

For Workers' Liberty East and West

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Hear the
voice of
Soviet
workers

Page 5

By Cate Murphy

Mass non-payment is working! Three quarters of those liable to pay in London have yet to pay a penny.

Hackney council has collected only £1.5 million of the £8 million it expected; Camden has only received 4% of its poll-tax revenue.

Throughout the rest of the country, non-payment is running at between 40 and 50%. In Bath, Chris Patten's constituency, 43% haven't made any payment; in Birmingham the figure is 50%.

Leeds has no idea how many non-payers there are, as a failure in its computer system has meant no reminders, or revised bills taking account of rebates, have been sent out.

The 21 capped councils face administrative chaos. All bills will have to be revised and sent out again.

Lambeth council's delay in chasing up non-payers has led to the threat of surcharge and disqualification for some Labour councillors by the District Auditor.

In Scotland, councils are facing a shortfall of nearly £200 million because non-payment is running so high.

In Scotland, on average, in the second year of the poll tax there 15% of people have still not paid any tax. Only 1% defaulted on rates.

In some areas the figure is even higher: in Strathclyde — the largest region — non-payment is running at 20% — of £90 million.

Scottish council leaders are to press the government for extra transitional relief or they will have to raise poll tax bills by £35.

Unlike councils in England, councils in Scotland are reluctant to get court orders for wage or benefit arrestments; and where they have made orders for bailiffs to go in, mobilisations by anti-poll tax campaigners have meant these have all been unsuccessful.

We must learn from Scotland and continue to build the anti-poll tax campaign in the communities and use this strength of opposition to back the struggles by trade unionists and by Labour councillors for non-implementation.

By linking the fight in the communities and the fight in the workplaces we can defeat the Tory poll tax.



Poll Tax in chaos

12 million aren't paying

2 POLL TAX

A controlled women's conference

By Trudy Saunders

Labour Party Women's Conference which took place in Skegness on 9-11 June was a clear reflection of the growing bureaucracy and lack of democracy within the whole Party.

The agenda was 'doctored' to ensure few controversial motions appeared. Every motion on non-payment and non-implementation of the poll tax was ruled out of order. "Compositing" ensured that other motions were severely watered down.

Debate itself was poor. The Chair had asked for women to 'share experiences'. Unfortunately some of them did — ranging from the crass Militant-style "I live in a council flat..." (so do I, it's hardly special), to the more tortured style of the right wing, desperately trying to bring politics into the whole affair.

After every debate, the National Women's Committee gave their (unwanted) recommendation on the motions. The faces pulled and the noises made during the debate by those on the top table made it clear exactly where they stood.

Needless to say, the right won virtually everything. A bland motion on the poll tax was carried and an emergency motion condemning the Labour leadership for attacking the All-Britain Federation of Anti-Poll Tax unions was massively defeated.

A motion from Islington North Women's Section on women's representation, supporting quotas for women but arguing that such measures alone will not give women effective power in the Labour Party, was defeated on a card vote.

The motion — which called for National Labour Women's Com-

mittee to elect the five women's places on the National Executive, National Labour Women's Committee to be directly accountable to Labour women, and trade union and Constituency Labour Party representatives to have equal representation — would have helped end some of the anomalies that exist and given greater powers to women in constituencies.

Some of the trade unions and the Women's National Committee were loathe to give up the power they hold and opted for a safer motion.

Labour Women's Conference 1990 clearly showed the divide between trade union and women's section delegates. Those representing trade unions consistently formed a right wing bloc.

It is vital that Labour maintains its links with the trade unions. But we should look carefully at just who the women delegates from trade unions are representing.

Many are full time trade union officers, and most have been appointed as delegates rather than elected in women-only membership elections.

Few trade union delegates are mandated by women in their union.

By contrast, women delegates from Women's Sections are elected and mandated by women in their constituencies.

1990 Labour Women's Conference did very little except carry a few motions supported by those women who already run the show.

If Labour is to win the next election we will need much more than this to attract and recruit women Labour Party voters and supporters.

We must work in our constituencies to build large, campaigning women's sections and ensure that Labour women really do have a voice.

Cuts highlight need for union action

By Cate Murphy

19 Labour councils have failed in their attempt to reverse the government's poll tax capping.

As a result, those councils, and two others which did not challenge the capping, must make a total of £223 million worth of cuts — and send out new poll tax bills at a cost of £6 million.

"Non-statutory" services such as nursery education will be the first to go, along with services for the most needy.

Both local government workers and teachers face the threat of huge job losses: the NUT estimates that at least 2,000 redundancies will result from the ruling.

Already, many NALGO workers are facing pressure to collect poll tax on top of their normal duties, with no extra staff taken on.

In Greenwich, NALGO housing workers have been on strike for over a month in support of cashiers refusing to collect poll tax as well as rents.

Similar disputes have occurred in Manchester, Sheffield, Southampton, Liverpool, St Helens, Kirklees and Leicester. Under-staffing and worsening conditions, as well as hostility to the poll tax itself, will undoubtedly lead to more action being taken, as NALGO general secretary-elect Alan Jinkinson warned at the recent NALGO conference.

In Barnsley, 1,000 teachers staged a one-day strike recently in protest at threats of job losses due to poll tax-capping. Barnsley council has drawn up a programme of £10 million worth of cuts, 50% of which will come from the education budget. Nottinghamshire NUT is currently balloting its members for strike action over threatened redundancies.

Trade unionists will also be in the front-line of action against the poll tax when councils pursue wage and benefit arrearments.

Poole council last week became the first council in England to win liability orders, enabling them to pursue non-payers, and deduct poll tax direct from wage packets or giro. Medina, South Tyneside and Wandsworth councils all intend returning to court for liability orders; other councils will follow suit.

Trade unionists should start the fight now to prevent employees from deducting wages at source, and CPSA members must organise to win non-cooperation with benefit arrearments.

Up to now the poll tax campaign has concentrated — successfully — on the mass non-payment tactic. But it is important that this struggle is linked to the fight to prevent wage arrearments, and redundancies in the workplaces.

The All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation must campaign for greater trade union involvement: supporting strikes and other industrial action against the poll tax, and in defence of jobs and services; and helping to establish

workplace anti-poll tax unions.

The trade union conference called by the All-Britain Federation for 23 June is a gesture in the right direction — but undermined by the undemocratic, conspiratorial and sectarian way it has been organised.

Approaches by other bodies — including the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee — for a joint, broad, open, working conference were rejected out of hand by Steve Nally, the Federation's secretary. The Federation's own trade union officer has been prevented from participating in organising the conference because he is not a *Militant* supporter.

This bodes ill for the future of the anti-poll tax campaign in the unions: we need to build the maximum possible unity with all those who genuinely wish to fight the poll tax, not sacrifice the campaign — and the workers at the forefront of the struggle — on the altar of sect-building.

Delegates to the conference in Liverpool should fight to make sure different opinions and different tactics are heard, and debated fully, and that rank and file initiatives — such as the teachers conference against the poll tax in Nottingham on 7 July, and the third NALGO Against the Poll Tax conference — receive the wholehearted backing of the All-Britain Federation.

We also hope the Federation will organise a national lobby of the TUC conference, so we can show the faint-hearts in the leadership of our movement that the determination by the members to fight is there — and we demand they back us, and fight the Tory tax.

If this conference is anything like the founding conference of the Federation, it will be more of a rally than a serious attempt to discuss and thrash out a united strategy for defeating the poll tax in the workplaces.

There will still be a need for a genuine, open, working and non-sectarian conference of trade unionists — such as the one the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee has organised for 8 September in Sheffield. All trade unionists committed to fighting the poll tax should mobilise for this conference.

The Poll Tax and the Unions

Defend rights, jobs, services and democracy

Saturday 8 September
Sheffield Poly Students
Union
10.00am

Called by the Socialist
Movement Trade Union
Committee, and sponsored
by over 50 trade union
branches

CLPs Network plans campaigns

By Martin Thomas

Against the Poll Tax, for a Workers' Charter of trade union rights, for mandatory reselection contests for Labour MPs, against the witch-hunt — those were the campaigns mapped out by the Constituency Labour Parties conference last Saturday, 17 June.

The conference also decided to seek the maximum left unity on those issues. It specifically welcomed the new "Councillors Against the Poll Tax" group and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's campaign on mandatory reselection.

It decided to seek discussions between the CLPs Network and the "Labour Party Socialists" group set up in Sheffield last month to maximise cooperation.

The CLPs Network was mandated to produce a newsletter pull-

ing together news of local Labour Party activity against the poll tax round the country. Richard Hanford of Mid-Sussex CLP sent a report to the conference on the phone call he had received from the "Organisation Directorate" at Labour Party HQ telling him he was in breach of Party rules for standing as a "Labour Party No Poll Tax" candidate in a forthcoming District Council by-election.

His case would be referred to Southern Region of the Labour Party for "appropriate action".

The conference heard of many other moves by Labour Party officialdom against anti-poll tax campaigners, but also of positive and successful work by "Labour Against the Poll Tax" groups.

Mike Marqusee from Hornsey CLP led a workshop on the Workers' Charter and trade union rights, which worked out a detailed campaign plan to be implemented jointly with "Labour Party Socialists".

"Labour Party Socialists" and the CLPs Network will be working to maximise support for trade union rights at October's Labour Party conference, to canvass trade unions on the issue, and to build a lobby of Conference with delegations from many groups of workers who have come up against the Tory laws in struggle.

For the Workers' Charter campaign contact Mike Marqusee, 79 Inderwick Road, London N8, or Steve Battlemuch, 191 Burford Road, Nottingham NG7 6AY. For the CLPs Network contact c/o 11 Egremont Promenade, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG.

CLPs Conference Network
Pre-National Labour
Party Conference
Briefing

Saturday 8 September 1990
Unity Hall
Westgate
Wakefield

Credentials for delegates and observers £5 from CLPs Conference, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG



Labour movement action must back the non-payment campaign

Barnsley strike a success

By Liam Conway

Last Thursday 14th, Barnsley Association (branch) of the National Union of Teachers held a one day unofficial strike against the sacking of 24 music teachers.

The strike was a runaway success, with over 1,000 teachers taking action. Yet only a couple of weeks earlier the national union had 'postponed' an official strike because of a low turnout in the ballot.

Local union activists built for the action, mobilising three times more members to strike than those voting yes in the national union's postal ballot. And the action led to widespread publicity in the north of England about the issues at stake.

The national union has not even used its own magazine "The Teacher" to let members know that the NUT members

are facing the sack. In the national media the leadership has resorted to using the union's solicitor as the spokesperson for our 'campaign' in defence of teachers, which consists entirely of appealing to the High Court not to Poll-Tax-Cap local councils.

The High Court doors were firmly shut in the union's face last Thursday when the judges ruled against the councils. Now thousands of teachers face the sack, and probably many other local authority workers with them.

Despite being slapped in the face by the Tories' drinking partners in the courts, the union seems set to continue its low key response over redundancies.

So what can we do to extend the Barnsley action and build for a national strike in defence of teachers jobs?

Firstly, apply maximum pressure on the national leadership to carry out conference policy. Pass motions at association and school meetings condemning their total failure to mount any campaign on this issue. Step up the heat over the question of illegality.

How can national action to defend teachers against the cuts from poll tax capping be illegal? Who is responsible

for capping — Government, LEA or School?

Most important of all — learn from Barnsley! The leadership might claim that the ballots have produced poor results for action, but when it came to the crunch members were willing to strike *en masse* to defend jobs.

So far very little is known about the success of the Barnsley strike across the country, so activists everywhere must spread the word and build for solidarity action with Barnsley and any other areas threatened with the same. At the very least we must ensure that activists in Barnsley are not disciplined by the national officials for organising the unofficial action.

Redundancies are a serious and immediate threat facing teachers now! That is why we must work on building support networks as quickly as possible. We need further action before the end of this term. Invite speakers to your association from Barnsley.

Get publicity out in your area generating support for national action. And, finally, build the Local Association Jobs and Salaries Conference on 7 July in Nottingham.



Romania: oppose the repression!

EDITORIAL

Repression of student demonstrators in Bucharest, Romania, by the National Salvation Front government, has been extremely severe. Several people have been killed, although it is not known how many; all opposition activity has been suppressed.

Demonstrations continue, however. The chief demands of the demonstrators are for democracy, and against 'communism'.

Most dramatic has been the mobilisation of miners to crush the demonstrations. Armed detachments of workers have used brute violence to try to drive the student demonstrators off the streets.

Politically, the demonstrators seem quite inchoate. For certain, extreme, rightist groups have been active; but it does not seem likely

that all the demonstrators are consciously pro-rightist, and still less semi-fascist, as some on the left in the west appear to think. Many of them are influenced by the broadly liberal opposition.

The National Salvation Front came out of the recent elections with considerable legitimacy. It won handsomely, according to western observers with little direct interference with the polling. That it can mobilise the miners to crush opposition suggests that it has real popular support. According to some press reports, the miners' wages — already above the workers' average — have been doubled since Ceausescu's overthrow. Even if the miners have been deliberately favoured, probably most workers have had real improvements from the NSF government.

Nevertheless, it is clearly the inheritor of the old Ceausescu regime. It is the party of the same bureaucratic ruling class that ruled Romania before last December's revolution, with its ugliest excrescences removed. The repression launched in Bucharest was to defend the interests of that class.

Several factors account for the ability of the regime to survive, and even increase its strength, after the revolution. Under Ceausescu, there was no tradition of opposition. Certainly there was nothing like the sophisticated opposition culture that existed in other East European countries like Czechoslovakia or Poland.

After the revolution, there was a proliferation of parties; but none of these had been organised at all under the old regime. They had no popular roots, and were unable to sink any in the short time available. The strongest ones had exile leaders and were very backward-looking. The National Salvation Front, as the continuation of the traditional

political apparatus, was in a vastly stronger position. It had a near-monopoly of the media.

Perhaps the Iliescu group, by turning on their boss when they did, saved their own skins. If they had left it any longer, the inevitable revolution might have swept them aside also.

And the post-Ceausescu regime is able to point to real improvements in the lives of Romanians. The country is, or has been, immeasurably freer.

Given those improvements, it is not surprising that most Romanians

identify the Iliescu regime with Ceausescu's, are the intelligentsia and students. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, militant radicalism often means militant pro-marketism. It is the mirror image of militant Maoism in the West twenty years ago.

This frustration exploded on the streets of Bucharest. Student demonstrations escalated to violent confrontations, and then the army moved in.

Apparently, in the initial stages of the fighting, local working-class people went to the aid of the students.

According to the Western press, as the violence heated up, old Securitate figures became active in the repression.

So the peculiar alliance emerged of the old Securitate (if the reports are true) and the miners, clearly being manipulated by the regime.

The fact that miners attacked the student demonstrators makes the repression no more progressive than the occasional violent attacks on student anti-Vietnam protests by 'hard hat' workers in the US 20 years ago.

Socialists would not have much sympathy with the students' right wing ideology. It may be that lack of concern by the students to answer specifically working-class concerns made it easier for the Stalinists to mobilise miners against them, though probably the miners got no chance at all to hear what the students really had to say.

We would have every sympathy with the students' fundamental demand: more democracy.

And we should condemn the repression meted out to them. The regime in Romania has simply reverted to type. Not only students who might be right-wing were attacked, but also every sort of possible dissent, and the gypsy minority in Bucharest.

look more to the National Salvation Front than to untried opposition groups.

Those sections of society most frustrated with the lack of fundamental change, who most clearly

"The fact that miners attacked the student demonstrators makes the repression no more progressive than the occasional violent attacks on student anti-Vietnam protests by 'hard hat' workers in the US 20 year ago".

How to cut inflation

PRESS GANG

The Guardian
Daily Mirror
Daily Star

By Jim Denham

Inflation, as we all know, is the mortal enemy of a stable, prosperous society.

Inflation carries in its train unemployment, industrial strife, plague, pestilence, eternal damnation etc. Which is just one reason why Tory governments are such a jolly good idea.

Tory governments are good at controlling inflation whereas Labour governments always let things go to pot, mainly because of their propensity to give in to everything the unions demand.

The only trouble is that according to the official figures, inflation is now higher than it was when the Tories took over in 1979. Thanks to some pretty skilful 'talking-up' of predictions to over 10%, this month's announcement of 9.4% didn't come as quite such a blow as it might have done — just as carefully nurtured predictions of annihilation at the polls allowed the government to present last month's local election results as not such a bad show after all...

But still, the April rise was 3% and it co-incided with the first rise for almost four years in the official unemployment figures. Naturally, the government's response has been to blame the greedy working class for pricing themselves out of the jobs market and for pushing up the RPI with their excessive wage demands.

Unfortunately, however, most people seem to have got the idea that the latest rise in inflation has something to do with government policy — high mortgage rates and the poll tax, for instance.

Actually, mortgage costs and poll tax are the main causes of the present inflation but the point is they shouldn't be... do you follow? Well, 'housing is an investment asset which produced a return for its owner... in the long term mortgage payments are balanced by the capital gains accruing to home owners'. So mortgage costs shouldn't be in the inflation figures at all, you see!

As for the poll tax, well, it's 'a direct tax on individuals, just like income tax. It does not, therefore, belong in an index of prices.' So there we are. Clear now?

If you were to leave mortgage costs and poll tax out of the calculation, you would be able to cut inflation at a stroke. April's figure would have been just 6.4%.

This is exactly what the *Sunday Times* proposes doing (the above quotes came from the *ST* of June 10th). They've even set up their own '*Sunday Times*/Institute for Fiscal Studies retail price index' (billed as the 'honest' index) based on this new way of measuring inflation.

ST Economics editor David Smith admits that 'both the *Sunday Times* and the IFS are aware that our measure produces an inflation rate convenient for the government. That however is not its purpose'.

Heaven forbid such a thought! Since when have Mr Rupert Murdoch or his stirling, independent-minded team of editors, ever allowed their papers to be used to prepare the ground for sensitive or controversial Tory proposals?

And anyway, the idea of Mrs Thatcher's government massaging statistics for their own political advantage is too ridiculous to contemplate isn't it?

'COWABUNGA! We're going turtle-y crazy with the contest that'll leave you turtle-y shell shocked, folks... you'll be mad if you Donatello all your mates!"

What does this mean? Is it a secret code understood only by readers of the *Sun*? Am I too old or too stupid to be writing this column?

And while we're at it, what is this bull that must be let loose? Can anyone explain these things to me?

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

Karl Marx
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4 LETTERS



Our last word on Ken?

GRAFFITI

This column has been criticised hitherto for too critical an attitude to Kenneth Livingstone. Here, perhaps, is our last word. (*Sunday Mirror*, 3 June).

Rumour has it, though whether it's trustworthy rumour is another matter, that the more-or-less defunct Communist Party wants to join the Labour Party en masse via a merger with the Labour Coordinating Committee.

The LCC is broadly Kinnockite; some of them are what might be called "left Kinnockites". A group known as the Chartists (who, if you go back to the early '80s, come from the same stable as the founders of *Briefing*), involved in the LCC although on its left, are unhappy about having a bunch of kitsch trendy crypto-social democrats voting at their conferences. And who wouldn't be?

Meanwhile some of the more die-hard Stalinists who for some reason are still in the Communist Party (and for some equally incomprehensible reason haven't given up the ghost on politics generally, despite having such a hard time recently), aren't happy about joining the Labour Party anyway. Old habits die hard.

No doubt the dissolution of the CP into the Labour Party is inevitable. It's just something we're going to have to put up with. Whether rank and file LCC members (if there is such a thing) will put up with 2,000 of them, remains to be seen.

Your Royal Beauty and Elegance Incarnate, I read with dismay that your regalness last week bismir-

ched the fair name of motherhood by placing your hand rather too firmly on the behind of the future monarch.

According to the *Daily Mirror*, which is never wrong on these matters, "Naughty Prince William burst into tears yesterday when his mum gave him a stinging smack on his bottom... She was unmoved by his blubbering and led him firmly to the car."

I understand, your slimliness's need to assert maternal prerogative. But your nasalness must be aware that with eager newspaper photographers around, any such disciplinarianism is likely to end up on the front page of tomorrow's tabloids DRIVING US BLOODY MAD.

JUST KILL THE LITTLE BASTARD AND GIVE US ALL A REST.

Yours royalistically,
Shocked of Peckham.

Princess Di, by the way, should take note of the following statistic from *Today* (19 June).

Only 38% of married parents smack their children to punish them (although 59% of single parents do it).

77% (53% of single parents) "ground them" (an expression that must be catching on since I heard it for the first time two weeks ago in 'Roseanne'. I presume it means ground as in aeroplane, rather than as in coffee beans).

Only 7% of parents (both categories) said that they "often" punish their kids.

So a substantial majority of parents have come round to the idea that hitting people isn't made right by the fact that those people are too small and weak to hit back. It's progress, even if the royals are still "unmoved by the blubbering" of small children.

No proscription!

LETTERS

Further to your request for me to endorse your statement defending freedom of dissent in the

Labour Party, I regret that I cannot endorse this statement.

The wording is too loose and could be taken to mean that any political views and dissent should be allowed. My worry is that this could be taken to include racist views.

I am, however, more than happy to endorse the view that the Labour Party is a broad church and has

always encompassed all sorts of strands of socialism, including your own.

For this reason I am opposed to the attempts to proscribe your organisation and newspaper and feel that political differences of this nature should be debated openly and not dealt with administratively.

Harry Barnes MP,
North East Derbyshire

Is it just a bosses' debate?

Your headline on your story on the Exchange Rate Mechanism: "ERM: in or out the fight goes on", strikes me as an example of the mindless sloganising so frequently excoriated by SO.

After all, you could say this too about NATO, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, or anything else we can't be bothered to think about.

You are right that the present debate in some ways is a reprise of the debate on entry to the Community. As I recall, SO's predecessor, *Workers Fight*, then denounced anybody who took any view on this issue. As it happens, at the time I shared this view and campaigned before the referendum on the slogan "Don't vote — it's a bosses' debate". I am not so sure now that this was an adequate response!

Even if one accepts the institutional framework of the Community and entry to the ERM with fatalistic resignation, however, there still remains a debate on the terms and conditions of membership.

For example, should we really accept the establishment of a European Central Bank, with very substantial economic power, entirely outside political control? This is scarcely the position with the Bank of England.

If, as seems likely, Britain enters the ERM this autumn at a high exchange rate, this will have a long term deflationary effect on the economy. In the future it is very likely to be used as an instrument of wage control. On the desirability of this there is consensus between Labour and Tory front benches.

Should we not be arguing for entry at a lower or more flexible rate



and loudly demanding that "the democratic deficit" in the Community is made up with powers for the democratically elected European Parliament over the economic institutions of the Community?

I think SO should help the left to "unchain our minds" on these and related issues.

Dave Holland,
West London

The class nature is not changed

The sight of Stalinist-led workers batoning radical protestors last week in Bucharest is a sad one. But for those sections of the left that uncritically hailed those who led the revolution against Ceausescu as "socialist rebels" it's time to rethink.

All socialists supported the wave of rebellion in the Stalinist states last winter. It was high time the corrupt bureaucracy was swept away. However, the revolution did not replace Stalinism with workers' control. Instead the Romanian bureaucracy was purged and reformed on a pro-capitalist programme.

The freedoms won in December are being turned back. Phones are tapped, letters opened, the Securitate is back in action. The Stalinists manipulate the privileged miners — now paid 3 times

more than the average wage — to break up independent newspapers, parties and protests.

Many Romanian radicals understand what's going on. As student leader Marian Munteanu said: "the miners are not guilty for this, they were tools". Undoubtedly the Stalinists will use the repression of radicals to cover up cuts in the living standards of workers and the introduction of the market.

What does this tell us about both the revolutions last winter and the tasks for working class socialists?

Firstly, the revolutions exchanged hardline Stalinists for pro-market 'reformists' themselves hoping to become part of a future capitalist class. The Stalinist class nature of these states has not been fundamentally changed.

Secondly these revolutions were betrayed because the working class didn't fight for a programme that reflected their class interest. Instead they followed the liberal wing of the Stalinists.

Finally the workers must take the power themselves. They must reject the plans for the dominance of the market and make a new revolution against the bureaucracy and the threat of imperialist domination.

Many in the West did not oppose the Stalinist moves towards the market because a healthy workers' state could use market mechanisms. But it is clear that a healthy workers' state was not being created!

The only programme that can lead radicals in the bureaucratised workers' states forward is working class anti-Stalinist revolution for socialist democracy and workers' control of production.

British socialists must learn from that. We need a campaign in solidarity with workers in the East. But we also need a political dialogue to build revolutionary workers' parties in those countries and internationally.

Duncan Chapple,
Manchester

Soviet trade unionist tours Britain

The Kuzbass Workers' Union was formed in response to the bureaucratisation of the original workers' committee set up after last summer's miners' strikes, Yuri Budchenko told a press conference in London.

Yuri is a representative of the union currently touring Britain with the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc.

The workers' committee became like officers without an army, he said. The union is more democratic, and has real support. It has gone on to be the base for the new Confederation of Labour established on a Soviet-wide basis.

More than 50% of the delegates at the recent Confederation congress were from the Kuzbass. They see their role as to help the smaller workers' organisations that have now been set up.

The union believes the crisis in Soviet society to be very severe. Socialism is a discredited idea among the workers, and so 'the market' is a popular alternative to the chaos and collapse now taking place. They don't see the market as ideal, Yuri said, but can see no better alternative.

Asked if there was not a contradiction between the aim of defending workers' interests and supporting the introduction of a western-style market, Yuri argued that the market would at least provide basic goods. If there is a better way, they would like to know about it, he said.

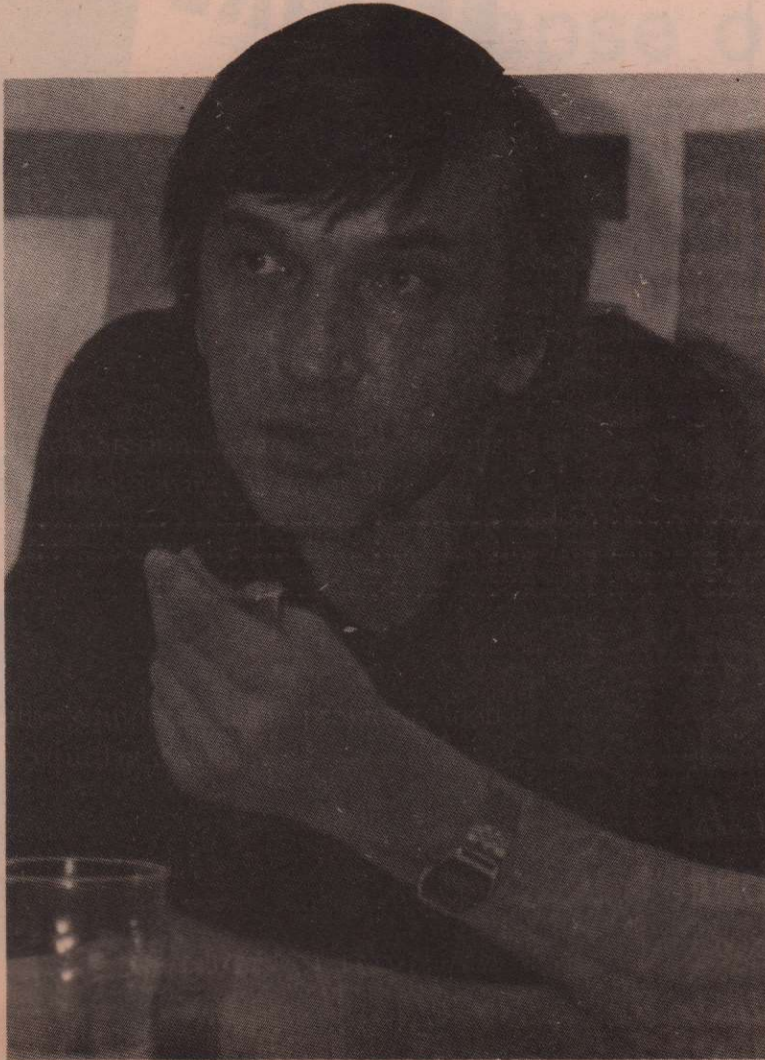
But he seemed unconvinced by socialist arguments put to him at the press conference, or at the meeting which followed, organised by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc.

The programme of the Kuzbass Union says it is against the restoration of capitalism. Yuri believed this programme to be largely outdated, and anyway the union's policy was to allow people in different areas to work out their own solutions.

Autonomy from Moscow was an important theme. People on the spot know better what needs to be done than bureaucrats in Moscow, he said.

But he said there had not been any discussion about "self-management". The union's aim was to defend workers' interests within the workplace, not to control the enterprises. There should be skilled and efficient managers, rather than bureaucrats who do nothing, as at the moment.

Contact CSWEB, c/o 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5.



Yuri Budchenko

Why the miners formed their own union

Independent Soviet trade unionist Yuri Budchenko has told meetings across the country about the new Soviet miners' union

The working class is only just beginning to fight. Everything is ahead of the working class. It has awoken.

The working class is in opposition to the ruling class — the bureaucracy and administration.

The bureaucracy form a new aristocracy — like under Tsarism. There are many bureaucratic organisations who act in the interests of the rulers. They operate the plan. The plan is built on control of distribution — of production, resources and raw materials.

Last week the miners took a major step forward. They took a decision to form an independent miners' union.

One delegate was elected from each pit in the USSR. Nearly 600 pits sent delegates from a total of 650 mines in the USSR.

Two thirds of the delegates voted to set up an independent union. The union will be set up in August, after the delegates have had the chance to go back to their pits and discuss

with the miners who sent them to the conference.

It is important to understand why the miners have taken the decision to organise their own independent union.

The state miners' union conference was held in Moscow during the winter. However only 20% of the delegates to this conference were miners. The rest were functionaries.

A lot of genuine workers left in disgust. The state union has failed miners. And people like Arthur Scargill who accept invitations to speak at the state union's conference damage their reputations amongst Soviet miners: they are seen to be siding with the government which treats Soviet miners very badly.

The Soviet state, despite the strikes last year, still has a lot of power. It cheats Soviet miners by using its monopoly of power.

For instance, it buys coal we produce, then it sells it on the world market using its monopoly of foreign trade, for much more.

Many of the demands — 47 in total — which the government agreed to in order to settle with the miners during last summer's strikes (Resolution 608) have not been fulfilled. The government has only kept its promises on 14 minor points.

It is true that the supplement paid to Siberian miners has gone up from 15% to 30%. But there are no more goods in our shops. The housing situation has not improved.

Housing is very bad. We have to wait 15 years for a flat. Some people become pensioners before getting a flat. Many flats have no running water, we have to get water from pipes in the street.

One of our major demands: independence for each pit from Moscow, the right to keep funds at the pit rather than have our funds taken by Moscow — has not been met. One of the major points made by the miners' conference was that the delegates wanted all of 608 implemented.

Mine directors earn about 1000 roubles per month. Some of the special brigades of miners earn this sort of money too. A lot of the special brigade members are CP members. Those are the workers whom foreign visitors meet.

Other workers at the mines earn around 500 roubles a month. "Women's jobs" pay about 200-300 roubles per month.

The official minimum is 75 roubles per month. Raising a child adds 86 roubles per month on top of this. It is impossible to survive, let alone live, on anything less than 100 roubles per month.

Working conditions in the mines are very bad. I will give you an example: the independent miners' union conference lasted for four days. Every day there was a minute's silence for each miner who was killed in pit accidents the day before.

The first day there were 11 minutes silence for the 11 miners who had died; the second day there were five; the third day there were six; the last day there was one minute's silence. I think you can see that conditions are very bad.

The miners' congress was very concerned about Russia's economic condition. Although the congress was broadly in favour of introducing the market it did not accept the Ryzhkov government proposals.

Ryzhkov wants to make the workers pay by introducing big pay rises. The conference rejected this and called for Ryzhkov's resignation.

These two don't represent Soviet miners!

By Mark Osborn, National Secretary, CSWEB

hunt against Arthur Scargill and the NUM.

The Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB) wants to make it clear to all British workers that, contrary to the report in the *Mirror*, the two Soviet miners who addressed the UDM conference are neither representatives of that country's independent mineworkers' organisations, nor officials of those organisations.

The two men are individuals, over in this country as members of the 'National Workers Union' (NTS). The NTS is an extreme right-wing organisation which, between 1941 and 1944, actively collaborated with and fought alongside the Nazis.

The two Soviet miners were brought to this country by Mr

George Miller, a representative of the right-wing NTS in Britain.

CSWEB will not collaborate with the NTS. We call on all genuine labour movement bodies not to have anything to do with the NTS. CSWEB's aim is to build solidarity with the independent workers' organisations now emerging in the Eastern Bloc, not to give a platform to extreme right-wing organisations that have pro-fascist histories.

On the very day that Masalovich and Terokhin addressed the UDM, delegates from every Soviet coalfield assembled in Donetsk, to establish an independent miners' union. Masalovich and Terokhin have no right, nor any authority, to speak on its behalf.

The *Daily Mirror* wishes to persecute Scargill and the NUM. It does this as part of its campaign against all forms of class struggle militancy inside the labour movement.

If Soviet miners do want to discuss the finances of the 1984/85 strike, they must do so directly with the NUM itself. Mr Robert Maxwell and Mr Lynk of the UDM have no right whatsoever to demand anything of the NUM or intervene in its internal affairs. Mr Masalovich and Mr Terokhin have no authority to make accusations against the NUM on anybody's behalf. They are merely two right-wing individuals.

Get your organisation to affiliate to the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc. £10 (large organisations)/£5 (small organisations)

Name.....

Address.....

Organisation.....
Return to CSWEB, 56 Kevan House, Wyndham Road, London SE5

On Tuesday 12 June two miners from the USSR, Sergei Masalovich and Nikolai Terokhin, addressed the conference of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers (UDM) in Weymouth.

The *Daily Mirror* of 13 June gave a front page spread to the speeches of these two men. The *Mirror* used these speeches as part of its witch-

Volkammer, who revealed some of the secret plans of the Bundesbank to reintroduce private, West German ownership of the state property in the GDR following currency union on 2 July.

There was a heated discussion on the use of the Volkammer. Most delegates saw it as an opportunity for Klein to make left-wing speeches and glean information, rather than as a democratic body. There was a call for Klein to withdraw from parliament but this was not backed completely by the conference.

The VL has been excluded from a coalition of the 'Civil Movements': New Forum, the Greens, Democracy Now, and the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights. This is part of a more general swing to the right; leading members of New Forum have left to join the ruling coalition.

The VL is left independent with little

chance of gaining the 5% threshold for representation in the elections proposed for December.

This has meant the VL reassessing its role: whether it should become a fully-fledged political party or remain a diffused movement including life-stylers, semi-anarchists and Marxists of various forms.

Berndt Gehrke, a leader of the VL, argued that the VL must become part of a common European workers' movement that rejected Stalinism in all its forms, and generated a culture of discussion.

The conference was held in a tense atmosphere as fascists organised in Dresden, attempting to found an East German version of 'Die Republikaner', the fascist group in the Federal Republic. A number of delegates were attacked leaving the Dresden headquarters of the VL on Friday night.

East German left reassesses

Jon Pike reports on the conference held last weekend (16-17 June) in Dresden by East Germany's United Left (VL).

The conference, attended by about 150 delegates from all parts of the GDR, discussed perspectives for the future of the VL after the victory of the right in the Volkammer (parliamentary) elections.

It was addressed by Thomas Klein, the sole representative of the VL in the

Who's making trouble in Sardinia?

Nick Lowles, just back from Sardinia, reports on how English fans have been treated.

A lot has been written in the British press about the English World Cup fans and their hooliganism.

The reality in Sardinia has been very different. The English fans have been given a hard time by the Italian authorities and the 7,000 riot police on the island. The rubbish that's been spouted by our press and government has seeped through into Italy.

If you are English, no-one wants to know you. Ask any Italian what they think of the English and they answer "hooligans".

On Sardinia itself such hysteria has been whipped up that many hotels are closed to the English. The result has been 3,000 England supporters sleeping at the station.

The police have been heavy handed. Many fans spoke of their fear. Two Manchester United fans who were heading home after only three days spoke about their time with the police.

"We were picked up for no reason, driven 15 miles out of town, and just left there. It took us 5 hours to walk back."

Local fascists and gangs have attacked small groups of England fans while the police just looked on and laughed. Many fans spoke of being stopped every few hundred yards and searched publicly.

Even the *Daily Mirror* accused police of being heavy handed, though Colin Moynihan congratulated the police on hitting English fans with rifle butts.

The blame for the events in Sardinia must be put at the feet of the government, the Football Association, and the press. Fans were discouraged from going. Those that went were continually told to go home; and everyone was treated like an animal.

Even before leaving England, the FA decided that fans could only get tickets as part of a package deal, the cheapest being over £600. Thousands couldn't afford this and set off without tickets or accommodation.

On arriving at the seaport, English fans were made to fill out forms about who they were, where they were going, etc. Many boats and trains carrying English fans to Sardinia were sealed in case of trouble.

There is a lot of anger brewing up

among English fans against the British government and FA, and the Italian police. It will not be surprising if before the World Cup is over the English fans are provoked once too often, and their anger spills over into violence.

Obviously, the British press will go on about English hooligans and so on, and all the experts will give their solutions, but the truth is that the majority of fans are there for the football and a good time.

The English fans have been treated completely differently from the Scottish or Irish fans. Their own FAs called for as many fans to go as possible, organised cheap tickets and accommodation.

The Scottish FA and police have been giving out sheets every few days to the Scottish supporters, with information on tickets, accommodation, food, etc.

They have treated their fans as human beings and their fans have acted accordingly. Only one Scotland fan has been arrested so far in two weeks.

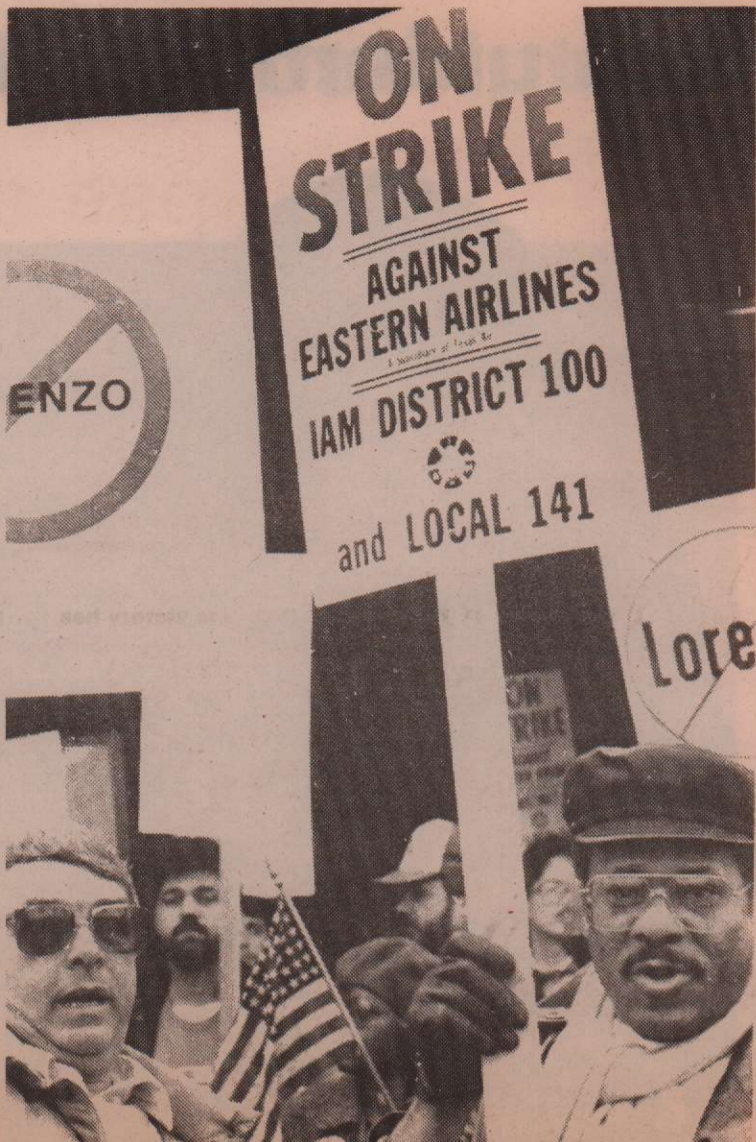
Before the Scotland-Sweden match a "peace march" was held, where over ten thousand Scottish and Swedish fans marched to the ground together, led by pipes and drums. All along the route local people clapped and cheered. There were two of those marches which were totally spontaneous.

A similar one held by English fans led to attacks by police and 40 English fans needing hospital treatment. They were attacked by police wielding batons, rifles and firing tear gas. 600 English fans were made to sit crosslegged at gun point.

The English fans in Sardinia are suffering from the reputation they bring with them. That reputation, which stems partly from the antics of some fans in the early 1980s, but more importantly from the British government and press, means that every nation hates them. Simply wearing England colours makes them a target for the police.

There are fans who follow England to cause trouble, but most do not. There are only 5,000 English fans in Sardinia. The rest have been scared off by the price of package tours and media attention on hooliganism. Things won't get better until our FA and government start treating the fans as human beings.

More must be encouraged to go, help must be made over accommodation and greater effort should be made by the FA to gain links with local people. The 25,000 Scots who made their way to Italy must be the example to follow — liked by the locals, respected by the Scottish FA, causing no trouble.



'Where working men defend their rights, that's where you'll find Joe Hill'. Eastern Airline strike, 1989.



Pickets fight police. Coal miners' strike.

Joe Hill, Swedish socialist

Claes Nilsson, a member of the Swedish Factory Workers' Union (SAF), tells the story of Joe Hill.

Joe Hill's real name was Joel Emanuel Hägglund. He was one of nine

children. Only six survived their childhood.

Joel was born on 7 October 1879 in a town in Sweden called Gäule.

His father worked as conductor on the railway. His wages were very low, and he was just about able to provide food on the table.

The Hägglands were very religious, members of a very strict Lutheran sect. As a boy, Joel was a very good student in the Sunday

school and he also attended the weekly Salvation Army meetings. Politics did not play a very big part in Joel Hägglund's upbringing.

Music did. Both parents loved to sing songs with the children. Joel learned how to play the guitar, the piano, the concertina, and his favourite instrument, the violin.

In 1887, when Joel was eight years old, his father died after an accident at work. The children had to start working, and Joel's first

'The Preacher and the Slave'

Long haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell you what is wrong and what is right,
But when asked how 'bout something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet;

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land in the sky.
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

And the Starvation Army they play,
And they sing and they clap and they play

Till they get all your coin on the drum.
Then they'll tell you when you're on the bum.

If you fight hard for children and wife,
Try to get something good in this life —
You're a sinner and bad man, they tell,
When you die you will sure go to hell.

Workingmen of all countries, unite,
Side by side we for freedom will fight!
When the world and its wealth we have gained,
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

You will eat, bye and bye,
When you've learned how to cook and to fry.

Chop some wood, 'twill do you good,
And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye.

(Originally Joe Hill had another verse to this song, but it was not published by the IWW)

Holy rollers and jumpers come out,
And they holler, they jump and they shout,
"Give your money to Jesus" they say,
"He will cure all diseases today".

Today Joe Hill's songs are sung at union meetings and trade union educational in Sweden. To us he was one of the first Swedish workers fighting the international struggle against capitalism and its robbery of the working class.

As Joe Hill once said, "Don't mourn, organise!"



Should we mourn the collapse of Stalinism?



ke, Pennsylvania, 1888.

workplace was a rope-making factory.

In 1902 Joel's mother died. The Hägglund children were now able to support themselves. Therefore they decided to sell their home and divide the money between them.

Joel and one of his brothers left Sweden for the promised land of America in the autumn of 1902.

In America, Joe worked in factories, mines, on farms and as a docker. He went from the east coast to the west.

After a while he ended up in San Pedro, California. This was where he joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Many of Joe's songs were written in San Pedro.

Joe Hill's life as an IWW member and activist was very exciting. Joe went from one struggle to another.

It could be a strike at the Southern Pacific Railroad or a steelworkers' strike in Illinois. Wherever it was needed, Joe came with his songs and violin to unite and to help the workers in their struggle.

The songs gave the strikers a feeling of unity and solidarity. The reason for the popularity of the songs was Joe's knowledge about the workers' situation and his sarcastic and satirical judgements on capitalists of all sorts.

In 1915 Joe worked in the mines in Utah. It was during that time he was framed on a murder charge.

He was supposed to have

murdered a shopkeeper in Salt Lake City. The evidence produced was not sufficient, but the capitalists and the politicians wanted Joe dead.

Meanwhile, Joe had taken a third name, Joseph Hillstrom.

In the month of November 1915 they killed Joe with five shots through his body. After this Joe Hill became a legend, formed by the IWW and other workers' organisations.

His story has been told not only in America, but also in Sweden, Australia and many other western countries, in Russia and in East Germany.

Today, Joe the Wobbly, hidden in myths, rightfully can be called "the man who never died". Hill's songs have become a part of working class culture.

His songs are still living and the words are worth considering even today.

The first of Hill's songs in the IWW songbook was 'The Preacher and the Slave'. This song was printed in the third edition in 1911.

The song is a parody of the Salvation Army hymn 'In the Sweet Bye and Bye' and it's an attack on the "streetcorner" missionaries and against the preachers in the Salvation Army.

The preachers told the workers to be satisfied with their share in society, so that they would be worthy of the wealth and happiness in the sky above.

The revolutions in Eastern Europe, according to *Socialist Action*, were "the greatest defeats suffered by the working class since World War II." Only one victory has been won there — the election success of the Romanian Stalinists (National Salvation Front).

The revolutions in which workers won the right to organise and speak freely for the first time in 45 or even 60 years were worse defeats than the Chile coup of 1973, the Indonesian coup of 1965 in which half a million leftists were slaughtered, the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, the imposition of apartheid in South Africa or the 1948 Arab-Israeli war which led to half a million Palestinian Arabs becoming refugees!

Socialist Action comes to its strange conclusion because of its theory that the old regimes were "deformed workers' states". Vicki Morris investigates the argument.

That the events of 1989 were a turning point in history, few would disagree. But that the political revolutions in Eastern Europe, and the dismantling of their Stalinist systems has dealt a crushing blow to the prospects for world socialism is harder to accept.

That is, nonetheless, what Peter Drew argues in the latest edition of *Socialist Action*.

His argument starts to go astray in his second paragraph. 1989 "weakens the working class and strengthens world capitalism". I agree that anything which does both "sets back the fight for equality, etc". But are the two both consequences of 1989, and, if so, in what proportions? Drew refuses to contemplate the idea that you might have one without the other.

Even if they were, would the alternative, that Stalinism continue its stranglehold on Eastern Europe — and on the allegiance of large sections of the world's "anti-imperialists" — bode any better for us in that fight?

Unlike Drew, who is confident to predict the apocalyptic consequences of 1989, I think the first question is very difficult to answer. For now, then, I'll try to tackle the second.

Read Drew's article and you will not find a credible attempt to explain why Gorbachev wants to introduce the market in the USSR, nor, indeed, why enormous numbers of ordinary Eastern European people were prepared to risk possibly their lives to bring down their national Stalinist regimes. I'm sure it isn't, and wasn't, because of their illusions in what capitalism might give them, but because of their disillusionment with what they already have.

For Drew, however, Gorbachev's

actions are explained only by reference to the treachery of Stalinists, now reaching their full extent. Gorbachev has sold out the international working class.

Why do *Socialist Action* imagine that Stalinists have, or would ever do otherwise? In fact, Gorbachev's interest is personal: to keep control of the USSR. To make it function...and certainly not as a workers' state. The only way he can do this is to find something to end the present economic stagnation and decline.

Like the adherents of the degenerated workers' state theory, *Socialist Action* throw up their hands in horror at the social and economic problems which the insecurities of the market will bring to workers. But the USSR was no paradise before.

Market economies in the developed capitalist countries periodically require their workers to tighten their belts, and the workers can usually do it. But it won't be possible for East European workers to pull their belts any tighter than they already are. Austerity measures will be horrendous in Eastern Europe as a whole, because the Stalinist systems have maintained their economies at such an already low base.

Likewise racism was already rife, and the position of women already dreadful. Drew does not do justice to his case to raise these spectres as threats of what the market has yet to bring.

Socialist Organiser is against these terrible conditions, conditions which the market might exacerbate. But who can say that they would not have deepened anyway had Stalinism prevailed?

Are we for the end of Stalinism? Absolutely. And, it seems to me, that the price we urge the international working class to pay is, in terms of the gains — of which, as I said, more anon — not too high.

Are *Socialist Action* anti-Stalinist? Probably...in the long run. And there is the rub.

They are for the end of Stalinism...if it is replaced by socialism. And if that isn't a viable option — it certainly isn't at present with working class organisations and politics at such low levels — then they seem to think that, compared to capitalism, it is a lesser evil.

Or do they? *Socialist Action* probably wanted change. But of a different kind. The logic of their illusions in the Stalinist regimes it seems, and their demonisation of the Big "I", Imperialism — by which they mean, I take it, international capital — must be that they welcome the extension of Stalinoid formations in other parts of the world.

Soviet aid, unlike the interventions of international capital, has, indeed, been beneficial to the national economies — and bureaucracies — of developing countries like Cuba and Nicaragua, if not to the independence of the workers' movements there. But I cannot understand how *Socialist Action* can be so sanguine as to think that, in brighter days, the USSR would not rather have invaded those countries — as it did Eastern Europe to set up replicas of its own regime there, and bring those countries more firmly into its own military fold.

Whereas the USA wields a big stick in the Third World, the USSR offers a big bribe, probably because its stick wouldn't stretch that far.

Nor, of late, does its budget. Did

pre-Gorbachev Soviet leaders give a damn for the impoverished masses of the Third World? No. Does Gorbachev? Oddly, he probably cares a bit more, but the USSR can no longer afford to give the aid.

Drew berates him for abandoning his commitments. By extension, does he rue the gradual, if uncertain, thawing of the Cold War? Although this disarmament is not something we have brought about or can take for granted, history, even in this age of "deepening imperialism", does deliver the odd temporary boon. Reduced arms spending means money for more useful things, and less chance for our governments to distract the workers with chauvinism.

Yet in this article we find *Socialist Action* feeling utterly dismayed and demoralised by the events of 1989, and by the undeniable confidence which the capitalists have taken from the aftermath. I do not know how they could not have felt demoralised before.

Were the Trotskyists greater in numbers then? Could they operate more freely? No. Were their tasks any less? Not appreciably.

However, those who believed that the Stalinist regimes were already doing part of their job for them must now, undoubtedly, be feeling rather at sea.

Others of us see the opportunities which the end of Stalinism brings.

For instance, it is an enormous asset to see disarmed those Stalinists enjoying life outside the Stalinist states but nonetheless willing to sacrifice the interests of the international working class to the foreign policy needs of the USSR. In this country, arguably, their day is already long past as they are already quite discredited.

But what of the Trotskyists — like *Socialist Action* — who seek a rapprochement with their remains? They are in danger of appearing more than a bit cranky for denouncing those who were moved by the sight of the East European people putting the Stalinists to rout.

None of us are over-sanguine about the struggles ahead. But we must rejoice at the prospects for workers' organisation which the events of 1989 open up.

Socialist Action did not despise the formal rights to equality granted to women in the Stalinist systems although even they admit that the material conditions for their realisation were poor. Why then discount, for instance, the rights which the left now has in Eastern Europe to publicise its ideas, just because they will find it difficult to afford a photocopier?

Socialist Action correctly identifies the first task of socialists — East and West — as uniting in struggle. Although necessary, how possible was that prior to 1989? They also say that we should not let our ideological differences hinder us.

To that end it would be better if *Socialist Action* would use more thought before denouncing the socialists who take a different view of the events of 1989 to themselves.

Such thought might convince them that their disorientation — past and present — is a result of feeling impotent in a world where the Trotskyists have seemed overwhelmed by history, and the Stalinists have seemed on the offensive against capitalism, even if against their own working classes into the bargain.

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	Manning Hall	3E	3D	3A	3B	3C	2F	2G
Friday	12.15-1.35			Marxist economics 1 Simon Mohun		Why the working class? Martin Thomas <small>POLITICS OF WORKERS' LIBERTY</small>		Room 2G is set aside for additional sessions and video screenings which will be announced at Workers' Liberty '90
	2.20-3.40	Anti-semitism in the USSR Stan Crooke		Marxist economics 2 Simon Mohun		Women's liberation and the working class Lynn Ferguson <small>POLITICS OF WORKERS' LIBERTY</small>		
	4-5.20	Did Leninism cause Stalinism? John O'Mahony		Marxist economics 3 Simon Mohun		National conflicts and the working class Robert Fine <small>POLITICS OF WORKERS' LIBERTY</small>		
	5.40-7	Will there be a war in the Middle East? Clive Bradley		Marxist economics 4 Simon Mohun		Racism and the working class Dion D'Silva <small>POLITICS OF WORKERS' LIBERTY</small>		
	evening SOCIAL at University College Student's Union (2nd floor), Gordon Street							
Saturday	11.20-12.20	PLENARY The end of Thatcherism Alice Mahon, John O'Mahony, Reg Race						 Extra sessions will include: Analytic Marxism Jon Pike Ireland: are the Unionists finished? Patrick Murphy The novels of Salman Rushdie
	1.20-2.40	Fighting the Poll Tax Harry Barnes MP, Cate Murphy, Ian Greaves	Nicaragua: what went wrong? George Davey Smith	Market socialism Martin Thomas	The women's movement in East German United Left speaker	The left in the trade unions Jim Denham, Trudy Saunders	Organisation and the working class Pete Radcliff <small>POLITICS OF WORKERS' LIBERTY</small>	
	3-4.20		Is 'twin track' the right strategy? John Bloxam, Danny Nicol, Reg Race	Debate: The left and Eastern Europe <small>Socialist Organiser (Tom Right), Socialist Outlook, Workers Press, Workers Power</small>	The French Revolution and the abolition of slavery Robin Blackburn	Where will Havel lead Czechoslovakia? Adam Nowak	Capitalism: an irrational world Alan Johnson <small>INTRODUCTORY COURSE</small>	
	4.40-6	Is Marxism outdated? Debate: Ruth Cockcroft and Mark Perryman	OUR HISTORY & THEIRS 1: The English Revolution John Moloney		The new technology of childbirth Sue Himmelweit	The workers and German unity Speaker from United Left	What is socialism? Rosey Sibley <small>INTRODUCTORY COURSE</small>	
	evening SOCIAL in the Palms Bar, ULU							
Sunday	10-11.20	Is the world dying? Les Heam	Gerry Healy John O'Mahony	10-12.10 Round table on Eastern Europe Josef Piniar, Adam Nowak, speakers from United Left, Tony Dale 1.10-3.20 Symposium: The nature of the Eastern Bloc Oliver Macdonald, Meshe Machover, John O'Mahony, Martin Thomas	No longer Fleet Street: Britain's press Jim Denham	The way to lesbian and gay liberation Clive Bradley	Socialism from above: reformism Pat Markey <small>INTRODUCTORY COURSE</small>	OUR HISTORY & THEIRS 2 The Chartists Cathy Nugent
	11.40-1	Racism in Fortress Europe Gail Cameron	A year after the Tiananmen massacre Cheung Siu Ming		Chaos theory Mac Clarke	Prisons: what is to be done? Adam Sampson (Prison Reform Trust)	Socialism from above: Stalinism Pat Murphy <small>INTRODUCTORY COURSE</small>	OUR HISTORY & THEIRS 3 The General Strike Jill Mountford
	2-3.20	South Africa: the end of apartheid Robert Fine	The USSR today Hillel Tickin		Myths in the movies Belinda Weaver	Which way for the student left? Debate: Emma Colyer and Joe Marshall	Socialism from below: workers' liberty Caroline Healy <small>INTRODUCTORY COURSE</small>	OUR HISTORY & THEIRS 4 The miners' strike Jean Lane
	3.40-4.15	PLENARY Renewing socialism Josef Piniar, Adam Nowak, Gail Cameron						

"We reject the Stalinist system and we reject capitalism"

Jozef Pinior, a member of the Socialist Political Centre in Poland, was in London recently, and spoke to Mark Sandell and Martin Thomas about his ideas on the nature of the Stalinist systems.

We are not sure, of course. The discussion is not finished.

My personal opinion is that it was a workers' state after October 1917 in Russia. Later there was a process of degeneration. That process of degeneration developed, developed, developed. It is difficult to say now about whether there is a workers' state.

In my opinion it is a post-capitalist state, a bureaucratic system. The bureaucracy has a lot of elements of a class, but a lot of elements of a caste, too. Now we are in a period when the bureaucracy is trying to change themselves into a strong class.

In what way do you see the system as being post-capitalist? In a way the Stalinist system in Poland, say, is post-capitalist — it came after capitalism — but it seems to us that it is not post-capitalist in the sense of being a historic advance on capitalism, more progressive...

It is post-capitalist in the sense that it is another system...

But post-capitalist means not just that it is different but that it is "after", it is more advanced. The question is: was the Stalinist system an advance on capitalism? Did it create better conditions for the working class, or for the development of the productive forces? It seems to me that if you put the question clearly now, there is only one possible answer: it wasn't.

In the October Revolution there were a lot of possibilities to build an advanced system. The process of Stalinist degeneration crushed those possibilities, and the working class rejected the bureaucratic system.

It is difficult for us to say which is worse, capitalism or Stalinism, because we reject both. We rejected the Stalinist system and at the same time we rejected capitalism. We aimed for new possibilities of socialism, workers' control and so on.

It is difficult for us to say which is worse, because in this process of rejecting Stalinism we don't like to support capitalism.

If you say the Stalinist system is more advanced, the conclusion must be that not only do you reject capitalism — but also that you say to the Polish workers that the system they have is bad, and they should try to fight for socialism, but capitalism would be even worse, so they should fight to defend the present system against capitalism even if they can't win socialism.

We say that we fight to overthrow the bureaucratic system in Poland and Eastern Europe, and at the same time we want to create a new revolutionary alternative. We don't want to defend the bureaucratic institutions.

That isn't what you would say if you thought the system was more advanced. In the 1930s Trotsky argued that the system in the Soviet Union wasn't good, but it was better than capitalism; he argued for the workers to organise to overthrow the Stalinist system, but when they weren't strong to overthrow the Stalinist system they



Strikers in Gdansk last year

should defend it against capitalism. I think that view made some sense then; I don't think it makes any sense now for the Soviet Union, and I don't think it makes any sense at all for Poland, where the workers never had power.

We don't want to defend this bureaucratic system. It is difficult to say which system is more advanced, because every system is worst! And, of course, we must use the possibilities in every system to overthrow that system of exploitation and domination and create a new alternative — all possibilities, workers' rights, workers' freedoms, and so on.

Don't you think what's happening in Eastern Europe indicates that whatever the systems were there, it is possible to transform them peacefully into capitalism?

The problem of restoration...

Yes. And restoration which is not happening as you would expect if they were workers' states, but counter-revolution against the working class, but by a peaceful process which is supported by the workers...

I think we must be very careful in these discussions about restoration. In Poland there is no national bourgeoisie. There is not a class which can make an accumulation of capital on a capitalistic level. The peasants cannot make an accumulation of capital. There is only foreign capital.

Foreign capital could probably do it through the central bank, central government, and so on. But I think it is a process of decades. It depends on the class struggle.

We have a workers' resistance against pauperisation. Workers will defend themselves against the IMF programme.

It will not be a struggle against capitalism as such, I think, but struggle against pauperisation.

There are three possibilities, not only two. Not only revolution or restoration, but also a real possibility of bureaucratic reaction. The in-

dependent Soviet bureaucracy has the force to reproduce itself. The Polish bureaucracy is not independent, but the Soviet bureaucracy is different.

We must be careful. In Poland the process of re-privatisation has not really begun. It is a plan.

If the IMF wants to introduce its programme of re-privatisation, factory closures, unemployment, and so on, they must absolutely control the state and the government. They must attack workers' rights.

In South Korea they had a ban on trade unions. But in Poland these freedoms — workers' rights, trade union rights — are a Solidarity symbol. If you want to introduce the programme in Poland, you must attack the Solidarity symbols too.

The bureaucracies, led by Gorbachev, are trying to solve a crisis in the way their economic system works. For some of them, at least, not all of them, their aim is to convert themselves into private capitalists. And isn't there a good possibility that the IMF will go into alliance with them?

It's possible for new capitalist classes to be built up around the state machine. It has happened in the Third World.

In Poland — perhaps it is different in the Soviet Union — it is not possible for the lower and middle bureaucracy to become capitalists.

They tried to do it after the Round Table. They tried to control the means of production through setting up new companies. They met workers' resistance, and now, a month ago in Parliament, they made a law against it.

The central, top bureaucracy is another problem. They really control the banks, the ministries, and so on. Nobody knows the result of the process.

But their position, I think, is very weak. On the one hand you have a labour movement absolutely against them. On the other hand, you have the capitalist market and the big multinationals. In relation

to the big capitalists, the bureaucrats are nothing. They are very weak.

It is difficult to say if it is possible or not possible for bureaucrats to become capitalists. But what looks more possible to me is a bureaucratic reaction, military action as in China.

In the Soviet Union, there is a process of disintegration. The central bureaucracy must choose between continuing that process or repression. At some point they must decide for repression or go for historical hara-kiri. I think they will choose repression.

But aren't the indications that a military or dictatorial regime — and the first step of it has already happened, with Gorbachev taking full powers — will not restore the old Stalinist command economy but carry through marketisation faster?

I agree. There are several possibilities. The first possibility maybe the most likely, is some kind of military dictatorship with a process of marketisation.

Another possibility is that power is taken by the most chauvinistic, reactionary part of the Russian bureaucracy.

I don't think there will be repression on the classical Stalinist level. And I agree there will be marketisation.

The bureaucracy is trying to change itself into a strong class with a lot of elements of capitalism. I don't know whether it will be capitalism or not capitalism. Of course it will not be socialism! The bureaucracy is completely reactionary.

It is difficult to say how this process will look. It is a different process from in Turkey or Mexico or countries like that. On the one hand the bureaucrats' position is very strong because they have the army and police, on the other hand very weak because they have workers' resistance.

They couldn't advance economic production. They organised the

first step on a massive scale — industrialisation — then stopped. Now they are looking for a new way to advance themselves.

It seems to me that to say that the bureaucracy is transforming itself from a caste into a class is wrong. It's more like the opposite way round — transforming itself from a class into a caste. Their position is not becoming stronger, but weaker.

But we must remember that this process is not finished. It was started by Gorbachev. It was a project of the central bureaucracy, to use the capitalist market but control the process.

But the process of self-emancipation in Eastern Europe went very quickly, and they could not control it. Now they are at the crossroads. They face historical hara-kiri. Perhaps in the future some of them will be managers and so on, but I think their position will be very bad because all social movements will be against them and they are very weak in relation to multinational capitalism.

In Poland, after the Round Table, we said the state was controlled by the bureaucracy. Now it is another situation. Walesa will be president. There will be new elections to parliament, and so on.

A lot of managers in the bureaucracy have a strong position. But the bureaucracy as a central political force has lost its positions.

So the bureaucracy must decide. Not in Poland, because the Polish bureaucracy is not independent — it is nothing — but in Moscow they must decide.

Our position is that the Stalinist systems were class systems that are not an advance on capitalism. Some of us think they were new systems, quite distinct from capitalism; some of us think they were a form of state capitalism. Why do you think that state capitalism is a wrong description of the East European systems?

The accumulation was on another level than capitalist accumulation. It was a new form of accumulation, a new form of exploitation and domination. The bureaucrats' relation to the means of production was that they decided about profits and production and so on.

Why did the systems go into economic crisis?

Their so-called centralised planning was not planning. It was bureaucratic planning, planning without planning. Economically it was completely without sense. Capitalist multinationals have much better planning. In fact things were decided by fighting within the bureaucracy about money and resources and so on.

They made a first step — industrialisation. They couldn't make another step.

First it was a workers' state in Russia. The bureaucratic caste could not advance society to a new stage without the working class. But they oppressed the working class. So it was impossible for the bureaucracy to advance society.

The bureaucracy was caught in a vicious circle. Their existence as a caste depends on entirely controlling the working class. On the other hand, their existence for the future as a class depends on advancing the economy and industry. It was a contradiction.

So the bureaucracies are a caste and a class. Their existence as a caste depended on totally controlling the working class and society. But in the long term that weakened their position. It made it impossible for them to advance the economy and industry.

Their position as a class depended on advancing the economy and industry. It was a contradiction. From that point there was a development to today's crisis.

What did you do in the war, Daddy?

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver reviews 'Music Box'

Parents' pasts have to be taken on trust. Growing up, most of us probably heard different versions of our parents' history, some false, some true, some exaggerated and embellished. We can never really know which is real. We weren't there.

In 'Music Box', lawyer Ann Talbot has to start questioning that early childish trust when her father, who emigrated to America from Hungary after the second world war, is accused of war crimes and threatened with loss of citizenship.

At first, it seems like an honest mistake; Ann believes the authorities have the wrong Michael Laszlo. But when the case comes to trial, and she decides she must defend him, she has to confront her own fears that the man she knows and loves may have been the brutal and sadistic Mishka, of the Special Section death squad.

Her doubts don't all surface at once. Laszlo is anti-communist, and has publicly humiliated the Hungarian government. It's possible that they might want to destroy him in revenge. After all, they seem almost too eager to cooperate with the prosecuting Americans. But as witness after witness identifies Laszlo as Mishka, Ann becomes more and more uneasy.



Armin Mueller-Stahl and Jessica Lange as suspected Nazi war criminal and his attorney daughter in *Music Box*

The witnesses, all imported from Hungary, have amazing recall of what they went through at Mishka's hands. Forty six years have not drawn a veil over the horrors, and many relive them over and over as nightmares.

Ann is pierced by their testimony, the overwhelming cruelty meted out to them, the whole catalogue of inhumanity. She begins to lose heart. Could her father be one of those ex-Nazis, a man who compartmentalised his life, hiding past years of brutality in the new guise of model citizen and family man? It suddenly begins to seem possible. But if it's all a terrible mistake, she can't afford to shrink from the grim task of destroying the witnesses' credibility.

Whatever the outcome, she knows she will never feel quite the same about him again.

The film is obviously inspired by the ongoing John Demjanjuk/Ivan the Terrible trial, where the issue of identification has played so important a part. But it ducks the issue of whether it is right to try to prosecute people, even Nazi war criminals, so many years after the events.

Those opposing trials of war criminals usually doubt that the trials would be fair, or that any testimony could be accurate after so long a time. Yet in this film, the evidence of the witnesses is as clear and as concise as if the events had happened days, not decades, ago.

It's as if the images were burned in to their brains.

The one discussion in the film about the trials issue is held outside on a terrace. We only hear snatches of it, while we're involved in quite a different scene inside.

The film is not just a courtroom drama, but a film about the emotional devastation of a family. Ann and her young son, Mikey (named for his beloved grandfather), go through hell. But the film lets us draw our own conclusions about their ordeal; director Costa-Gavras doesn't exploit their suffering, or cheapen it.

This isn't a tear jerker, but it's a sad film, a film that thinks the unthinkable.

I wish I'd been nicer to teachers

TV

By Vicki Morris

Watching BBC2's programme about Spurley Hey comprehensive school made by wish that I'd been nicer to my teachers when I was at school.

Not that I was particularly disruptive, just that I probably didn't get as excited about their subjects as I might have. That, pupils' interest and improvement in learning, it seems, is all the compensation these comprehensive school teachers could find in a stressful, poorly-paid and undervalued job.

The programme followed the fortunes of Spurley Hey school in Manchester and of its staff in particular throughout the revolutionary year of 1989.

The programme had some faults, mainly being rather monotonous. The passage of the school year wasn't clearly marked.

The teachers began the year depressed and disgruntled, and ended it depressed, disgruntled and doomed. The Head, who had tried to raise their flagging spirits throughout, had to announce that, because of the disastrous poll tax, Manchester was now looking to make some teachers redundant.

This was the final blow in a whole series of attacks on education in recent years: cuts and changes like Local Management of Schools and the National Curriculum had already combined to cause terrible strains in the year.

The Head himself seemed the most cowed by this latest disaster. He had scrupulously avoided political comment when talking to staff, if not the camera, before which he was prepared to call the National Curriculum a fascist type of educational control.

In staff meetings, though, he had spent a year persuading staff to enter positively into the task of "marketing" the school — appointing new governors with business acumen and connections, cadging money from local banks which only materialised in the form of some nasty wallets to send the school's prospectus out in, and collecting scrap paper for recycling.

This latter made the weirdest spectacle of all. While the Head in his office tried to do deals with Barclays Bank, pretending they really had something to offer them, a teacher and a group of pupils worked outside shovelling scrap paper into the skip which would take it to the recycling plant.

Why do teachers stay? It's not the pay, it's not the prestige, it's not the job security anymore.

Lots of teachers are leaving. This programme concentrated on those who do. Some had domestic reasons for avoiding upheaval. All seemed genuinely concerned that someone has to do the job and no-one is likely to replace them if they leave.

And what of job satisfaction? The programme made little effort to show those aspects of teaching which make it enjoyable for teacher...or pupil.

But it wasn't, after all, a recruitment film. Just a rather impressionistic attempt to show the dismaying effects of the Tories' wrecking job on our state education system.

All you wanted to know about global warming, nitrates...

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

Faced with a plethora of environmental problems, with an overwhelming quantity of facts and claims and counterclaims, the layperson can be forgiven for being confused.

There is therefore a ready market for popular books, and these have not been slow in coming forward. I have been looking at what's on offer and I have to report that there are some good and some not so good.

'Poisoners of the seas' is a highly informative book, full of data on sea pollution by oil, sewage, toxic and radioactive chemicals. Inevitably, technical terms and acronyms litter the text, but are fully explained.

It is not a dry-as-dust academic tome. Blow-by-blow accounts of famous pollution disasters put the statistics into a more real context. These include:

- the wreck of the Torrey Canyon in 1967 which brought 100,000 tonnes of crude oil to the beaches of Cornwall and Brittany;

- the poisoning by dumped mercury waste of the fishing community of Minamata, Japan, in the '50s and '60s;

- the saga of radioactive leaks from Sellafield, exposed by Greenpeace.

The pressures on the seas from our modern industrial society are described, as are the consequences when corners are cut, errors made or deliberate decisions to pollute taken.

This book would make a very useful companion to anyone speaking on pollution of the seas or otherwise seeking to alert others to the threats to the health of the liquid covering of our planet.

On the other hand, 'Nitrates — the threat to food and water', by Nigel Dudley, about an important environmental pollutant, is marred by inaccuracies and an alarmist tone, bordering on the scaremongering.

It was particularly depressing to read in the preface that nitrates in farm manure are an important source of air pollution and "thus" of acid rain! Later, this was "clarified" so that ammonia released from the manure was the culprit.

This is the complete opposite of the truth which is that ammonia is an alkaline gas and thus neutralises acids. Nor does ammonia oxidise sulphur dioxide to the more damaging trioxide, as Dudley claims. He also names nitrous oxide, the laughing gas of past dental practice, as an important source of acid rain!

I was unable to locate details of the nitrate contribution to the greenhouse effect promised in the blurb.

An eighth of the book tells us of the many claims for health damage from nitrates but has to admit to a complete lack of firm evidence. Nitrates and nitrites added to meat products are claimed to form carcinogenic nitrosamines in the body which lead to stomach cancer.

However, present levels are far lower than in the salt-cured meats of the past, thanks to refrigeration, and in any case stomach cancer levels are falling. You are far more likely to get nitrosamines from smoking (including other people's) than from food.

High nitrite levels in water are said to threaten babies with the condition methaemoglobinemia ("blue baby" syndrome), which

harms the ability of the blood to carry oxygen. But, far from this being a growing problem with the increased use of fertilisers, there have only ever been 14 cases in Britain (2000 worldwide since 1945), the last nearly 20 years ago.

Dudley accusingly quotes the Fertiliser Manufacturers Association as saying that there is no evidence to link nitrates with cancer and that unfertilised soil can sometimes release as much nitrate as treated soil. But these statements are true! Indeed, organic farming can sometimes result in more nitrate pollution.

Dudley is on stronger ground when he describes the effects of nitrate run-off on freshwater and sea eco-systems: the overgrowth of algae cutting out sunlight and killing other plant life and hence animal life in the rivers; the poisonous algal blooms that sometimes occur in reservoirs and in the North and Baltic seas.

His strategy for reducing nitrate exposure would unfortunately rule out many interesting and otherwise nourishing foods. Better is his plan for reducing nitrate usage in agriculture and I am sure many of the more enlightened farmers would be happy to save themselves money by reducing wasteful applications of fertiliser.

The above criticisms aside, at £4.99 for 118 pages of large print, with no index, this book is rather poor value, unlike Dudley's excellent 'The Death of Trees' (reviewed by me a few years ago).

'Green Energy — a non-nuclear response to the greenhouse effect' is written by SERA member Dave Toke. It is, on the whole, a competent and well-written book. Briefly stating the problem of emissions of "greenhouse" gases, from industry, transport, homes and most importantly from power generation, he goes on to dismiss nuclear

power as an environmentally friendly alternative.

Interestingly, he points out that quite large amounts of CO₂ are emitted during the mining and processing of uranium ore.

Unfortunately, he then loses his way and starts lashing out. He repeats the dubious claim that fast breeder reactors are at risk of nuclear explosion. FBRs are, of course, a way of circumventing the inevitable future shortage of uranium by generating plutonium. Toke does not really help his case by warning of a world "almost literally swimming in plutonium"!

His case against nuclear power is at its strongest in simple economic terms, as is his criticism of the vast sums spent on nuclear fusion research. However, his criticism of the attention paid to the "cold fusion" seems misplaced.

This was not, as he claims, "high science" but relied on very cheap components. If cold fusion had worked, it would be the height of stupidity to reject it in favour of what Toke terms "technology that acts in harmony with nature" (rather unfairly the image of Boy Scouts rubbing two sticks together comes unbidden to my mind).

The rest of the book is a much more balanced survey of energy conservation, acknowledged to be the most rewarding way of reducing emissions of greenhouse and other polluting gases, and cleaner energy sources, renewable or otherwise.

While slightly pricey, the book would be a useful addition to a socialist environmentalist's bookshelf (or to the library of a Labour Party or trade union branch).

1. K A Gourley. Zed Books, 1988, 256pp, £7.95.

2. Nigel Dudley. GREENprint, 1990, 118pp, £4.99.

3. Dave Toke. GREENprint, 1990, 136pp, £5.99.

Good Old British immunities

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

"It is not good for trades unions that they should be brought into contact with the courts...Where class issues are involved...a very large number of our population has been led to the opinion that they are, unconsciously no doubt, biased."

That about sums up the standard left wing attitude towards the law and trade unionism. The less contact there is between the two, the better. Hence the widespread suspicion that exists on the left towards any talk of legal "positive rights" for unions. Much better — much more "revolutionary" — to rely upon the struggle in the workplace. Only craven reformists look to the law to enforce workers' rights.

Now I'm as much in favour of work place struggle as the next person; it is the starting point for all serious socialists. But workplace struggle needs to be given a political direction if it is to result in lasting gains for the entire working class. And that political direction often takes the form of forcing

through progressive legislation.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, for instance, there were big arguments amongst socialists about how best to pursue the campaign for the 8-hour working day. That well-known reformist Karl Marx insisted that strikes in particular factories, or even throughout entire industries, were not sufficient:

"On the other hand the movement to force through an 8-hour law is a political movement. And in this way, out of the separate economic movements of the workers, there grows up everywhere a political movement, that is to say a class movement, with the object of enforcing its interests in a general form."

Of course, since then the British labour movement has developed its own alternative way of dealing with the law — immunities. The idea is very simple: instead of having positive rights under the law, unions were instead exempted from certain laws that would otherwise make effective organisation and action impossible.

This began in the 1870s, when the governments of Gladstone and Disraeli gave the unions immunity from the conspiracy laws. Then, in the 1890s, the judges began using the civil law against unions, digging up the obscure tort of "inducing a breach of contract" against strikes. After the notorious Taff Vale

judgement, the fledgling Labour Party was able to force the Liberal government of 1906 to give unions and union officials immunities from the torts (civil laws) concerning breach of contract.

And there matters stood for about the next five decades, with a *de facto* agreement between the state and the union bureaucracy that the law would be kept out of union affairs and the officials would keep the membership in line. But with the rising rank and file militancy of the 1960s, the judges suddenly discovered that the threat of industrial action constituted the tort of "intimidation". The 1906 Act had given immunity to the act of inducing a breach of contract, but it had not said anything about the threat of breaking a contract!

All of which goes to demonstrate one of the central weaknesses of immunities...they are by definition defensive and can only relate to past decisions of the courts. Judges have often shown an impressive degree of imagination in conjuring up new civil law offences in order to get around existing immunities.

Incidentally, back in the 1870s, the TUC leadership had wanted to go for positive rights, but were persuaded to opt instead for immunities by their friends in the Liberal Party.

This brief wander through the history of unions and the law has not just been an academic exercise. Probably the single most important issue now facing

the British labour movement is what we want done about the Tory anti-union laws. Labour's Policy Review is clear: the laws will stay, with a few rough edges smoothed off, and some of the more blatantly unfair aspects modified.

But the left is still confused and divided, with a lot of people refusing to give any support (or only giving half-hearted support) to demands for positive rights like the right to strike, take secondary action and picket effectively. The myth that immunities are more effective and somehow more "pure" and "militant" still prevails on sections of the left; the idea that "real" trade unionism means having no truck with the legislative process is equally widespread. Such prejudices have meant that the left of the movement has not always thrown itself behind the 'Campaign for Free Trade Unions' or the 12-point Workers' Charter recently endorsed by the NALGO conference, with the unambiguous vigour that it should have done.

Hopefully, the history behind this issue will help some people on the left shake off their syndicalism and/or illusions in Good Old British Immunities.

By the way, that quote right at the start was from Winston Churchill.

Thanks to Roger Welch of Chelmsford and District Trades Council for a lot of the historical background for this article.

Support Waterford strikers

By Stan Crooke

The 2,300 workers at the Waterford Crystal factory in Waterford in the South of Ireland have been on strike since 5 April.

At the beginning of June a delegation from the strikers arrived in England to raise financial support for the dispute. Members of the delegation are now based in London, Liverpool and Newcastle. Jimmy Galvin, one of the strikers based in Liverpool, spoke to SO.

"In 1986 the company was financially sound and decided to buy the porcelain manufacturers Wedgewood, to complement its own high-quality crystalware production. This was the beginning of the downfall of Waterford Crystal.

£250 million was paid for Wedgewood, which financial advisers have considered to be £30 million too much. With interest rates going up, the company soon found itself in financial difficulties and wanted to impose wage cuts and a thousand redundancies.

The union refused to negotiate redundancies, so the company went over the head of the union and introduced early retirement and big payouts for voluntary redundancies. This package cost another £50 million.

In June 1989 the union (the ATGWU, organised as a region of the British-based TGWU) agreed to a new package of cost-cutting measures amounting to £8.8 million, including a three year wage freeze.

This year the company announced a

loss of £61 million and debts totalling £120 million. So they came back again with another cost-cutting plan, for £10 million.

This was to be achieved by wage reductions, longer working hours, an increase in the pension age, and redeployment with no compensation for loss of earnings. Workers would end up losing between £34 and £76 a week.

At this stage we were still prepared to negotiate. But then, on 5 April, two days before a meeting was due to be held with management, two of the cost-cutting measures — the abolition of the Christmas and summer bonuses — were imposed by management without consultation.

At a mass meeting held the same day there was a unanimous vote for immediate strike action. Since then production has been at a standstill, and we have had a round-the-clock picket on the factory.

For eight weeks there were no negotiations. Our attitude was 'enough is enough!' — we were not prepared to negotiate while management went ahead with introducing the plans without discussions. In the meantime, management was making noises about transferring production to Czechoslovakia if there was no settlement.

After an intervention by the Irish Minister for Labour, talks were opened up again. The company wants to conclude these talks in two weeks. We think that it is very important to sustain the pressure, as the company is still sticking to the very hard line it has held from the start.

We have had donations and support

from all the other unions in Ireland, and the TGWU in Britain has sent out a circular to all regions and branches here asking for full support for us. It is of the utmost importance that we are seen to be strong while the negotiations are going on."

The outcome of the dispute will also be of importance for workers throughout Ireland. As Jimmy Galvin put it: "We are seen as a leading light of the trade union movement in Ireland, and the whole country will be watching the outcome. The result will set the trend for the 1990s, so it's important

that we come out on the right end of this."

Workers at Waterford Crystal have a long record of supporting workers' struggles in Britain, including the steelworkers' strike (1980), the miners' strike (1984/5), the Wapping dispute (1986), the dockers' strike (1989) and the ambulance dispute (1989/90).

It is important that such solidarity is repaid by workers in this country. "We are fighting the fight of our lives," said Jimmy Galvin, "and we need all the support we can get from all trade unions."

Donations to/further information from: 'Waterford Glass Strike Fund', c/o TGWU, Transport House, Islington, Liverpool L3 (Tel: 051 207 3388), or ATGWU, Keyser Street, Waterford, Southern Ireland.

NALGO backs Workers' Charter

By Tim Cooper (Nottinghamshire County NALGO)

"NALGO attacks Labour's stance on union curbs...The left-dominated National and Local Government Officers Association drove a wedge between Labour and the trade unions over the party's plans for union reform."

"NALGO General Secretary elect Alan Jinkinson led the attack."

So said the *Guardian*. How true was their report?

The rumour that previously meek and mild Alan Jinkinson is to become the Action Man of the TUC is sadly true.

The 60-strong well-lunched National Executive of NALGO is now led by the man who was previously its administrator. Less than 1 in 4 NALGO members bothered to vote in the recent NEC and General Secretary elections, partly due to postal balloting and partly due to the perceived huge gap in the relevance of national leadership to a union with strong local decision making.

But even moderate union leaders have rallied round the call for 'Free Trade Unions' and positive rights for workers. *Socialist Organiser* supporters initiated a "Workers' Charter" with a comprehensive list of practical rights over which the Labour Party and trade union movement could unite.

The sticking point was over the "right to picket". The Labour Party leadership is prepared to accept it if it used the

word "peacefully" and they can interpret that as keeping limits on numbers to six, and no secondary picketing. Tony Blair, the Shadow Employment Minister, was hot on the phone to NALGO leaders to ensure NALGO did not rock the boat.

After attempts to block the Workers' Charter by throwing in the red herring that the wording "picketing in whatever numbers is chosen" could let the police choose less than six(!), a change was made to "without restrictions to numbers" and the Charter was passed unanimously by the 2,000 delegates.

The new Rambo, Alan Jinkinson, will need some bionic implants if he is to really become the workers' hero of the TUC. The alternative is for union branches, Labour Parties, etc. to raise the Charter and ensure it is not lost.

SO bulletin brings the news

At NALGO conference it was widely agreed the best way to find out what was going on was to read the daily *Socialist Organiser* bulletin.

Its lively, practical and socialist information became required reading for both left and right. At the end even the usually hostile SWP had one of their members give a donation to it saying it made conference bearable!

And Bury NALGO voted to give a donation and propose to their branch they take a bundle of *Socialist Organiser* for the use of union members.

NALGO: How we lost the poll tax vote

Although NALGO has many sections (Universities, Polys, Electricity, Gas, New Towns, Water, Health, etc) Local Government dominates, with nearly three quarters of the 750,000 members.

And if an issue or speaker catches the imagination of the majority, it can snowball to massive support. When something doesn't hit the nail on the head it can be disastrous.

The Poll Tax debate was a classic case. Everyone agreed that the Poll Tax was terrible, but when speakers from the SWP and other left groups screamed at the conference to support mass non-payment, boycott collecting the tax, affiliate to the All-Britain Anti Poll Tax Federation and back a one-day general strike, the leadership were able to appeal to the self-interest of delegates by saying we need the money from the Poll Tax to pay our wages, so we should wait and get rid of the tax in several years time under a Labour government.

The "Don't Pay, Don't Collect" position was hammered and yet some left sects were visibly so happy at their positions being heard that they didn't care about the issue being lost.

But all is not despondency. We are still left with last year's position of "supporting a campaign of mass non-payment if and when it becomes viable". Branches can still argue that it is viable and they will strike as Greenwich NALGO are doing.

Conference round-up

Merger: The ongoing talks with NUPE and CoHSE were approved, with the leadership's proposal amended to say that the union be membership led. Why anyone should oppose that worthy intention only the Executive knew, and they failed to convince conference why. Their real reason is that they would like a free hand to stitch up a merged union where the officials had firm control.

South Africa: The secret "bat phone" of retiring General Secretary John Daly was used to signal to *Morning Star* stooges to move next business, ie. hear virtually no debate on such a crucial issue.

We were left with a self-congratulatory mood that said Nelson Mandela is free, continue not buying South African fruit and everything will be OK. The new situation demands we redouble our efforts to build solidarity with all those forces fighting for one person, one vote, in a unitary democratic state, but we were left with a mood as flat as a pancake.

NALGO Action: "It's not a front, it's a non-sectarian open bulletin for activists in every service," Nick Hey (Birmingham) and Pete Sutton (Chair, Met District Health Committee) both assured the NALGO Action fringe meeting on Tuesday.

"By the end of the meeting the 50-strong audience didn't need convincing. It was one of the few practical fringe meetings around."

That was amazingly how the Metropolitan Conference round-up reported. Amazing, because the Met report is the biggest and most influential report of conference and is slavishly pro-*Morning Star*, they being extremely anti NALGO Action.

Socialist Organiser supporters were prominent in both providing the political drive for the way forward and doing the practical donkey work. *SO* supporter Leon Edwards' suggestion that people meet in NALGO Action groups as they do in Avon was appreciated, not as an alternative to the Broad Left, but as recognition that NALGO Action is the respected voice of the fighting branches.

Gill Emerson: A high point of conference was unanimous support, against the wishes of the leadership, for the one person sacked in last year's dispute. She told SO: "Thank you very much. This is not a question of charity, but one of principle — the defence of members in weak branches".

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Defend the right to socialist dissent!

By Martin Thomas

Socialist Organiser is going to be banned, and its sellers expelled from the Labour Party. So claimed the *Sunday Times* on 17 June.

"The Labour Party is to outlaw the 500-strong Socialist Organiser group, which is accused of infiltrating the party and acting as a 'mini Militant Tendency'. Several leading figures in the group face expulsion", wrote Political Correspondent Andrew Grice.

Labour activists can hope the Murdoch rag is just hyping it up to discredit Labour, but we can't be sure. The *Sunday Times* report is all we've got to go on.

Labour's National Executive decided in February to 'investigate' Socialist Organiser, but Labour's national officials have not contacted SO to put questions, answered phone calls from us offering assistance, or even formally notified us of the investigation.

Sentence first, charges later, and evidence and trial never — that's the

'justice' of the new regime in the Labour Party, if the *Sunday Times* report is right.

Immediately, Labour Parties should rush emergency motions to the National Executive, preferably before its meeting on 27 June.

All those who value the right to socialist dissent in the Labour Party should endorse our appeal for justice, and go out to get others to endorse that appeal.

The whole affair began with the decision of Birkenhead CLP to choose TGWU official Paul Davies as their candidate for the next election, in place of sitting MP Frank Field.

Field alleged foul play, called on the National Executive to investigate and threatened to force a by-election and stand against Labour if he didn't get his way.

Socialist Organiser was dragged in in a roundabout way. Although SO fully supports Birkenhead CLP's right to deselect Field, no supporter of the paper had any direct part in the deselection, and nobody alleges they had.

However, part of what set Birkenhead CLP against Frank

Pass this emergency motion!

This CLP notes the report in the *Sunday Times* of 17 June that *Socialist Organiser* is to be banned and its sellers expelled from the Labour Party.

We call on the National Executive to issue a denial and to drop the investigation into *Socialist Organiser*.

Since the National Executive decided in February on the investigation, the editorial staff of *Socialist Organiser* have not been contacted to answer questions, had their phone calls returned or even been formally notified of the investigation.

If the investigation is to proceed, the minimum of justice requires that:

1. *Socialist Organiser* be informed of the charges against it.
2. *Socialist Organiser* be informed of the evidence adduced for those charges.
3. Representatives of *Socialist Organiser* have the chance to cross-examine and to produce evidence in their favour, and have a hearing before any decision is taken.

We believe that the right for Labour Party members to associate to publish and distribute journals such as *Socialist Organiser* is an essential part of the democratic life of the Labour Party.



Field was that he probably lost the neighbouring constituency of Wallasey for Labour in the 1987 General Election. He told the local press very pointedly that he was not supporting Labour candidate Lol Duffy.

Lol Duffy increased the Labour vote in Wallasey by 39 per cent, and came within 279 votes of winning the constituency for Labour for the first time since it was created in 1918. Field's intervention may well have made that crucial 279-vote difference.

Field obviously thinks that the best form of defence is attack. So in

his 'dossier' on his deselection he threw in claims that Wallasey CLP was 'controlled' by Socialist Organiser, and assorted financial and other allegations against Wallasey CLP for good measure.

By all reports, including the *Sunday Times*, most of Field's allegations have been proved ill-founded. And even his allegations contained no detailed claim that Socialist Organiser supporters are like a 'mini-Militant Tendency'. What exactly the case is against SO, no-one knows, except perhaps someone at Walworth Road and some Murdoch journalists!

According to the *Sunday Times* the National Executive is likely to move to expel six members of Birkenhead CLP for being *Militant* supporters, but to reject Field's allegations against Paul Davies and to allow a new selection contest which Davies will probably win.

The same prediction has been made by *Tribune* (8 June). Neither *Tribune* nor the *Sunday Times* has offered any guesses on the charges against Wallasey CLP or Wirral District Labour Party.

Another possibility, according to both the *Sunday Times* and behind-the-scenes rumour, is that the National Executive will find some way to postpone decisions. 'Privately', reports the *Sunday Times* "some NEC members hope the general election is called before the Birkenhead contest is re-run. As the sitting MP, Field could then be confirmed as the official Labour candidate..."

Experts on Labour's constitution reckon that a decision to proscribe Socialist Organiser could not be taken by the National Executive alone, but would have to go to Labour's Annual Conference.

It's hard to say how much time we have for our campaign to defend the right of socialist dissent in the Labour Party. But for sure that campaign needs to go into high gear.

If Frank Field and his friends at Walworth Road are allowed to strike down Socialist Organiser, then who knows who could be next: Labour Briefing, Labour Party Socialists, Campaign Group News, Tribune...

Workers' Liberty 1990

June 29, 30, July 1
London



BURNING POLL TAX BILLS

* **Did Leninism cause Stalinism? Is tyranny the inevitable result of revolution led by a tight-knit party?** John O'Mahony, editor of *Socialist Organiser*, discusses the arguments.
Friday 4pm

* **Will there be war in the Middle East?** With Clive Bradley.
Friday, 12.15pm

* **Courses on Marxist economics** (with Simon Mohan), **Politics of Workers' Liberty, Introduction to Marxism, Our History and Theirs.**
Friday, Saturday, Sunday

* **The politics of football** with Alan Johnson.
Friday, 5.40pm

* **The end of Thatcherism: is it within reach, and what comes after?** Alice Mahon MP, Reg Race, and John O'Mahony discuss the prospects.
Saturday 11.20am

* **Renewing socialism: learning the lessons from Eastern Europe.** With Gail Cameron (SO), Adam Nowak (Left Alternative, Czechoslovakia), and Jozef Piniar (Socialist Political Centre, Poland)
Sunday 3.40pm

* **Fighting the Poll Tax:** strategies debated by Harry Barnes MP, Cate Murphy, Sham Singh.
Saturday 1.20pm

* **Is Marxism outdated?** Ruth Cockerfi (SO) debates Mark Perryman (Marxism Today).
Saturday 4.40pm

* **Round table on East Europe** with Jozef Piniar, Adam Nowak, and speakers from E. Germany.
Sunday 10am

* **The USSR today: can Gorbachev survive, and what comes next?** With Hillel Tickin.
Sunday 2pm

* **Symposium on the nature of the Stalinist states: workers' states, bureaucratic collectivist, state capitalist?** Oliver Macdonald, Moshe Machover, John O'Mahony, Martin Thomas.
Sunday 1.10pm

* **Debate: the left and Eastern Europe.** *Socialist Organiser*, *Socialist Outlook*, *Workers Press*, *Workers Power*.
Saturday 3pm

* **Is apartheid finished? And what then?** With Robert Fine.
Sunday 2pm

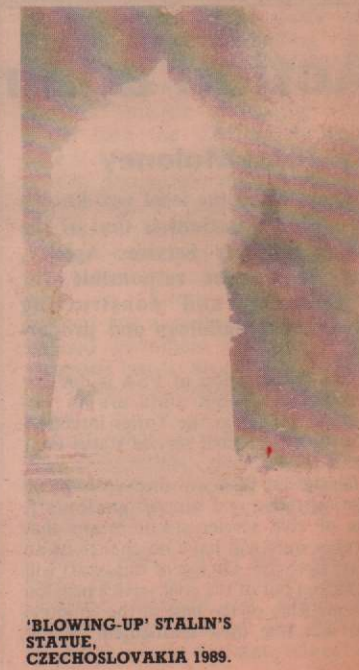
* **Is the world dying? The greenhouse effect, the loss of the ozone layer...** Les Hearn explains.
Sunday 10am

* **The French Revolution and the abolition of slavery,** with Robin Blackburn.
Saturday 3pm

* **The new technology of childbirth,** with Sue Himmelweit.
Saturday 4.40pm

* **Nicaragua:** George Davey Smith, who has spent much time there recently, reports.
Saturday 1.20pm

* **and much, much more.**



BLOWING-UP STALIN'S STATUE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1989.

More details
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