solution", I suppose, would be to have different roads with different tolls so that the rich could travel speedily on expensive roads while the poor crawl along on cheap roads. But it is rarely practicable.

And so even free market governments go further. They recognise the need for public transport, and for subsidising public transport.

Britain's Tory government is trying to buck the rule by reducing subsidies on rail and public transport to zero. If they do this, then the free market will no doubt produce an equilibrium — at the point where the high fares, unreliability, seediness, overcrowding and general inconvenience of public transport are just not quite so bad as to make most people walk, cycle or take a car into the traffic jams instead. To have better or cheaper public transport than that is "inefficient" by free market criteria.

In the meantime, of course, the roads will have become more crowded, more stressful, more dangerous and more polluting.

Even the rich suffer from this "free market solution". Their Rolls Royces may be comfortable, and their chauffeurs may take the stress of driving through busy traffic, but they are still delayed. Yet here as so often the free market produces a "solution" which no-one wants but no-one can change.

Almost everyone would prefer a cheap, reliable system of public transport and less crowded roads; but no-one can get it by paying individually.

It takes more than the fumbblings of a "hidden hand" to produce decent conditions for millions of people to live together in an environment they must all share.

Why are the cops so racist?

RACE AND CLASS

By Dion D'Silva

Have you ever noticed that at every anti-fascist demonstration there is at least one black police officer helping protect the fascists?

It can't be that easy to arrange. Out of 126,000 police officers, only 1,176 are from ethnic minorities — that's 0.9%. In 1989 fewer black people were accepted than in the previous three years.

Jeremy Whittle was the first black policeman in North Yorkshire. He described how "not a day passed without me being called a nigger, sambo or jungle bunny". As for the senior officers, "They just laughed along with the rest of them".

Cheryl Farley was a black woman police officer in London who eventually quit because of the endless stream of abuse about her race and her sex.

It is not a matter of a few "rotten apples" but of a deeply racist culture. For those black officers who manage to stay and put up with the daily abuse, chances of promotion are bleak. Only 65 have risen even to the level of sergeant!

The police usually say that they only reflect society. Obviously there is truth in this. Racism exists in all spheres of society. The question is how you tackle it.

The routine police excuse is a cop-out. After all, when criminals, burglars and rapists are found in the police force, it is not reckoned acceptable to say that it's just a reflection of society.

The cases of Jeremy Whittle and Cheryl Farley suggest that racism is worse in the police than in other jobs. Why?

Part of it must be the type of person attracted to the job. Generally

speaking they are not from the most enlightened and progressive sections of society.

Surveys of police attitudes show them to be very conservative. Many would probably regard Judge Pickles as a dangerous liberal.

There is also a more fundamental reason. The police are there to uphold "law and order" as determined by a state riddled with racism. Laws on immigration and deportation encourage the attitude that black people are "a problem".

Recently, for example, a number of illegal immigrants were rounded up and deported to Africa. They had been working on extremely low wages as cleaners in a London firm. But the police targeted the workers, not the employers breaking health and safety rules — or even those involved in tax frauds, insider dealing, etc.

Black youth in particular are victimised by the law and the police. That being so, it would be a sociological and psychological miracle if black cops didn't have a

hard time with their "colleagues".

There has been some talk about combatting racism in the police force, but no action. No officer has been dismissed for racist behaviour, or for wearing a National Front sticker. Black people are quite right to have very little confidence in the police. There are cases, again and again, of black people who report racist attacks being arrested themselves.

Naturally socialists must support the fight against all forms of racial discrimination, and to that extent welcome changes in police recruitment and promotion procedures.

Yet the situation in America shows that such measures don't go far. Steadily the police force in the USA has come to reflect the population make-up. In many cities the police are predominantly black.

It was just such a police force, under the orders of a black mayor, which completely flattened a black neighbourhood in Philadelphia — looking for drugs.



Winston Lindsay is an ex-soldier in the Grenadier Guards who is bringing a court case for discrimination against the Army. During his time in the Guards, he says, he was treated as other black people have described being treated in the police force, constantly being taunted with names like nigger, coon, monkey and black bastard.

Sam Bornstein

Sam Bornstein died in London on January 8th. To many he is best known as the co-author, with Al Richardson, of 'Against the Stream' and 'War and the International', a history of Trotskyism in Britain. However, his own record as a Trotskyist activist — hardly mentioned in the books — goes back over more than 50 years.

Coming from a left-wing political family in the East End of London, he joined the Independent Labour Party and in 1938 proposed that the ILP Guild of Youth affiliate to the Fourth International. Shortly afterwards he joined the Workers International League, which grew during the war as a result of an orientation towards industry. Sam became an AEU shop steward at

Napiers in West London.

This was the period when the Stalinist Communist Party claimed that "the class-conscious worker is the worker who crosses the picket line," and described Trotskyists as "open agents of Fascism". After he wrote a pamphlet exposing war profiteering, he was protected by the workers in the factory against an attempt by the Stalinists to have him sacked.

He was also arrested while leafletting an American film, 'Mission to Moscow', which praised Stalin and the Moscow Trials.

The WIL became part of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1944. The return of peace and the Labour government in 1945 meant that the RCP's great hopes for quick and large-scale growth of the party, its ultra-optimistic "perspectives" came into glaring contradiction with the reality of Attlee's Britain, and the organisation entered a

crisis.

Sam was part of the 'Open Party Faction' which supported maintaining an independent organisation as against the old majority, which had collapsed, and the minority around Gerry Healy which advocated work in the Labour Party. After the RCP disintegrated (1949-50), he was briefly a member of Healy's group before being expelled for making criticisms of their support for Tito.

In 1957, along with Ted Grant, he helped set up the Revolutionary Socialist League as the British Section of Pablo's Fourth International, breaking with Pablo in 1962. The RSL evolved into the organisation known publicly as 'Militant Tendency'.

From the 1970s onwards he was increasingly involved in the historical work, which ensures that the pre-war generation of Trotskyists remain living in the movement today and that we can learn from their struggles.

Lenin's last struggle

The idea that Leninism leads directly to Stalinism is one of the most popular myths around today.

John O'Mahony and Andrew Hornung confront that myth. They tell the story of the dying Lenin's last struggle against Stalin's bureaucratism, and in defence of national rights in the infant Soviet state

In 1922 Lenin suffered a stroke which paralysed him almost totally for a period. After a brief recovery, he suffered another stroke on 7 March 1923. He never recovered, though there were periods in which he was able to dictate notes.

In this period he fought his last battle, against growing bureaucratism and in defence of working class democracy.

On his deathbed he became increasingly aware that things were not going well, and was alarmed by the growing power of the bureaucracy. He had, he said, the uncanny sensation of turning a steering wheel which no longer had any control over the vehicle.

Initiative from below was being stifled. The Workers' Inspectorate, far from being a genuine organ of working class supervision, had become merely one more source of bureaucratic power for Stalin.

On the national question, too,

"great Russian chauvinism" was restoring itself to power within the new social structures. Stalin and Dzerzhinsky had conducted a savage campaign against the Georgian Bolsheviks, accusing them of nationalism. Lenin knew where the malignant nationalism lay — in the great Russian chauvinism of the central state apparatus.

He resolved to conduct a struggle against the bureaucracy, in favour of the maligned Georgian Bolsheviks and the rights of the Georgian people within the Soviet system. But Lenin the activist was reduced to Lenin the dictator of notes, unable even to write them himself. These notes became his testament.

On 4 January 1923 he wrote: "Stalin is too rude and this defect...becomes intolerable in a general secretary. That is why I suggest that the comrades think over a way of removing Stalin from that post and appointing somebody else differing in all respects from Comrade Stalin by one single advantage — that of being more tolerant, more loyal, more polite and considerate to the comrades, less officious, etc.

"I think that from the point of view of assuring against a split and from the point of view of what I wrote above of the mutual relations between Stalin and Trotsky, it is not a detail, or it is a detail which can acquire decisive importance."

Stalin was not removed and in any case he was not himself the new bureaucracy, merely its personification.

No political issue so clearly epitomises the profoundly revolutionary and democratic spirit of Lenin and the Bolsheviks as their policy on the national question. True, they had (rightly) not hesitated to subordinate the national rights of the Poles in 1920 and of the Georgians in 1921 to the needs, as they saw them, of the workers' revolution.

But for most of the long-oppressed nationalities and peoples of the Tsarist empire, the workers' revolution meant liberation, a tearing-down of that Bastille of the nations. The revolutionary effects of Bolshevik policy on oppressed nationalities and peoples was felt as far away as among the Blacks in the USA.

The fate of the national minorities under the Stalinist



1924: Stalin eyes the dead Lenin. Stalinism could rise only on the grave of Leninism.

bureaucratic counter-revolution graphically summed up what that counter-revolution meant, and will do to illustrate what happened in every area of society.

It was one of the most savage ironies of history. While the Austrian prison house of nations had been shattered into fragments, the Bolshevik policy of self-determination had preserved the unity of most of the former Tsarist empire — unity on the basis of freedom of the component nations and peoples.

Now the Stalinist bureaucratic degeneration began systematically to convert the free association of Soviet peoples created in the fires of revolution and civil war back into a prison house for the non-Great Russians. Stalin rebuilt the walls and institutions of national oppression. The systematic bureaucratisation of the party and the state apparatus, bureaucratically centralised and unified throughout the 'Soviet Union', inevitably meant that the constitutional rights of the nations and peoples became a fiction.

The political and ideological degeneration of the bureaucracy injected the poison of Russian chauvinism into the state structure. By the mid-'20s, the Stalinist faction was already using anti-semitism within the Party against the Trotskyist opposition which continued the anti-bureaucratic offensive of Lenin.

By the early 1930s the Stalinists were able to turn on its head the

central teaching on the national question of the revolution and of Lenin.

They now proclaimed that the main national problem in the USSR was no longer the poison of Great Russian chauvinism, but 'nationalist deviations' among the peoples long oppressed by that chauvinism.

For over 50 years now a majority of the people of the USSR have had national oppression superimposed on the social oppression experienced by all the population.

Whole nations have been deported. The Ukraine, a nation of 50 million, the biggest oppressed nation in the world, has been sub-

national proletarian revolution.

Over years and decades they went to redefine the very basis of socialism, the self-liberation of the working class, to comply with the own authoritarian police-state rule. The notions of liberty and democracy, and much else that the socialist working class takes over from the great liberation movements of the past, were excised from their state socialism, and an authoritarianism previously associated with the Right inserted in their place. Lenin's properly bitter denunciations of the reformist parliamentary fetishism were construed as absolute renunciation of democracy and endorsement of bureaucratic tyranny.

Trotsky and the Left Opposition were very soon the only forces still standing on Lenin's programme. The bureaucracy gained control of the young parties of the Comintern, many of them still in the process of formation. In time they were transformed into corrupt, lifeless bureaucratic machines.

Within little more than ten years of Lenin's death, almost the entire generation of Bolshevik revolutionaries were murdered by the totalitarian state with Stalin at its head.

Lenin, safely dead, was mummified and made into an icon by the Stalinist state. As if foreseeing it, Lenin had written, with Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in mind:

"During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slanders. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonise them, so to say, and to hallow their names to a certain extent for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its substance, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarising it."

The impossibility even for Stalin of destroying Lenin's published works — which for us remain the real Lenin — now led to endless scholastic reinterpretations of them, quite alien to the spirit of Lenin and the spirit of Marxism.

The Russian Revolution led the way of the Stalinist counter-revolution to the savagely tyrannical rule of a vast bureaucratic caste which subjected the working class of the USSR and Eastern Europe to unparalleled social

"No political issue so clearly epitomises the profoundly revolutionary and democratic spirit of Lenin and the Bolsheviks as their policy on the national question"

ject to systematic national and cultural oppression, sometimes more savage, sometimes less. The last large-scale purge there began in the 1970s.

There were few states on earth more alien to Lenin's programme on the national question than the one where the production of pictures and statues of Lenin — stylised to fit a vulgar Stalinist caricature — was a major industry.

On 21 January 1924 Lenin died. Within a short time all that he stood for had become a dead letter in the Communist movement.

Stalin and his friends used the occasion of Lenin's death to organise the so-called 'Lenin levy', a swamping of the revolutionary core of the party by a mass of raw, often careerist, recruits.

At the end of 1923 the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky, had taken up the same struggle as Lenin. Within a year of Lenin's death, the bureaucracy had differentiated itself from his programme by proclaiming a programme that he would have mocked at, that there could be socialism in one country. Thus they started on the road to abandoning the struggle for inter-

"Whatever a party could offer of courage, revolutionary far-sightedness and consistency in a historic hour, Lenin, Trotsky and the other comrades have given in good measure. All the revolutionary honour and capacity which western social democracy lacked were represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian revolution, it was also the salvation of the honour of international socialism."

Rosa Luxemburg



Our anti-Stalinism and theirs

The American Trotskyist, James P Cannon, wrote this analysis of the difference between socialist and middle-class anti-Stalinism in 1947, at a time when broad anti-Stalinism was sweeping the USA, although elsewhere in the world Stalinism still held mass support

An understanding of the perfidious character of Stalinism is the beginning of wisdom for every serious, class-conscious worker; and all anti-Stalinists who are also anti-capitalist should try to work together.

But anti-Stalinism, by itself, is no programme for common struggle. It is too broad a term, and it means different things to different people. There are more anti-Stalinists now than there were when we started our struggle...But very few of the current crop of vociferous anti-Stalinists have anything to do with us, or we with them. That is not because of exclusiveness or quarrelsomeness, either on their part or on ours, but because we start out from different premises, conduct the struggle by different methods and aim at different goals.

Many anti-Stalinists devote their arguments exclusively to the terrorist activities and totalitarian methods of the Stalinists. This is a rather common approach to Stalinism nowadays, but in our opinion it is an incorrect one. We believe it puts the question in too narrow a frame and provides neither an explanation of the monstrous phenomenon of Stalinism nor an adequate programme by means of which the revolutionary workers can rid the labour movement of this plague.

Stalinism manifests itself in a totalitarian police state in the Soviet Union and a terrorist apparatus in the labour movement of the capitalist countries. But it is not only that. Stalinism has its social base in the nationalised property of the Soviet Union — the product of the great revolution. It is not the continuator and legitimate heir of Bolshevism, but its antithesis. The Stalinists, a privileged bureaucracy which fastened itself on the Soviet state in a period of its degeneration and decline, had to liquidate in blood virtually the whole generation of the original Bolsheviks, before they could consolidate their power.

But despite all the crimes and betrayals of the Stalinists, great masses of radical workers in Western Europe still identify them with the Soviet Union and, in turn, identify the latter with the revolution which gains attractiveness in their eyes the more that capitalism reveals its irremediable bankruptcy. Herein is the main secret of the malevolent influence of Stalinism in the European labour movement.

By far the greatest power of Stalinism derives from the illusion in the minds of the European workers that Stalinism means communism as represented by the great Russian Revolution. They want the same kind of revolution, and they will not be freed from Stalinism until they are freed from the illusion that Stalinism can help them to get

it. Most anti-Stalinists, especially the professionals, identify Stalinism with communism. This only serves to embellish Stalinism in the eyes of the radical workers, to reinforce their illusions, and to strengthen the position of Stalinism in their midst...

The illusions of the masses as to the real nature of Stalinism are continually nourished and kept alive by the Stalinist propaganda machines with their perfected technique of demagoguery and mass deception. Stalinism is, first of all, a political influence in the labour movement in the capitalist countries. And it exerts this influence, primarily, not as a police force or a terrorist gang, but as a political party. The fight against Stalinism is first of all, and above all, a political fight. This political fight will never make any serious headway with the radicalised workers — and they are the ones who are decisive — unless it is clearly and unambiguously anti-capitalist from beginning to end. No propaganda that bears, or even appears to bear, the slightest taint of Trumanism will get a hearing from the anti-capitalist workers of Europe. That kind of "anti-Stalinism" which is currently popular in the United States is absolutely no good for export.

We have no reason to minimise the terrorist apparatus of Stalinism, unexampled in its magnitude and monstrosity in all history. It is a bloody and fearsome thing; we have paid enough in blood to know it. This terrorism must be exposed and fought. We must keep the pitiless light of publicity shining on it. But the exposure of the terrorist activities of the GPU is only one part, important to be sure, but not the most important part of the struggle against Stalinism.

Leaving out of consideration altogether the capitalist demagogues who exploit the fraudulent slogan "democracy versus totalitarianism" for their own imperialistic purposes, there are a



James P Cannon

great number of people who sincerely hate Stalinism for its violence and terror, its bloody and awful tyranny, its utter disregard for human life and human dignity. But in their revulsion against this horror — which does them credit, no doubt — they fall into the same basic error as that of the Stalinists themselves. They overestimate the power of naked force. The Stalinists think that violence can accomplish anything, and this fallacy will eventually facilitate their downfall. Many of their opponents likewise imagine that violence and terror are omnipotent, able to repeal the historical laws explained by Marx.

It is wrong to make a fetish of violence and terror, to see only the GPU and not the tens of millions of Communist and Socialist workers in Europe. It is fatally wrong to lose faith in the ability of these workers to overcome their illusions and take their destiny into their own hands. And it is criminal to proceed from these errors — as so many anti-Stalinists are doing in this country — to the dreadful and monstrous conclusion: the destruction of hateful Stalinism must be entrusted

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political oppression. In conditions of Russian backwardness and the isolation of the revolution, the worst features of class society were grafted on to the collectivised property initially established by the workers' revolution. The totalitarian bureaucracy "owned" the state, which owned the means of production, and ruled through a tight "Communist Party" monopoly of power.

Does the historical fate of the Russian workers' revolution endorse in retrospect the verdict of those scholastic Marxists like Karl Kautsky who condemned Lenin and the Bolsheviks as adventurists — people who took a leap in the dark?

It is best to let the splendid revolutionary Marxist Rosa Luxemburg answer that question. Luxemburg was an ardent supporter of the Russian Revolution, but also a sharp critic of the policy of the Bolsheviks. She differed with them on their land policy and on their national policy. She criticised the Red Terror and argued that the Bolshevik Revolution could and should have been won with less repression and more democracy than the Bolsheviks felt they could foster after the outbreak of civil war in mid-1918.

She wrote against the Kautskys: "That the Bolsheviks have based their policy entirely upon the world

events, should be regarded by the International as a shining example of socialist policy towards which only uncritical admiration and zealous imitation are in order."

But: "Whatever a party could offer of courage, revolutionary far-sightedness and consistency in a historic hour, Lenin, Trotsky and the other comrades have given in good measure. All the revolutionary honour and capacity which western social democracy lacked were represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian Revolution, it was also the salvation of the honour of international socialism."

The Bolsheviks — socialists, proletarian revolutionaries, and consistent Marxists — were absolutely right to seize power, to base themselves on the perspective of the international socialist revolution. It was not their fault that the working class was everywhere defeated in the advanced countries of Europe and that the Russian Revolution was left isolated and subsequently degenerated.

If a group of old Bolsheviks, led by Stalin, finally betrayed the revolution, they could only feel secure in that work when they had slaughtered almost the entire membership of the revolutionary party that Lenin had built.

If the European labour movement had had more of Bolshevism in it, then the Russian Bolshevik-led revolution would not have led to Stalinism but to the inauguration of the liberation of the working class at least of Europe.

Their method, their programme, and their spirit is today still the only serious working class answer to capitalism, and now also to the Stalinist system.

Let the writer Maxim Gorky, a friend of Lenin though not always an uncritical one — he opposed the October insurrection, and very bitterly criticised the Red Terror — have the last word on Lenin's character and motives:

"I have never met...nor do I know of, any man who hated, loathed and despised so deeply and strongly as Lenin all unhappiness, grief and suffering...Lenin was exceptionally great, in my opinion, precisely because of this feeling in him of irreconcilable, unquenchable hostility towards the sufferings of humanity, his burning faith that suffering is not an essential and unavoidable part of life, but an abomination which people ought and are able to sweep away."

"The Bolsheviks... were absolutely right to seize power, to base themselves on the perspective of the international socialist revolution"

proletarian revolution is the clearest proof of their political far-sightedness and firmness of principle and of the bold scope of their policies.

Surely nothing can be further from Lenin's and Trotsky's thoughts than to believe that all the things they have done or left undone under conditions of bitter competition and necessity in the midst of the roaring whirlpool of



Roosevelt and Stalin

'Stalinism has nothing in common with socialism'

From page 7

to Truman and his atomic bombs.

If Stalinism were merely a totalitarian police state in the USSR and a terrorist apparatus in the labour movement of the capitalist countries, then the struggle against the terrorists by publicity, exposure and any other means at our disposal would be the main, if not the only, task. But the problem doesn't end there; it only begins. The real fight against Stalinism, the main fight, takes place on the political field. That is the way Trotsky explained the question and conducted his struggle. And that is why the Stalinists have always regarded Trotskyism as their most serious and consistent enemy. Trotsky's method must be the model for the revolutionary workers of the present day...

On the other hand, reports from Eastern Europe, where the first approaches of the victorious Red Army were greeted by revolutionary uprisings and mass acclaim, indicate that the workers have already been sadly disillusioned and the moral position of Stalinism has apparently been hopelessly shattered. The conditions are maturing there for the construction of genuine Socialist (or Communist) parties — anti-Stalinist as well as anti-capitalist.

What, then, can be the real situation within the Soviet Union itself, after all the bitter, bloody years? Can the masses still believe in Stalinism? Are there any illusions left? The known reaction of the masses in the occupied territories should give us the answer. The very fact that the terror, instead of mitigating, grows worse from year to year, with the police apparatus swelling to ever more monstrous proportions — all this testifies not to the strength of the Stalinist regime within the country, but to its weakness, to its isolation and lack of mass support. The Stalinist regime in the USSR, isolated from the masses and ruling by terror alone, is weakest at the moment when it appears to be most secure. The strongest assaults of the Nazi military machine proved unable to bring about the downfall of the regime in the USSR from within. And that is convincing evidence, we think, that the Russian masses don't want liberation from accursed and hated Stalinism in the shape of capitalist restoration and the colonial dismemberment of the country. But one strong revolutionary demonstration from the outside can bring the whole regime, with all its apparatus of repression and terror, crashing down in ruins.

The salvation of the Soviet Union, or rather what is left of it, from the curse of Stalinism, depends in the first place on a strong revolutionary impulse from Europe or America, or some other part of the world. This impulse will come, we firmly believe, and this will change everything. This task of liberation belongs to the workers. It cannot be farmed out to their class enemies, the Anglo-American imperialist gang, in the hope that somehow something good will come from the greatest evil. To assign the task of liberating the Soviet Union and the labour movement of the West from Stalinism to Truman and his atomic bombs is to renounce faith in the future of humanity, to pass a premature death sentence on civilisation.

We must go back to Marx, and reassert and be guided by his affirmation that "the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself". Only on that basis can we make an effective common front against Stalinism and free the labour movement from its malign power and influence. Only on that basis can we see the future clearly and prepare for it.

The media are trying to throw socialism and Leninism into the grave of Stalinism and to bury them together with the discredited tyrannies of Eastern Europe.

In fact Stalinism was the negation of socialism and Leninism. Stalinism came to power only by making a bloody counter-revolution against the socialists and Leninists in the USSR.

Leon Trotsky was the voice and the symbol of those socialists and Leninists. The movement called "Trotskyist" continued the struggle for his ideals and ideas after he was murdered by a Stalinist agent in 1940.

They opposed the Stalinisation of Eastern Europe, calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1946.

After 1948 many would-be Trotskyists fell victim to confusion, concluding that the Stalinist systems in Eastern Europe and China must be some sort of workers' state. This led the movement to grievous errors; persistently, repeatedly, the logic of the argument led to the industrial development of underdeveloped countries being substituted for workers' self-liberation as the goal of socialism.

As early as 1951 Trotsky's widow, Natalia Sedova, protested, in the letter printed below. The Trotskyists to whom she was protesting did, whatever their errors, maintain a commitment to workers' liberty against Stalinism; and the group with which Sedova associated herself in 1951 took an ultra-left and sectarian course on many issues not to do with the Stalinist states.

Nearly 40 years later, however, with hindsight, it is clear that Sedova was right in the basic arguments of her letter.

You know quite well that I have not been in political agreement with you for the past six or six years, since the end of the war and even earlier.

The position you have taken on the important events of recent times shows me that, instead of correcting your earlier errors, you are persisting in them and deepening them. On the road you have taken, you have reached a point where it is no longer possible for me to remain silent or to confine myself to private protests. I must now express my opinions publicly.

The stop which I feel obliged to take has been a grave and difficult one for me, and I can only regret it sincerely. But there is no other way. After a great deal of reflections and hesitations over a problem which pained me deeply, I find that I must tell you that I see no other way than to say openly that our disagreements make it impossible for me to remain any longer in your ranks.

The reasons for this final action on my part are known to most of you. I repeat them here briefly only for those to whom they are not familiar, touching only on our fundamentally important differences and not on the differences over matters of daily policy which are related to them or which follow from them.

Obsessed by old and outlived formulas, you continue to regard the Stalinist state as a workers' state. I cannot and will not follow you in this.

Virtually every year after the beginning of the fight against the usurping Stalinist bureaucracy, LD Trotsky repeated that the regime was moving to the right, under conditions of a lagging world revolution and the seizure of all political positions in Russia by the bureaucracy. Time and again, he pointed out how the consolidation of Stalinism in Russia led to the worsening of the economic, political and social positions of the working class, and the triumph of a tyrannical and privileged aristocracy. If this trend continues, he said, the revolution will be at an end and the restoration of

capitalism will be achieved.

That, unfortunately, is what has happened even if in new and unexpected forms. There is hardly a country in the world where the authentic ideas and bearers of socialism are so barbarously hounded. It should be clear to everyone that the revolution has been completely destroyed by Stalinism. Yet you continue to say that under this unspeakable regime, Russia is still a workers' state. I consider this a blow at socialism. Stalinism and the Stalinist state have nothing whatever in common with a workers' state or with socialism. They are the worst and the most dangerous enemies of socialism and the working class.

You now hold that the states of Eastern Europe over which Stalinism established its dominion during and after the war are likewise workers' states. This is equivalent to saying that Stalinism has carried out a revolutionary socialist role. I cannot and will not follow you in this.

After the war and even before it ended, there was a rising revolutionary movement of the masses in these Eastern countries. But it was not these masses that won power and it was not a workers' state that was established by their struggle. It was the Stalinist counter-revolution that won power, reducing these lands to vassals of the Kremlin by strangling the working masses, their revolutionary struggles and their revolutionary aspirations.

By considering that the Stalinist bureaucracy established workers' states in these countries, you assign to it a progressive and even revolutionary role. By propagating this monstrous falsehood to the workers' vanguard, you deny to the Fourth International all the basic reasons for existence as the world party of the socialist revolution. In the past, we always considered Stalinism to be a counter-revolutionary force in every sense of the term. You no longer do so. But I continue to do so.

In 1932 and 1933, the Stalinists, in order to justify their shameful capitulation to Hitlerism, declared that it would matter little if the fascists came to power because socialism would come after and



Natalia Sedova with Trotsky in Norway, 1936

through the rule of fascism. Only dehumanised brutes without a shred of socialist thought or spirit could have argued this way. Now, notwithstanding the revolutionary aims which animate you, you maintain that the despotic Stalinist reaction which has triumphed in Europe is one of the roads through which socialism will eventually come. This view marks an irremediable break with the profoundest convictions always held by our movement and which I continue to share.

I find it impossible to follow you in the question of the Tito regime in Yugoslavia. All the sympathy and support of revolutionists and even of all democrats, should go to the Yugoslav people in their determined resistance to the efforts of Moscow to reduce them and their country to vassalage. Every advantage should be taken of the concessions which the Yugoslav regime now finds itself obliged to make to the people. But your entire press is now devoted to an inexcusable idealisation of the Titoist bureaucracy for which no ground exists in the traditions and principles of our movement.

This bureaucracy is only a replica, in a new form, of the old Stalinist bureaucracy. It was trained in the ideas, the politics and morals of the GPU. Its regime differs from Stalin's in no fundamental regard. It is absurd to believe or to teach that the revolutionary leadership of the Yugoslav people will develop out of this bureaucracy or in any way other than in the course of struggle against it.

Most insupportable of all is the position on the war to which you have committed yourselves. The third world war which threatens humanity confronts the revolutionary movement with the most difficult problems, the most complex situations, the gravest decisions. Our position can be taken only after the most earnest and freest discussions. But in the face of all the events of recent years, you continue to advocate, and to pledge the entire movement, to the defense of the Stalinist state. You are even now supporting the armies of Stalinism in the war which is being endured by the anguished Korean people. I cannot and will not follow you in this.

As far back as 1927, Trotsky, in reply to a disloyal question put to him in the Political Bureau by Stalin, stated his views as follows: *For the socialist fatherland, yes! For the Stalinist regime, no!* That was in 1927; now, 23 years later Stalin has left nothing of the

Socialist fatherland. It has been replaced by the enslavement and degradation of the people by the Stalinist autocracy. This is the state you propose to defend in the war, which you are already defending in Korea.

I know very well how often you repeat that you are criticising Stalinism and fighting it. But the fact is that your criticism and your fight lose their value and can yield no results because they are determined by and subordinated to your position of defence of the Stalinist state. Whoever defends this regime of barbarous oppression, regardless of the motives, abandons the principles of socialism and internationalism.

In the message sent me from the recent convention of the SWP you write that Trotsky's ideas continue to be your guide. I must tell you that I read those words with great bitterness. As you observe from what I have written above, I do not see his ideas in your politics. I have confidence in these ideas. I remain convinced that the only way out of the present situation is the social revolution, the self-emancipation of the proletariat of the world.

The socialists who said 'Soviet troops out!'

The Fourth International demands the withdrawal of all foreign armies, including the Red Army, from all occupied territories. It opposes all annexations, reparations, forced transfers of populations and the detention of millions of German and Japanese workers as prisoners of war, either by the imperialists or by the Soviet bureaucracy. The Fourth International recognises no other frontiers than those drawn by the culture and freely expressed preferences of the populations concerned.

The masses of the countries at present must feel absolutely free, without any pressure, to determine their own fate. The occupation of these countries by the Red Army, the burdens imposed upon them, their treatment as defeated countries, can only harm the fundamental interests of the world socialist revolution. (Statement of the Fourth International, June 1946)

A white man finds the truth

REVIEW

Edward Ellis reviews
'A Dry White Season'

A 'Dry White Season' is in many ways very similar to 'Cry Freedom'.

Indeed, the opening few minutes invite the comparison: it starts where 'Cry Freedom' ends, with a dramatic reconstruction of the South African security forces gunning down protesting school students in Soweto, June 1976. Like 'Cry Freedom', it is a story of a white South African having his eyes opened to the truth.

Two questions are raised by such a film: whether it is right to make films about South Africa from such an almost exclusively white perspective; and whether, even if it was right once, the exercise has now lost its point completely.

Almost by definition, both 'Cry Freedom' and 'A Dry White Season' are liberal pictures. They concern the battle for truth and decency, justice and integrity, from the point of view of white people. Blacks feature in both films, even prominently, but the central characters, the *vantage point* of the drama, are liberal-minded whites.

Donald Woods in 'Cry Freedom' is, at the beginning, self-consciously liberal, working for a liberal newspaper and condemning even-handedly the racism of the apartheid state and the 'racism' of the burgeoning Black Consciousness movement, led by Steve Biko. Woods believes he knows how bad apartheid is. It is his friendship with Biko that transforms both his view of apartheid and his understanding of the struggles of black people against it.

In 'A Dry White Season', a former rugby star now working comfortably as a teacher (Donald Sutherland) is gradually confronted by the realities of South Africa as a result of the imprisonment of his gardener (Winston Ntshona), who had been trying to find out what had really happened to his young son, allegedly killed 'during the riots'. Sutherland discovers that his gardener is dead, according to the police as a result of suicide whilst in their custody. He sets out to uncover the truth.

The main difference with 'Cry Freedom', apart from being fictional, is that here we have a story about white Afrikaner South Africans, not English-speaking liberals. Sutherland finds that blind bigotry extends into his family: his wife leaves him. In 'Cry Freedom', Woods' wife accuses him of seeking not only justice for Biko but also fame for himself. Sutherland's wife (Janet Suzman) accuses him of abandoning his people.

Like Woods, Sutherland is accompanied and assisted on his journey of discovery by a scornful but ultimately sympathetic black man, in this case a street-wise lawyer (Zakes Mokae).

As in 'Cry Freedom', black South Africa exists almost outside the central arena of the story. We see Soweto primarily as Sutherland sees it; in 'Cry Freedom', the township slums were the beginning of Woods' realisation.

The events in Soweto are not much more than background, for the most part taking place 'off stage'. Certainly, although we see the June 16 massacre vividly portrayed, we see little in detail beyond that. We see nothing of the political debate (and in this case, unlike 'Cry Freedom', have no inkling of the existence of political organisation) that was taking place in townships. Black South Africans are very much victims: heroic victims, to be sure

— for example the horribly beaten man who denies his forced testimony in court knowing he will probably be killed for it. But black people mainly suffer. They fight back, get killed, grow embittered. But this is very much a kind of elemental, unsophisticated revolt. The real psychological and moral drama is elsewhere, in Johannesburg's white areas. What happens to the blacks is second-hand tragedy.

Even so, both 'Cry Freedom' and this film manage to pack a formidable moral, political and emotional punch. There is no denying that 'A Dry White Season' is extremely moving and disturbing.

A major part of this film's plot is precisely to ridicule 'liberalism', albeit in a narrower sense. A cynical, dry-humoured English lawyer (Marlon Brando) agrees to take on Sutherland's case against the police simply to prove that it has no hope of success. In court, he proves beyond any doubt that the gardener was murdered, and that the judge has no intention of finding the police guilty whatever the evidence may be.

"Justice and law are remote cousins," Brando's lawyer tells Sutherland. "And in South Africa they are simply not on speaking terms."

So the facade of fairness, due process, justice, runs up against the reality of racist political power. Real justice, the film suggests, only comes from stepping outside this framework of formal law, by defying the authorities: Sutherland in his quest for truth becomes, in effect, an outlaw, and he understands that by pitting himself against the unjust state he was put his own perhaps others' lives in danger. When Mokae's lawyer takes the law into his own hands in the film's closing sequence, exacting revenge upon the Special Branch thug responsible for so much death, we at least feel that there is some justice in what he is doing, even if it is a mistake.

There is some exploration of the 'Afrikaner mind'. Sutherland's wife leaves him, and although we



Zakes Mokae (left) and Donald Sutherland go on a journey of discovery

can feel no sympathy for her — she is a bigot — her reasoning has some internal coherence that does not depend solely on malevolence. She knows that the gardener was murdered by the police, and that horrible things are being done. But she believes you have to take sides: otherwise, the whites will lose everything.

And much more than for Donald Woods, here we have a sense that Sutherland has 'taken sides'. He is not merely broadening an already liberal-democratic idea of how South Africa should be run: he loses his family (except his son), his job, everything, because he is a 'traitor'. As a result of his desire to see justice done, he has to be prepared completely to reconstruct his life. A journalist friend asks him if he wants to go back to his wife, and he tells her not to be ridiculous. Nevertheless, the dilemmas of

Afrikanerdom, if that is a legitimate subject for drama, are not explored very extensively or with much subtlety. Essentially, 'A Dry White Season', despite stabs at something different, is just about a white man finding out the truth.

Ultimately this is not very satisfying, even if it can carry, as this film does, a great sense of moral outrage. Compare, for example, the film 'Mapantsula!', made secretly in Soweto. Here a black man, who ekes out a living as a petty thief and police informer, gradually comes to understand the necessity of struggle. Not only is the entire portrayal of South Africa vastly more intricate and complete, the dramatic impact, I think, is far more powerful.

It is also less pessimistic. Real transformations in society are made not by men of affluence making stands against injustice; they are

only the ripples on the surface. Change comes because the downtrodden of the earth make a different sort of moral choice and choose no longer to endure oppression.

So 'A Dry White Season' only covers old ground, ground which it must be increasingly difficult to justify covering. Did we need another 'Cry Freedom'? For sure, it is a well made film (directed, interestingly, by a black woman, Euzhan Palcy, from Martinique), and avoids 'Cry Freedom's' more irritating 'escape from apartheid' theme. There are some excellent performances, especially from Janet Suzman and Marlon Brando (who virtually steals the film). It is a story told with passion and anger. I would not deter anyone from seeing it; far from it.

But surely there are other South African stories to be told.

'Pray that another and a better kingdom come'

From 'Autumn
Journal' by Louis
MacNeice

August is nearly over, the people
Back from holiday are tanned
With blistered thumbs and a wallet of snaps and a little
Joie de vivre which is contraband;
Whose stamina is enough to face the annual
Wait for the annual spree,
Whose memories are stamped with specks of sunshine
Like faded *fleurs de lys*.
Now the till and the typewriter call the fingers,
The workman gathers his tools
For the eight-hour day but after that the solace
Of films or football pools
Or of the gossip or cuddle, the moments of self-glory
Or self-indulgence, blinkers on the eyes of doubt,
The blue smoke rising and the brown lace sinking
In the empty glass of stout.
Most are accepters, born and bred to harness,
And take things as they come,
But some refusing harness and more who are refused it
Would pray that another and a better Kingdom come,
Which now is sketched in the air or travestied in slogans
Written in chalk or tar on stucco or plaster-board
But in time may find its body in men's bodies,
Its law and order in their heart's accord,
Where skill will no longer languish nor energy be trammelled
To competition and graft,
Exploited in subservience but not allegiance
To an utterly lost and daft
System that gives a few at fancy prices
Their fancy lives
While ninety-nine in the hundred who never attend the banquet
Must wash the grease of ages off the knives.
And now the tempter whispers 'But you also
Have the slave-owner's mind,

Would like to sleep on a mattress of easy profits,
To snap your fingers or a whip and find
Servants or hours ready to wince and flatter
And build with their degradation your self-esteem;
What you want is not a world of the free in function
But a niche at the top, the skimmings of the cream.'
And I answer that that is largely so for habit makes me
Think victory for one implies another's defeat,
That freedom means the power to order, and that in order
To preserve the values dear to the élite
The élite must remain a few. It is so hard to imagine
A world where the many would have their chance without
A fall in the standard of intellectual living
And nothing left that the highbrow cared about.
Which fears must be suppressed. There is no reason for
thinking
That, if you gave a chance to people to think or live,
The arts of thought or life will suffer and become rougher
And not return more than you could ever give.
An' now I relapse to sleep, to dreams perhaps and reaction
Where I shall play the gangster or the sheikh,
Kill for the love of killing, make the world my sofa,
Unzip the women and insult the meek.
Which fantasies no doubt are due to my private history,
Matters for the analyst,
But the final cure is not in his past-dissecting fingers
But in a future of action, the will and fist
Of those who abjure the luxury of self-pity,
And prefer to risk a movement without being sure
If movement would be better or worse in a hundred
Years or a thousand when their heart is pure.
None of our hearts are pure, we always have mixed motives,
Are self-deceivers, but the worst of all
Deceits is to murmur 'Lord, I am not worthy'
And, lying easy, turn your face to the wall.
But I may cure that habit, look up and outwards
And may my feet follow my wider glance
First no doubt to stumble, then to walk with the others
And in the end — with time and luck — to dance.

Students and Eastern Europe

Dear Socialist Organiser,

I am writing to you to clear up a few misunderstandings that have occurred vis a vis Eastern Europe and NUS London's attitude towards it.

Without claiming to speak for the whole of the Executive, I think the following matters should be brought to your readers' attention.

First of all, NUS London is not an area where Socialist Outlook has any influence over any other grouping. The Exec consists of 1 Socialist Organiser, 2 Socialist Outlook, 2 Greens, 1 Militant, 2 Socialist Action, 2 NOLS, 1 Socialist Workers Party, 2 Independents (including myself) and one vacancy. I hardly think this is an Exec where Socialist Outlook wield any considerable power!

Secondly, you have misquoted

our attitude towards the conference. Despite the fact we had major disagreements over the publicity, we are still including the leaflet in our next mailing!! So much for pluralism! Our 'major disagreement' was that the leaflet included the incredible phrase "To support the East European workers no matter how confused they are". Presumably, does this include the Pamyat/Memory movement in the Soviet Union, and the Bulgarian Popular Front which denies Bulgarian Moslems the right to practice their religion? The whole exec, from NOLS to Socialist Action, Green to Socialist Outlook, bar Jeni Bailey (Socialist Organiser) took exception to that phraseology. Hence we did not refuse to support the conference because it "calls for freedom of speech and association in the Eastern Bloc".

I cannot speak for Socialist Outlook, but I imagine that they split away, like almost every other left grouping, and independent, from Left Unity because it was such a transparent front for Socialist

Organiser. How come all the candidates put up in all NUS elections so far under the Left Unity banner have been members of Socialist Organiser? The few independents on the steering committee are vastly outnumbered by Socialist Organiser members and nominees. All Left Unity mail is routed mysteriously through Socialist Organiser addresses, and printed at the same place and in the same typeface as Socialist Organiser. So who's kidding who, eh??

This isn't to say NUS London is wholly against Left Unity. I only speak for myself. But please don't accuse us of sectarianism, because it simply isn't true. Having been accused by Socialist Organiser of being a Socialist Outlook stooge (even though I'm not even a Trotskyist!!), I think it's the pot calling the kettle black personally!!

Please print this letter in the interests of open frank and honest discussion; if you don't it'll confirm all my worst fears about SO.

Yours in struggle
Ric Euteneuer

United campaigns and sectarian excuses



Mark Osborn replies to Ric Euteneuer

We — centrally, Socialist Organiser — began organising a conference to back workers in Eastern Europe in late September.

Since that date I have written numerous letters to the left, inviting other groups and individuals to help build a united solidarity campaign with these workers. I have had no response from Militant, the SWP or Socialist Outlook.

According to Socialist Outlook's office they have not even discussed the issue — despite the size of the conference; despite the action in Eastern Europe. All these groups are sectarian in the true sense of the word — they are, to one degree or another, unwilling to work with others where the general interest of our class demands such joint work, instead, they counterpose themselves and their own organisations and shibboleths to the broader concerns.

While unity overtures remain in the form of letters between organisations they can be put in the bin and quietly ignored. When unity is offered in public, people have to start inventing excuses to avoid getting involved.

Socialist Outlook supplied a 'political' excuse to NUS London Exec — and the other sectarians trotted along behind them.

In fact, if you read the leaflet for the conference you'll find no trace of Pamyat or pogroms. Quite the reverse. Quote the leaflet properly:

"Where should the British labour movement stand? Who should we side with? Certainly not with the profiteers. But with whom? With the reforming bureaucrats? With the old-line Stalinist bureaucrats, defending what they call 'socialism'? Or with the workers?"

"We believe the labour movement should side with the workers in their struggles for freedom and for wages and conditions. We should side with them unconditionally, whatever illusions or confused ideas they or their leaders have at any time; and simultaneously we should do all we can to help the working class socialists in the Eastern Bloc, groups like the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution), who are fighting for the workers to resolve the crisis through the establishment of democratically planned economies with workers' control as an alternative to both Stalinism and capitalism."

To anyone familiar with the arguments in the British labour movement, it is clear that we are advocating solidarity with the labour organisations/proto-worker organisations in the Eastern Bloc, ie. despite the fact that some of these organisations are pro-capitalist (Solidarnosc), we recognise them as our class organisations, and will defend their right to exist and their right to make what we consider mistakes — against the Stalinist state.

Do we support Pamyat? No we don't. Do we advocate the labour movement recognise Pamyat as 'on our side'? No we do not. Pamyat is not a workers' organisation. Nor does the leaflet suggest as much.

I find it increasingly bizarre that Socialist Organiser should be blamed for being unable to form a united organisation on the student left with people like the Militant and the SWP. These organisations did not 'split' from Left Unity; they were never involved with Left Unity. This was their choice. The only basis on which they would unite is that they control the organisation; the organisation has their full programme.

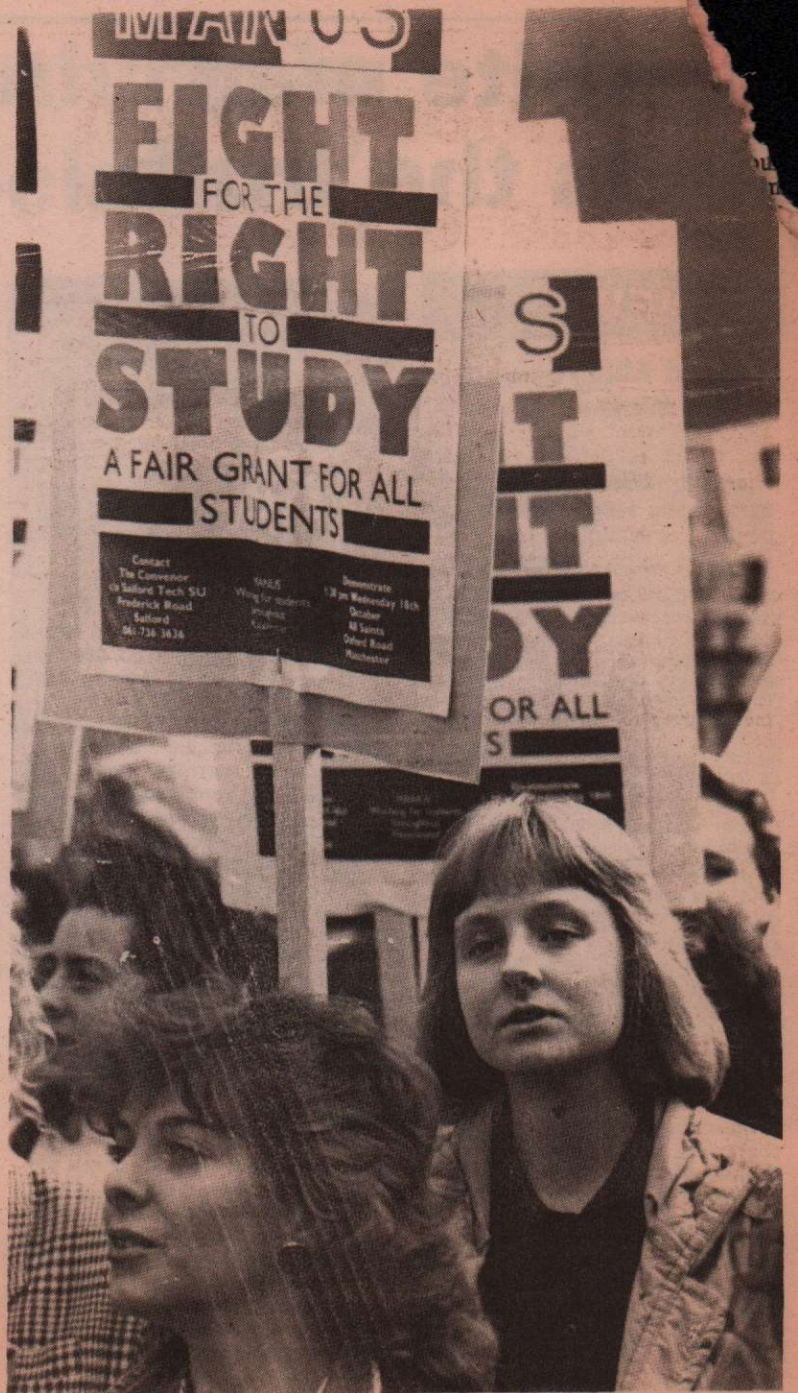
Blame them for their sectarianism — not me. Socialist Outlook! They were pulled along behind the call for Left Unity. After a while they took a decision: we are tied to a project with Socialist Organiser; they are bigger than us;

we cannot stomach this. Layered on top of this was a thick film of personal hatred. A nasty mixture which produced a lot of stupid mud-slurging — for example at the recent Socialist Movement Trade Union Conference.

Of course we had more influence in Left Unity than Socialist Outlook ever did. Just about every useful idea which is current on the student left comes from us. That's boasting. Nevertheless, it's true.

Left Unity got its policy passed on loans and the poll tax at last NUS Conference. Would a mere Socialist Organiser 'front' be able to do that? Left Unity submitted 40% of all the motions to last NUS Conference. Would a mere SO 'front' be able to do that? Left Unity was central to building a 10,000-strong anti-loans demo in Manchester in week two of last term. Would SO be able to do that on its own?

All the candidates Left Unity puts up are in SO? The only election since Left Unity was set up was at



Left Unity called a 10,000-strong march in Manchester

last Christmas NUS Conference. It's true that Janine Booth — the candidate — is a supporter of both Left Unity and Socialist Organiser. But she got the nomination on merit. Or perhaps you could name someone else in Left Unity who is better qualified to represent the left in that election — from any of the left groups or independents. There is no-one.

In the forthcoming NUS elections our slate includes independents and supporters of a left group which is quite hostile to SO (Workers Power).

What is the alternative to Left Unity? Join SWSS (complete control by the SWP)? Join Militant

(FELS) (fall into Stalinist ice-age)?

At one time you would have said that the answer was to join the London Broad Left and build Broad Lefts throughout the country. But the London Broad Left last met on 1 October. It does not exist, it has collapsed into NUS London Exec.

Nor has the NUS London Exec got a good record. Where's the poll tax campaign? It does not exist. Where is the FE involvement?, etc, etc.

Left Unity is thriving. The CSWEB Conference initiative is thriving. Compare this with the policy of your sectarian friends.

Re-volting research

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

I am indebted to the Scientific American of 1 March 1890 for a report on the "efficiency of the electrical appliances and dynamos placed in the State prisons" of New York.

And what was the purpose of these machines? Electric lights in the prisoners' cells? No! They were for the execution of condemned murderers as a replacement for hanging.

The State Prisons Superintendent had contracted for electrocution machinery consisting of an alternating current (ac) dynamo to supply between 1000 and 2000 volts in each of the three State prisons.

They were of a type that would normally supply around 700 incandescent lamps, each of 16 candle power.

The Superintendent had appointed a committee to assess the suitability of the dynamos and its three members, two of them doctors, took their duties seriously. They constructed means of measuring the voltage produced, using voltmeters and lamps of known power. They found the voltages output by the dynamos at Sing Sing, Auburn and Clinton to be equivalent to 1560V, 1680V and 1170V of direct current, respectively.

They did not neglect to test the dynamos' suitability for their intended purpose. While new medicines are tested on animals to ensure that they are safe, the prison dynamos were tested on animals to make sure they were quite lethal.

At Auburn prison, the committee tested the appliance on a horse weighing 1000lb, perhaps 7 times

the weight of a typical murderer. Electrodes were placed on the forehead and hindleg and a current driven by 1200V passed. Death was instantaneous. Just to check that the victims were really dead and not in a state of suspended animation, they tried resuscitating one, a calf. An apparatus was devised to allow forced respiration after the calf had been shocked, but even after half an hour there was no sign of life.

At Clinton prison, a young bull of 600lb was killed instantly by a current driven by 900V. Previous experiments by committee members on dogs, calves and horses found 500V sufficient to kill animals up to 75lb, while 1000V was enough to instantly kill a horse.

Finally, it was noted that, from the tests of the dynamos and the experiments on animals, "which were regarded as satisfactory," "the committee entertains no doubt as to the efficiency of the dynamos to accomplish the work for which they are intended."

Engineers must escalate action!

By an AEU steward

British Aerospace management are in trouble. They must obviously be worried by the threat of a £40 million fine for failing to deliver the Airbus wings. Local initiatives, despite and against our national officials, to stop the scabbing in Preston have also piled on the pressure.

Over 1,000 BAe workers are now laid off as a result of the action. The company is losing £1.2 million a week. So the stewards from Filton, Bristol were right to demand recently that the strategy committee ballot the whole of the company for all-out action. That will really pile on the pressure.

If our leaders believe what they say —

that BAe are the lynchpin in the EEF and a victory over them will mean we've broken the backs of the employers — then we should shut down the whole company and really squeeze them.

Secondly, it's vital that we turn this dispute into a national battle again.

There are two ways of doing this: we could demand the strategy committee ballot on GKN, LUCAS and Weir Group as they promised before Christmas. Or we could go for some kind of national action.

Both options have their attractions. Pulling out the other three groups would be an important escalation, but it would inevitably be dogged by all the problems associated with the selective action strategy.

Do we really want a repeat of:

- Local deals with no direct national gains?
- Shoddy deals like the fortnightly 42-hour week at Rolls Royce Hillingdon



John Smith, Profile

which Gavin Laird pushed through with arguments like "You can stay out till hell freezes over and Rolls Royce won't improve their offer."

• Strike pay cuts caused by a falling levy as engineering workers up and down the country lose interest in a dispute that no longer appears to concern them.

• Official calls to cross picket lines because the national levy fund is so low we can't allow the bosses to 'provoke' us.

The improvement in our side's fortunes over the last couple of weeks should not blind us to all these problems which were so visible before Christmas.

Because of these problems it makes much more sense to opt for national action.

A national one-day engineering strike would give a great boost to the campaign.

It would bring the dispute back into every workplace and revive interest massively. What's more, national action would make it easier to get the EEF back to the national negotiating table.

Solidarity in Southampton

By Alan Fraser

Southampton ambulance support group was set up in October. Ambulance workers, trade unionists, Labour Party members, etc. and many others are involved in the support work.

Over the last couple of months we have organised street collections in the town centre precinct and suburban areas in conjunction with ambulance workers from our local stations. We have organised workplace collections and have raised over £20,000 so far. Food buckets have raised over £2,000, benefit gigs in local pubs have also been organised.

We produce a regular bulletin. Last Saturday, for the rally, we organised a train to take up over 400 people from Southampton. We intend in the coming weeks to leaflet all the major workplaces in Southampton with an emphasis on factory gate meetings between ambulance workers and rank and file trade unionists.

Some shop stewards have been slow in helping to generate solidarity. Thus, it is key that we appeal directly to the rank and file for solidarity action. We will be organising a march and a rally and building for a day of strike action on 30 January.

The support group will continue to give information through our bulletin, agitating for strike action as the way

This is very important because every engineer needs the protection against the employers' divide and rule tactics that the national agreement gives us.

A one-day strike is unlikely to force the employers to crumble, but it would help turn the tide. More sustained national action is probably going to be needed.

We must re-affirm the total commitment of the rank and file in engineering to fight for a 35-hour week.

Every settlement that represents a breach in the employers' defences is a step forward, but our national fight is for 35 hours and that demand has so much more potential to unite and galvanise our side than settlements for 37 hours which include all sorts of strings.

It's time we had a national meeting of stewards from every Confed district to discuss the conduct of the dispute. The strategy committee should tell us of their plans for such a meeting. If they have no plans then rank and file engineers deserve to know why.

forward to winning the dispute. As yet the ambulance workers in Southampton are continuing with the emergency cover.

Both ambulance workers and support groups members work together very closely. There are constant visits by support group members to ambulance stations and this has encouraged a strong sense of unity. Every major town and city should have a support group and be working directly with ambulance workers. It is key and crucial that links are developed within every workplace and that rank and file workers are made aware of the need to physically support the ambulance workers.

The task of our support group in the coming weeks is to build for the local day of strike action on 30 January.

Stop Press

London ambulance stewards voted this afternoon (January 23) not to stage an all-out strike, and not to hold a ballot on London-wide unofficial action. Union negotiator Roger Poole sees this as a big victory for his strategy, and a big defeat for the government.

Meanwhile, ambulance workers in the North West are to start all-out action — without emergency cover — tomorrow.

Boycott Northcliffe newspapers

Striking NUJ members in Essex have called for a national boycott of all Northcliffe newspapers, as their dispute enters its seventh month.

The 14, who were sacked by the Essex Chronicle Series, one of Northcliffe's provincial newspapers, have already won widespread backing for the campaign from unions, Labour Party wards and local councillors.

Chronicle FoC Jeremy Dear said: "Already some people have come out in support of the boycott. What we need

now is for every union branch, trades council and workers' organisation to take the issue up.

"We are calling on everyone not to buy, or advertise, with any Northcliffe publication, not to supply them with any news and to publicise the boycott as widely as possible at all meetings and in non-Northcliffe media.

"Labour councils must also be forced to withdraw lucrative advertising contracts from the papers so we are also asking people to put pressure on their local councillors.

"The Essex Chronicle may think we will just give up and go away but after six months on strike we are more deter-

Bus workers call 24-hour strikes

By Rob Dawber
(Secretary, Sheffield and Chesterfield District Council NUR, in personal capacity)

After a long lull, workers at East Midlands buses have begun to fight back.

For a month, management have had it all their own way, since they announced the end of union organisation on 20 December.

They have been able to do this only because the NUR full-timers had vetoed any action to prevent scabs undermining the overtime ban called to defend Dave Edinboro.

Dave, a workshops rep at Chesterfield, had been victimised for his union activities. Before announcing the derecognition of the union on 20 December, East Midlands management had sacked a second activist, Dave McCann, on 18 December, for refusing to break the overtime ban.

Rather than stepping up the action to defend the activists, the union's divisional officer announced that the ban should be called off. That cleared the way for derecognition the next day.

Since then, District Council leaflets have gone out arguing the need for unity and why union activists must be protected. An open meeting was organised to rally for action.

This action has now been decided on. A mass meeting on 21 January, after hearing the full-timers repeat again and again that we should not talk about past errors committed by themselves, decided to go for a ballot on 24 hour strike action.

Local union reps are confident that we will get the necessary result, and that 24 hour strikes called at minimum notice will cause maximum disruption.

Many calls came from the floor for solidarity action at other companies owned, like East Midlands Buses, by Stage Coach Holdings — probably now Britain's biggest bus operator.

The union full-timer Vernon Hince (assistant general secretary) insisted that the law did not allow such solidarity action, and it was therefore out of the question. There was little opposition to his argument.

As is the intention of the anti-union laws, it will take a couple more weeks to begin any action, since the ballot has to be agreed to, organised, counted, and reported on, the union's National Executive must take a decision, and a date must be set. Stage Coach Holdings, as we know, will not waste this breathing space.

But once action has begun, the main job will be controlling the full timers and holding them accountable. They will be looking for the earliest possible compromise. Any sort of deal will do — so long as the union dues keep coming in.

The aims of the action have been set, and agreed by bus representatives, District Council, and now the National Executive.

1. Reinstatement of those sacked, because they symbolise the union's strength.

2. Re-recognition of the negotiating procedures, because we need to get at least to square one.

3. The company collecting union subs again.

So long as we take these aims as priorities, in that order, then we are set to win. That means ensuring that the full-timers aren't allowed to reverse the order.

'A time bomb under the Tories'

By Nik Barstow
Assistant Secretary,
Islington NALGO

A time bomb under the Tories" — that's how NALGO activists see their union's 1990 pay claim for council white-collar workers.

The flat-rate £1500 a year demanded by NALGO would add over 15% to local councils' pay bills, and mean increases of over 20% for many of the lowest paid members.

The claim, agreed by NALGO's National Local Government Committee on January 11, is the first time ever that the union has taken low pay seriously and is likely to win both a surge of support from council staff, and huge opposition from the Tories.

In 1989 the Tories were furious when action by NALGO members won an 8.6% pay rise — breaching their official 'pay norm' for public sector workers, and are determined not to let it happen again, threatening poll tax 'capping' and huge cuts if the council employers cave in again.

'The tail is wagging the dog'

Stuart Smith, chair of Merseyside ambulance NUPE branch, spoke to Socialist Organiser

The ambulance dispute is at a very critical stage now. It appears that the government and Kenneth Clarke in particular are trying to provoke the ambulance staff into an all-out strike.

I feel this is aimed at losing public support, which has been very important during this dispute.

The membership on Merseyside are fed up with the way the dispute has been

handled by the government, but our morale is very high, due to phenomenal public support and support from other trade union organisations. The membership realise the importance of this dispute. We are the last large group of workers in the NHS that the government has taken on, and we believe strongly that if we lose this dispute, the NHS will systematically be taken apart and thrown to the wolves.

I believe that the national negotiators, Roger Poole included, are going to have to recognise the calls for a national strike ballot. I think nationally the vote will go for a strike. We are getting into a situation where, as much as I applaud Roger Poole and the other negotiators, the tail is wagging the dog. The officials are telling the membership what to do.

This government is intent on provoking all-out action, but I believe that the time is now right for all-out action.

Locally, in St Helens, instances of public support are too numerous to mention, but there are one or two that stand out. A woman collapsed and unfortunately died. She was moved by ambulance. A few months later, just before Christmas, her husband came into an ambulance station with £170 which he and his wife had saved for their holiday. He insisted that we accept it as a donation. That was a very emotional moment.

In another instance, a retired miner had had an accident down the mines some years ago and was taken care of by ambulance staff. This man sent an anonymous letter to a local newspaper enclosing his retirement gold fob watch which he insisted we should auction for our funds. The watch was wrapped in a £5 note which he said was all he could afford.

We tried to contact him to give him back his watch, but as yet we have had no response.

Last week's meeting of Nottingham Trade Union Council adopted a proposal from Notts County NALGO to call for solidarity strike action on January 30th.

To implement this, the Trades Council has produced an appeal calling for strike action, signed by ambulance workers and shop stewards/branch secretaries from other unions, which has been distributed to all unions in the area.

The regional TUC have planned their protest for the 30th — releasing balloons, ringing church bells and tooting car horns! So it is going to be left to the rank and file to implement the action which is needed on January 30th — that is, solidarity strike action.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Ford workers lead pay battle

Ford bosses have been stepping up the propaganda today (January 23) as its 31,800 employees vote on whether to accept a 10.2% pay offer.

The London Evening Standard

front page screamed 'Strike at your peril', and carried a letter from Dagenham boss Jan Ubahgs, darkly threatening dire consequences for the plant if a strike takes place.

In fact, according to the *Guardian*, Ford in Britain can withstand almost any pay award, because their American parent is prepared to foot the bill.

It looks likely that there will be a vote in favour of a strike. A group of 2,000 skilled workers has threatened to strike even if the national vote goes against.

Ford's pre-tax profits per employee have risen from £6,744 in 1987 to £14,020 in 1988, while Ford UK total profits for 1989 topped £700 million. Obviously, they can quite afford an improvement on 10.2% — which was already a concession from their previous offer of 9.5%.

And the strike is not just about pay and hours: Ford want to enforce strings which could claw back the value of the pay settlement. These would be an increase in the allowance paid to line workers, provided stewards at each plant fixed local deals on flexibility; paying extra cash for strings Ford thought it had pushed through in 1987 and 1988; and making 'integrated team working' the norm in some areas — a system whereby groups of unskilled workers can earn productivity bonuses.

These strings would attack the national pay structure, and worsen conditions of work — for example, it would mean the abolition of fixed tea breaks and the introduction of 'team leaders'.

The strike ballot follows the outbreak of unofficial strikes last week at Halewood (where a walk-out by machinists caused 1,000 other workers to be laid off), Bridgend, and later also at Dagenham. At the end of last year, Ford workers voted by four to one for a strike, but the trade union officials managed, with the 10.2% offer, to get it postponed.

Jack Adams of the TGWU and Jimmy Airlie of the AEU have shown that they are not to be trusted. In 1987/88 the union officials agreed to an 'improved' offer worth just 0.5%. This time there must be no back room deals: Adams and Airlie must be accountable to the rank and file Ford workers.

Although it is a threat without economic foundation, the mutterings of Ford management about the closure of Dagenham are an attempt to divide Ford workers internationally against each other. It will be important to make and consolidate links with Ford workers in other countries during this dispute.

Ford traditionally leads the way in the pay round. In 1978, it was the Ford strike that killed the then Labour government's pay policy. The Ford strike of 1988 began the revival of industrial militancy we have seen over the past 18 months. This strike now could blow a hole in the Tories' unofficial pay policy, giving other workers the confidence to push for pay increases that realistically meet their needs as a result of government-led inflation.

Other workers have a vital interest in seeing the Ford workers win: the labour movement must build solidarity with the Ford strikers.

All out for the ambulance crews!

Mersey stewards call for solidarity strikes on 30 January

As the number of suspended ambulance crew members on Merseyside continues to grow, it looks increasingly likely that management could be calling in the police before the end of the week.

The latest wave of suspensions began after local ambulance crews decided that they would accept only emergency call instructions from management. This new action came into effect at midnight on 10 January.

Management promptly started suspending relief ambulance crew members, who normally cover for holidays, sickness, etc. When those suspensions left regular staff short of a second crew member, they were suspended too.

Ray Carrick, a NUPE shop steward who has been suspended, told us: "Suspensions are continuing in a very haphazard way, with a couple of suspensions each day after the initial rush."

"The police are scheduled to come in later this week, as the suspensions have eaten into regular emergency cover."

"Ambulance officers have already been staffing ambulances, despite the fact that many of them belong to one of the five unions involved in the dispute. A local NALGO official contacted the officers in NALGO who were taking over the work of those suspended, but their response was hopeless."

"About 150 of us had been suspended before the new action came into effect, and since then another 50, which makes at least 200 suspensions out of 500 crew members in the region."

The growing number of suspensions has not weakened the morale of the ambulance crews, and public support remains as strong as ever. Ray Carrick explained: "All activity is now focused on the day of action [on 30 January]. When we go to meetings, we don't talk about the background to the dispute any more. We talk about the latest escalation and the need for support on 30 January."

"We are mostly going to shop stewards' meetings rather than mass meetings, but we always ask shop stewards to bring us back to a meeting of their members. Every group of shop stewards we have spoken to has said they will do their best to support our call for action on the day."

"When we address a meeting, we don't ask for 15 minutes' action. We explain where the call for 15 minutes has come from, but what we ask for is a day of action — people to stop work for the day, or a minimum of half a day."

"We see the day of action as our last remaining card to play before an all-out national strike with accident and emergency cover."

Tuesday 30 January: Liverpool demonstration in support of ambulance crews assembles 11.30am at Shaw Street, to march to a rally at St George's Hall.

More on page 11

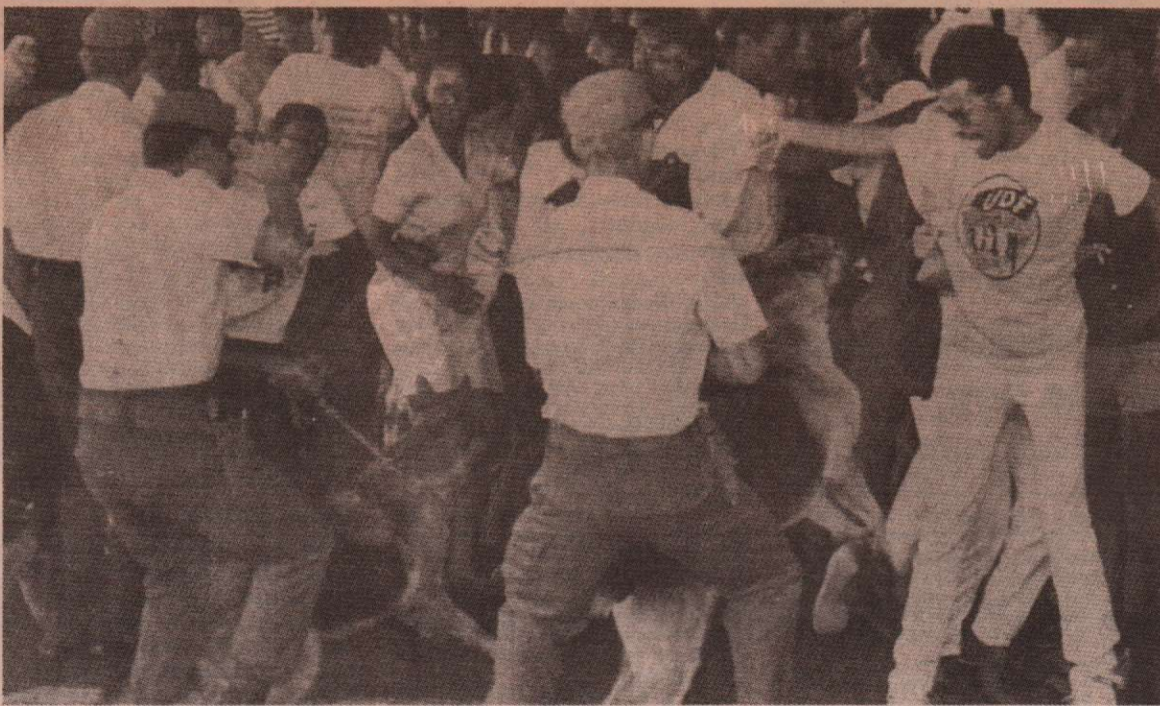
crews!

Ambulance Support Day

15 minutes for justice



Stop for 15 minutes at noon on Tuesday 30 January to show your support.



Black workers strike against rebel cricket tour

Britain's rebel cricket tour of racist South Africa is getting the welcome it deserves.

They have been met by protests everywhere they go and now strike action from the hotel workers where they are staying.

An organiser from the shop and hotel workers' union, SACWU, in Johannesburg explained: "Wherever they are going to stay we will not co-operate with them in any way. We will not serve these people. They will be rejected everywhere they go."

"This tour is being used to

boost the regime and so we must oppose it. We are going to use every means of protest available to us to show what we think of the visit."

• Next week: full story of the protests and more eye-witness reports.

Not all British citizens are made quite as welcome by the racist regime as Gatting and friends.

Geoff Revell, a London Underground worker and chair of Railworkers Against Apartheid, was detained on arrival at Jan Smuts airport, Johan-

nesburg, last Tuesday, 16 January.

Geoff went to South Africa in order to make contact with the railworkers union SARWHU, which has been involved in a bitter strike for the last three months.

Geoff was refused entry into the country and held for four days without charge.

NUR General Secretary Jimmy Knapp commented: "It's deplorable that Geoff Revell has been denied any opportunity to meet South African railworkers while the rebel cricketers are treated as heroes."



WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

Inside: more on reproductive rights, debate on pornography, VDUs, review and Eleanor Marx

Defend reproductive rights!

Our right to choose!

The anti-abortionists are pulling out all the stops in their fight to cut the time limit for abortions by up to 10 weeks.

MPs' postbags are bulging with letters from 'pro-lifers' in the constituencies, and undoubtedly the emotive thumb-sucking foetus pictures will start appearing in national newspapers soon.

In addition, SPUC and leading anti-abortion MP David Alton have jointly funded an 'expert parliamentary lobbyist', Charles Graffias, to advise their MPs. In the past, the anti-abortionists have found themselves out-manoeuvred in Parliament by the more experienced and better organised pro-choice lobby. Graffias' job will be to ensure that clever parliamentary tactics won't lead to the defeat of this attempt to cut abortion rights.

Of course, Alton, Widdecombe and Co. are helped by the fact that the Embryo Research Bill they are seeking to put anti-abortion amendments to is a government-sponsored Bill, and thus guaranteed time for debate. In the past, pro-choice MPs have been able to talk out the attacks on the 1967 Abortion Act, as they have been mainly Private Members Bills — as Dennis Skinner talked out David Alton's Bill two years ago.

So, to defeat this latest attack, we are going to have to use the anti-abortionists tactics — and mobilise on the ground. Concentrating on parliamentary tricks and lobbying, while not to be ignored (it is, after all, on the floor of the House of Commons where the decisive vote will be taken), shouldn't be the major focus of our campaign.

The Stop the Amendment Campaign (STAC), set up to co-ordinate the fight against Widdecombe, should look to the Corrie Bill as its model. Then, the involvement of trade unionists and Labour Party activists, which forced the TUC to support the huge demonstration, played a central role in the defeat of the Bill. We can also learn from the FAB campaign, where local groups oriented towards the labour movement, and won wide support, although the campaign centrally focused too much on parliamentary tactics and too little on rallying the TUC and Labour Party leadership behind it.

As with Corrie, we must build the broadest, most militant campaign possible. Immediately, our task must be to build local STAC groups — with affiliations, and delegates to



the meetings, from trade union and Labour Party branches, as well as tenants and community organisations. The STAC campaign has planned a week of action around International Women's Day (5-9 March), encouraging local groups to hold public meetings, street petitioning, pickets of MPs' surgeries, and local demonstrations. It has also produced model resolutions and an appeal for use in Labour Party and trade union branches — use it to win support at local and national level for a woman's right to choose!

We must also take the campaign

into the Labour Party, and demand that Labour MPs vote in line with party policy and not according to their 'consciences' — which makes a mockery not only of party democracy, but also of Labour's commitment to women's equality.

While it is essential that we mobilise to defend the basic right for women to choose **not** to carry on with an unwanted pregnancy, it is equally vital that we recognise the threat on women's rights to have children that will also be an issue in the Embryo Research Bill debate.

Right-wing Tory MPs like Ann

Winterton want the Bill to ban lesbians and single women from access to Donor Insemination, only allowing AID for women in 'stable, heterosexual' relationships.

For the reactionary bigots, this is not a separate issue from the attack on abortion rights, it stems from the same desire to impose their 'moral' standards on all women, to make it as difficult as possible for black, lesbian and single women to choose to have a child.

For us, too, the issues can't — and **mustn't** — be separated. We must give our support to the Campaign for Access to Donor In-

semination, make sure that STAC groups, and trade union and Labour Party branches affiliate to it, and that both the STAC and CADI speak at all public meetings.

Any limitation on the right of lesbians and single women to have children is a defeat for all women's rights to control their own fertility. We can't let the bigots win!

For more information, model resolutions, speakers, etc. contact: STAC, c/o Wesley House, 4 Wild Court, London WC2B. Tel: 405 4801.

CADI, Tara, 01 761 6995.

New attack on reproductive rights

By Elaine Jones, NUS Kent Area executive

With the current attempt by anti-abortionists to lower the upper time limit for abortions by amending the Embryo Research Bill, a woman's right to choose is clearly under threat.

Under the guise of 'medical recommendations' and 'moral responsibility', Anne Widdecombe MP, and the anti-abortionists, intend to break the 1967 Abortion Act and get late abortions banned. However, it is also quite clear that if they succeed this time, they will not stop there. They will go on trying to destroy the Act bit by bit until all abortions are banned, and women

abortion clinics and assaulting women as they try and enter.

In the light of these attacks it is essential that we organise against the attempts to destroy the 1967 Abortion Act and stop the Widdecombe amendment.

But, whilst we fight to protect our — limited — abortion rights, it's equally important that we don't ignore the other attacks on our rights to choose that the right-wing are trying to push through. In particular, there is the attempt to limit Artificial Insemination by Donor (AID) to 'stable, heterosexual couples', and the proposed amendment by Ann Winterton to explicitly prevent lesbians and single women from access to AID. To prevent women from exercising their right to have children.

We also have to address the question of lack of adequate contraception and contraceptive advice, and the inadequate abortion facilities already on offer, as well as the discrimination in society that often forces women — in particular, black women — into the position where abortion is the only option.

At the NUS Kent Area National Pro-Choice Conference there will be discussions and workshops on all these issues, with the aim of producing a campaigning strategy that can not only stop the anti-abortion and anti-AID amendments, but that can win positive gains for women, and extend our rights.

As part of this strategy, a coherent programme of demands will be essential if we are to successfully co-ordinate national activity against the amendments, and organise reproductive rights campaigns throughout the labour and student movement. It is essential that women continue to organise beyond the immediate fight against the attacks on our reproductive rights, and don't disappear as happened after the FAB campaign.

Our demands must link in to struggles for more facilities in the NHS, for greater rights for women within trade unions around such issues as maternity leave, and benefit, and the abolition of tax on workplace nurseries, and for adequate, cheap childcare facilities. Any campaign must take on board the specific problems faced by black women, lesbians, disabled and young women.

The Kent Area NUS conference is the only conference at which such a national strategy for reproductive rights will be discussed and co-ordinated, so it is vital that it is a success.

Support the conference, build the Pro-Choice Campaign — and defend a woman's right to choose!

"A coherent programme of demands will be essential if we are to successfully co-ordinate national activity and organise reproductive rights campaigns throughout the labour and student movement"

are forced to return to the horror of unhygienic, unsafe backstreet abortions.

To publicise their 'cause', we have seen a considerable increase in 'pro-life' activity. In colleges we have seen the formation of active pro-life groups, and across the country they have been using the disgusting tactics of surrounding

Our Right to Choose! A national pro-choice conference

Friday 16 February
Grange Moore Hotel
St Michaels Road
Maidstone
Kent

£3 waged/£2 unwaged
Registration from 10.00am
Creche • Disabled access

Supported by • National Abortion Campaign • Women for Socialism • NUS Women • Campaign for Labour Women's Action

For more information, write to: Pro-Choice Conference, NUS, The University, Canterbury, Kent, TN1 2ST

Evening Debate with Anne Widdecombe MP and National Abortion Campaign



'Life' supporters picket the Day of Action Against the Alton Bill rally, Central Hall London, 1988

Misunderstanding porn

DEBATE

I would like to reply to the article 'Nothing positive about porn' written in response to Ruth Cockroft.

Julia Coulton misinterprets what Rush said by claiming that she sees pornography in a "positive light" and that she would see the expansion of the porn market as being a victory for women. It isn't fair to claim that Ruth has the "dominant male attitude" to pornography. Ruth did say that porn is misogynist, racist, distorted and obsessed with power.

However, Ruth argued for the possibility of a feminist experimentation with pornography (or sexually explicit material) which could be progressive. I cannot understand the objections to this point of view unless we declare ourselves prudish. Julia seems to be saying that any form of sexually explicit material is bad and any pleasure women may derive from it is wrong.

In reality, Julia's view of women who enjoy male strip shows, films like '9½ Weeks', Ann Summers parties, etc. is subjective and very patronising.

She judges other women by her own standards and by what she thinks is the "right on" sexuality. She assumes that women are blank pages on which men write their fantasies. She cannot accept that many women derive pleasure from sexually explicit material and that they do so independently of men.

Women's fantasies are part of a subconscious world; a world that interacts with sexist society and is moulded by the reality of women's inequality. A view which condemns some forms of erotic desire underestimates the complexity of human sexuality. Julia's argument that women who like porn are merely concubines of men is equivalent to reducing everything to good women and bad women. (A creeping radical feminism here, I think).

The most worrying point of Julia's article however, is summed up when she says: "since when have we as socialists wanted a more liberal attitude to anything?", and that "the liberal attitude [to pornography] is just the male dominant attitude." It may have escaped Julia's notice, but the anti-censorship case which she puts forward herself is a liberal case.

As socialists we are positively in favour of liberal laws, of a liberal state, of democratic institutions. Why? Because we can organise to secure rights for oppressed people and defend our class interests to a greater extent in a liberal democratic society. So a 'liberal' attitude to pornography is part of the logic of our world outlook. If this liberal attitude is male then perhaps Simone de Beauvoir will help clarify the situation.

"Culture, civilisation, universal values have all been the work of men, since it is they who have stood for universality. Just as the proletariat challenging the bourgeoisie as the dominant class does not throw away the old bourgeois

heritage, in the same way women have to use, on an equal basis with men, the instruments men have created, not reject them totally."

Ruth draws attention to the fact that the 'power relationship' portrayed in mainstream pornography represents a male fear of powerlessness. The pornography empire is massive precisely at the same time that women have greater economic freedom, even divorce is easily available, when women are entering the workplace and the labour movement, and it is even

VDUs — gui

Work
A woman's place

By Trudy Saunders

Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI), skin disease, eye strain, back problems, infertility, stress, miscarriages and abnormal pregnancies are just some of the risks of working on Visual Display Units.

VDU working is becoming more and more common. In the Department of Social Security alone,

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

3. We aim to strengthen the position of women in the labour movement, and fight for the abolition of the 'maternity wall' and for the organisation and consciousness of women in the labour movement, and fight for the aims and demands of the women's movement in the unions and labour organisations.

4. We aim to change the sexist atmosphere in the labour movement, and to bring about the abolition of all forms of discrimination and to bring about arrangements and practices which enable women to play a full

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

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

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

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

Getting off on the exploitation of women?

Jean Lane reviews
Dennis Potter's
'Blackeyes'

Anyone who managed to wade through all four episodes of Dennis Potter's new play, 'Blackeyes' will probably have been reminded of the old shaggy-dog stories they used to get told in the playground at school, to which you always started listening with interest, kept on listening in the hope that something good would come of it, and groaned at the anticlimatic ending.

'Blackeyes' started off, in my opinion, with a really good idea. An author, Morris Kingsley (a really repulsive old man), writes a best-selling novel about the ordeals of a very beautiful model in the male world of advertising. It deals with the sexual abuse, the exploitation, even rape that these women are put through daily in a world where they are mere sexual commodities.

Kingsley bases his character, Blackeyes, on his own niece, Jessica, who was herself a model and who suffered all these things in real life.

Jessica hates the way he used her painful experiences to make a fast buck; hates the way he romanticises the woman, who ends up killing herself very conveniently by walking into a lake; and hates him because he abused her when she was a child.

She decides to set the record straight, not exactly by rewriting his novel, but by continuing it. Blackeyes has left a message inside her vagina naming all the men who drove her to her death. A police inspector starts to avenge her death, treating her case not as suicide but as murder, and confronting all the men named in the note with what they have done.

This is a great idea for a play (especially the bit about the note — leaving messages around to be found by people poking around where they shouldn't. Imagine the strip-searcher at Heathrow Airport, pretending to look for drugs and coming upon a little folded piece of paper which reads: "You nose bugger"). But Potter doesn't leave it there. Jeff (played by Nigel Planer — of 'The Young Ones' fame) appears to fancy Blackeyes as much as all the other men but doesn't

want to treat her as a sex object. He fumbles and bungles around trying desperately to find other things to talk about and to keep his sweaty palms to himself.

Then something weird starts happening. Jeff starts cropping up both in the old man's novel and in the general narrative about the novel and Jessica's attempts to avenge herself, which is being told by an anonymous other person entirely. With me so far? (You obviously weren't drinking the night it was on!)

It transpires that Jeff is not a bumbling fool at all, but the calculating author of the whole lot: the old man's novel and Jessica's revenge. He conveniently re-writes the old man's ending so that it's Jessica who walks into the lake, but not before bumping her uncle off, leaving him in the clear with Blackeyes all to himself. "She's free," he says with a satisfied smile. "Well, sort of free anyway. Because now she's mine."

Just as Jeff has got his fantasy all nice and straight, the anonymous narrator pops up and says "Ah, you might have written all that, but who's holding the camera? Who wrote you?" Jeff's left with a model's dummy while the camera — and whoever's behind it — follows Blackeyes, who is walking out. "Come back," he calls, "you're mine now." Blackeyes keeps walking. She's learned her lesson. She belongs to nobody.

The play is about how men fan-

tasise about women: with them at the centre of everything and women as their possessions. It's a good message, but it's done in such a convoluted and complicated way that it ends up getting lost, as do other messages within the play.

Another message of the play is whoever the man is, or appears to be, don't trust him. Potter has all the men in the play drooling over Blackeyes and abusing her: whether it's the banker who rapes her. Jeff who tries to talk to her or even the police inspector who is supposed to be avenging her death. He can't keep his hands off and she's dead by the time he meets her.

Their motives are all the same, to get their hands on her, and use her for their own enjoyment. Even the anonymous narrator questions his own motives: "Lips make the same shape for a spit or a kiss. Which is it I'm doing?" Is he writing about the sexual exploitation of women? Or is he getting off on it like all the other men?

It's a good question for Potter to ask himself. Because all the clever-clever, plot-within-a-plot technique has disguised whatever message he wanted to get across, to the extent that any man watching the play could do so, get off on it himself and come away with his fantasies about women intact — millions did. The play got top ratings. I don't think it was because of the message about the exploitation of women, do you?

'Rescue' must be stopped

LETTER

As abortion rights are again attacked in parliament, a small and particularly nauseating group — 'Rescue' — have begun direct attacks on abortion clinics in several parts of the country.

One of their targets is a clinic in South Manchester, and as individual women enter the clinic these bigots harass them — not only with verbal abuse, but by thrusting obscene photos in their faces and throwing plastic foetuses at them.

They have even broken into the clinic as terminations are underway.

The antics of fanatics like 'Rescue' cannot be separated from the actions of SPUC, Life and the anti-abortion lobby in parliament. They share a common goal — stopping all abortions.

In Manchester, the Stop The Amendment Campaign group has, with the support of clinic staff, organised an escort service for women using the clinic as they pass the 'Rescue' picket.

The group also organised a

massive pro-choice demonstration in Stockport last year.

As the amendments are introduced to the Embryo Bill, such activities must be escalated, and spread throughout the country.

The Manchester group is planning a solidarity demonstration in support of women at the Stockport clinic and activity during International Women's Week. A rally has been organised in Manchester on 13 February.

Union branches, Labour Parties and student unions should affiliate to the national STAC, and to local groups, and help build a mass campaign to defend women's right to choose.

Labour Parties must also fight to make Labour MPs stand by Party police, and vote against any reductions in time limits.

The campaign must organise local and national action to defeat all attacks on our abortion rights — from the assaults of 'Rescue', the attacks in parliament and the cuts in the NHS.

STAC Rally
Tuesday 13 February
7.30pm
Manchester Town Hall

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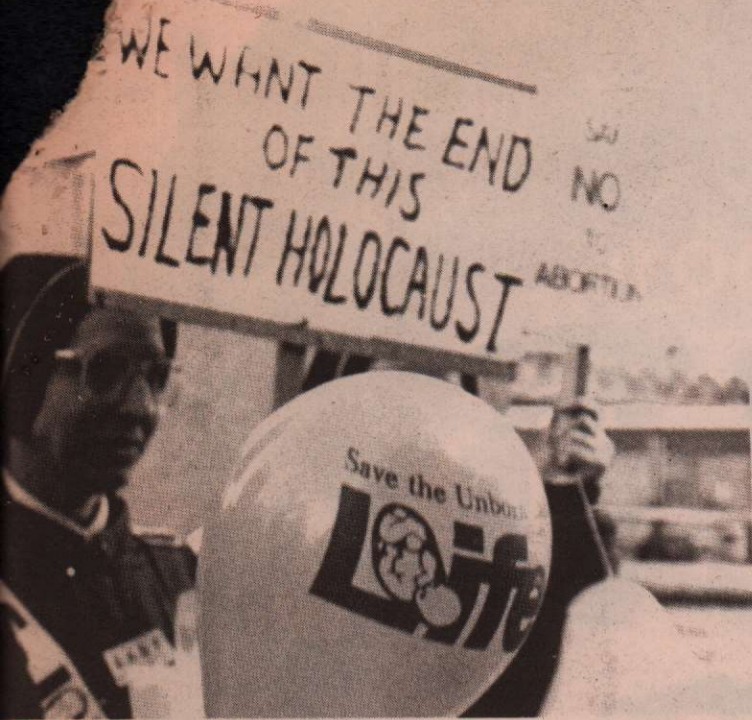
WE WON'T PAY THE POLL TAX!



Zuzanna Dubrowska, a member of the National Council of the Polish Socialist Party (Democratic Revolution) has been refused a passport for foreign travel by the Polish authorities.

This is not only a denial of her basic human right of freedom to travel, it is a politically motivated attempt to prevent Polish socialists from meeting with, and talking to, the international labour movement.

Write yourself — and get union branches and Labour Parties to write — in protest at the decision to the Polish Embassy, 47 Portland Place, London W1, and send copies of the letter to the PPS-RD International Office, The Basement, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11 2HE.



arguable that the nuclear family is slowly disintegrating. Of course, none of this means equality, but why has porn expanded when women have made substantial gains. In Iran, where pornography is censored, women have experienced no greater freedom because of its disappearance.

I am in favour of campaigning against porn in the workplace and like Elaine I do not think that anti-pornography campaigns should be ignored. But we must relate to these campaigns critically and draw out

anti-censorship positions.

Most pornography stinks, but a minority of it exists as a positive assertion of women's sexuality. Still a larger minority is enjoyed by many thousands of women; is it our task to make them feel more guilty? I agree with Ruth that a pornography of equality is a possibility and to condemn that idea is to condemn the idea of equal sexual relationships between men and women as being utopian.

Justine Harris
Yorkshire

ty until proven innocent

20,000 jobs will be lost because of this new technology. Management are quick to argue the wonders of VDUs — the greater efficiency and even "job satisfaction"! Yet the truth of the matter is that VDUs are a serious health risk to those who work on them.

RSI is increasingly becoming a common ailment amongst VDU workers. It is irreversible, and can leave sufferers with severely restricted use of hands and arms. It can make simple tasks, like turning on a tap, or opening a door, impossible. It is caused (as its name suggests) through quick repeated arm actions. VDU workers are usually under intense pressure from managers to key in high numbers of characters per minute — offering bonuses on usually low wages for higher character input. This causes RSI.

Eye strain, too, is common amongst VDU workers. It is a fact that the majority of VDU workers need to wear glasses after beginning to work at a VDU. Most bosses make no attempt to reduce the risk of eye strain by providing screens or ensuring that the VDU is not in a highly lit room, or in direct glare. Another, more serious, complaint among VDU workers is cataracts. These too can be avoided by reducing the risk of eye strain.

Back problems are also common among VDU workers. If managers provided the correct adjustable office furniture, this would also help reduce the number of sufferers.

These, and most other VDU-related diseases — particularly stress — could be helped to be avoided if management ensured VDU workers were given regular breaks from the screen. But in the cut-throat world of capitalist competition, bosses are not interested in

paying out money to ensure workers are healthy.

Perhaps the most contentious VDU health risk is the risk to pregnant women.

The vast majority of VDU operators are women — many of them young and likely to become pregnant. There is overwhelming evidence among VDU workers of "clusters" of abnormal pregnancies. The bosses have done their utmost to dismiss this evidence as "coincidence" and various establishment journals, such as the *British Medical Journal* have printed articles attempting to refute the risk of abnormal pregnancies from VDU working. (No doubt most doctors' secretaries and receptionists work at VDUs too!)

Yet even if there is no "real" evidence with which we can convince the bosses, our argument should be that until they can prove VDUs are not a threat to pregnancy, then all women wishing to become, or who are, pregnant, should have the automatic right to work away from a VDU without loss of pay. How many workers died from dangerous chemicals in factories in the last century before the bosses would accept the danger?

As most VDU workers are low-paid women, often working part-time, in non-unionised offices, it is vital that the labour movement quickly takes up this issue, campaigns to make all workers aware of the dangers and forces the bosses to bring in protective measures — screens, shields, suitable office equipment, adequate breaks, no pressure to do so many words per minute, and cast-iron rights for pregnant women.

It's our health and we must protect it.

Eleanor Marx: a life of struggle

The top officials of the GMB today would be horrified to know it, but Karl Marx's daughter, a dedicated revolutionary like her father, played a major leading role in the early history of their movement. She was an active strike organiser and a member of the executive of the Gas Workers and General Labourers' Union, one of a number of unions which later fused to form the General and Municipal Workers Union, which became the GMB.

Fran Brodie, in a two part series, describes the life of Eleanor Marx and the early days of the Marxist organisation in the British labour movement

Eleanor Marx was born into the workshop and armoury of scientific socialism on the 16 January 1855.

Her father Karl Marx was immersed in the economic research for his great work, *Capital*. Volume 1 of *Capital*, which eventually appeared in 1867, was to be decisive in transforming socialism from a moral ideal to a theory based on the most exact analysis of capitalist society and the contradictions driving towards its overthrow.

Meanwhile, the Marx family was plagued by illness and abject poverty. They had been forced into exile in Britain after Karl Marx's active participation in the German revolution of 1848, and Marx was keeping his family through journalistic work supplemented by help from his friend and comrade, Friedrich Engels.

Eleanor was the Marxes' sixth child. They had already lost two sons and a daughter and were left with three girls, Jenny, Laura and Eleanor.

Eleanor Marx, more notably than either of her sisters, was to grow into a dedicated fighter for socialism. She organised and led the unskilled workers of the East End of London, and was for decades the foremost fighter in the British labour movement for the cause of internationalism.

One of the first international issues which engaged her attention was Ireland. She was 12 years old at the time. Two Fenians, Thomas Kelly and Timothy Deasey, had been arrested for their part in the March uprising of 1867 against British rule in Ireland. They were rescued from a prison van in Manchester, and in the incident a policeman was accidentally shot. Kelly and Deasey escaped, but a manhunt was begun which ended in the arrest of over 30 Irishmen.

Three of these men — William Allen, Michael O'Brien and Michael Larkin — were publicly hanged on 23 November. They became known as the Manchester Martyrs.

This atrocity awakened in Eleanor a passionate interest in the "Irish Question", and from then on her political sympathies were strongly with the Fenians.

When she was 16 she went to France. It was the time of the heroic rising of the Paris Commune, the first proletarians to seize power.

During the rising, despite the weakness of conscious socialist organisation in Paris, the Communards carried out policies of a socialist nature: they abolished rents, confiscated the means of production, abolished the standing army and state bureaucracy, and had

all social affairs managed directly by workers and their elected representatives.

The Commune lasted from 18 March to 28 May, when it was drowned in the blood of the workers of Paris.

The Communards, Marx wrote, "had been starved for six months into submission by internal treachery rather than by the external enemy. History has no like example of a like greatness. The first proletarians to seize power, they were storming heaven: the most glorious deed of our party."

This period of revolution was to have a great effect on Eleanor, both politically and personally. Refugees flooded into London from Paris to escape the slaughter there: Paris lost 120,000 of its workers at this time. But there was not much support for them. "The saddest of all is the fact that in England the workers, with a few exceptions, were as bitterly hostile to the Commune as the ruling class," she recalled later. "While all the world was against the Commune, one great organisation stood by the revolution, holding aloft the red flag: the International Working Men's Association. The Communards bore hunger and misery and privation, disappointment and the agony of hope deferred without faltering or falling. All honour to their memory."

Among the refugees, Eleanor Marx met Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray. She was 'engaged' to him for nine years (despite her father's resolute disapproval) and translated his *History of the Commune* into English.

Eleanor's political work began in earnest in 1881.

During the 30 years to 1879, British capitalism had monopolised the world market. Britain was known as the workshop of the world; and the British working class movement settled down to seeking minor reforms, losing the revolutionary edge that had marked its struggles in the '30s and '40s.

In these decades, reformism entrenched itself, growing out the crumbs tossed from the tables of the ruling class, at the expense of workers in other countries, and primarily in Britain's vast colonial empire.

But in 1879 there was a severe trade depression, with repercussions which reverberated throughout the working class. The next decade saw a growth in communist ideas.

Not many people at this time in Britain had thought about independent working class politics, and there was no socialist movement to speak of, unlike in Germany and France. The ideas of socialism were kept alive in a few Working Men's Clubs. And German Social Democratic exiles were in touch with some of the old revolutionaries of the 1840s who had kept their socialist ideas.

But after 1879 the labour movement was on the upturn; the major organisation in the revival of socialism in Britain was the Democratic Federation.

The DF was founded by Henry Hyndman in 1881. Within three years it evolved from being a Radical movement to adopting generally Marxist positions. In 1883 it adopted the name Social Democratic Federation, following the German Social Democratic Party.

Soon after it was founded, Eleanor Marx joined the DF. At that time the organisation was concerned mainly with the Irish question, campaigning vigorously in defence of the oppressed nation.

It was also at this time that Eleanor's path crossed with that of Edward Aveling. She lived and worked with him until her death in 1898.

Engels, who became Eleanor's



chief political guide after her father's death in 1883, was very wary in his assessment of the SDF. He welcomed it, but was concerned that the people who turned towards Marxism were of bourgeois origin. They needed, Engels said, to turn themselves outwards, to implant themselves into the working class, if they were not to remain a sect.

To understand Engels' and Eleanor's perspective, we must look at the historical development of socialist ideas.

Since the French revolution of 1789-99 socialist sects had existed, especially in France. At their best they embodied a fiery revolutionary

"Eleanor Marx, more notably than either of her sisters, was to grow into a dedicated fighter for socialism. She organised and led the unskilled workers of the East End of London, and was for decades the foremost fighter in the British labour movement for the cause of internationalism"

courage and hostility to capitalism. All of them, however, failed to see a link between the daily organisation and struggle of the working class within capitalism and the realisation of the future socialist society based on their ideals.

As industry and the working class expanded, these sects took on a more and more negative role. They were usually indifferent or even hostile to trade union struggle. Instead they confined themselves to endless discussions on the details of the future socialist society, or conspiratorial organisation for armed

uprisings.

From 1850 onwards, the guiding idea of Marx's and Engels' was the liquidation of the era of sects and the building of a broad class movement. That perspective did not mean indifference to theory: on the contrary, Marx and Engels laboured for the utmost theoretical precision. But they wanted their theory to be "not a dogma but a guide to action". The theory would be assimilated by the workers as a result of their experience, not as a result of incessant lecturing by an 'enlightened' few.

In Germany, socialist organisation developed as the working class developed, from the 1860s onwards. The trade union movement in Germany was a direct product of the socialist movement. In Britain, the working class had developed from the end of the 18th century, long before scientific socialism. Its early, more or less confused rebellion was defeated.

By the 1880s a sizeable trade union movement had developed, but it was a bourgeois-minded, non-socialist movement, confined mostly to skilled workers. In the 1880s the unskilled workers began to unionise on a large scale. For Eleanor, the touchstone was always this mass movement of the working class. Groups like the SDF would be valuable educating influences, or mere sects, depending on how they related to that movement.

The SDF was, despite everything, the first avowedly Marxist organisation in Britain, and in its time it contributed to the education of thousands of socialists. Later, having changed its name to the British Socialist Party, and having disposed of its old leader Hyndman, it was the major component of the British Communist Party when it was formed.

He poisoned the internal life of the organisation with petty intrigues, leading Engels to describe him as "a pretty unscrupulous careerist" and to comment: "In every sect everything turns to scandal-mongering."

The SDF's policy towards the working class was sectarian too. In its manifesto it declared that the trade union movement was a diversion from the class struggle. One of the many able workers who joined the SDF and quickly left it, Tom Mann, said that "the SDF antagonised the trade unionists without drawing any considerable percentage to socialism."

But the first big clash between Eleanor and Hyndman came over internationalism. In spite of his support for some colonial struggles, Hyndman had strong nationalist tendencies (he ended up as an all-out chauvinist during the First World War).

When Eleanor proposed sending an SDF delegation to the Roubaix Congress of the French Workers' Party, Hyndman spread malicious gossip and slander against her and dismissed the proposal as a 'family manoeuvre'. Eleanor's sister Laura, and her brother-in-law Paul Lafargue, were prominent members of the French Workers' Party.

In December 1884 it came to the point of a break. There was a 10 to 8 vote of no confidence in Hyndman on the executive of the SDF. But because Hyndman personally owned the SDF's paper, he was able to keep control of the organisation, and it was the executive majority who left the SDF with 500 of the SDF's 1500 members.

The breakaway organisation, the Socialist League, never expanded outside London.

Part 2 in next issue