



**Why the Alcan strikers won**

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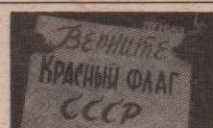


**How women invented solidarity**  
centre pages



**Why Yugoslavia is a battlefield**

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**Russia: Stalinists ally with far right**

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# SOCIALIST

**ORGANISER**

*Unite the left!*

**Save our hospitals!**  
**DEMONSTRATION**  
**Friday 21 August, 2.30pm**  
**Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital,**  
**Euston Road, London NW1**

# SLUMP

- **Why it's happening**
- **How to fight back**

**S**lumps are built into the capitalist system of production for private profit. The rulers of the West thought they had ended their difficulties when their rivals, the Stalinist states, collapsed in Eastern Europe and the USSR. But they had not conquered the inner demons of capitalism. They cannot conquer them.

Every capitalist upswing, even the feeble one of the mid-1980s, "overshoots". It leaves masses of poverty and even unemployment intact; but the building of new offices, factories, and production facilities overshoots the limited market. The capitalists compete wildly, in boom-time, to

expand fastest and grab the biggest share of the expanding profits. The expansion is blind, unplanned, chaotic, and runs out of all proportion to whatever limited increase there is in wages and mass-market demand.

The mid-'80s upturn was pushed along by mushrooming credit, especially international credit.

Vast speculative projects, like London's Docklands, and sleazy financial empires, like Ivan Boesky's, Michael Millken's, Robert Maxwell's, Alan Bond's, the BCCI, or the US Savings and Loans companies, were built on that credit.

The bubble was bound to burst. It was pricked by the US

government's attempts to put right the imbalances created by the upturn - vast trade deficits and budget deficits.

Now, from Canary Wharf to Tokyo, the big capitalist cities are full of excess offices and half-idle factories.

Few capitalists are buying new machinery or buildings: with sales low, they make do with what they have, and maybe even try to sell off some of their assets. Thus the construction and machine-making industries are hit doubly hard.

**Continued on page 4**

# Tube: urgent need for unity

## THE POLITICAL FRONT

By a Central Line guard

During the ongoing tube dispute *Socialist Organiser* has caused to differentiate ourselves clearly from *Socialist Outlook* over several issues. However, we firmly believe that wherever possible the left must unite. Just such an opportunity now faces us.

The Joint Working Parties covering negotiations for different grades of tubeworkers will finish their meetings soon. The negotiations will then pass on to head office level. It is entirely likely that agreement to massive changes in working conditions and practices will be reached and the unions will put their names to the various deals without giving tubeworkers a chance to vote. This shows, yet again, the contempt for the rank and file and union democracy common to RMT, ASLEF and TSSA leaders. For example, Morning Star supporter and RMT tube NEC rep Bob Crow has argued against the tube workers being given a vote! This was because, he said, they would just vote to reject the deals without coming up with a strategy he thought could win!

Socialists, as opposed to Stalinists or bureaucrats, can have no such views. By uniting and campaigning within the unions for the right to a vote, the left could revitalise the fight against the Tube bosses' Company Plan. The second step would then be to campaign for rejection of any deals which represented a worsening in working conditions. This is a strategy which not only shows the left's commitment to democracy and rank and file participation but also offers a real chance to fight against the plan.

August's RMT District Council meeting will give us the chance to back a resolution calling for all grades of workers to have a vote in any deal affecting them. The serious left must ensure this is passed and fight for it to be implemented.

# South Africa

# After the great strike, a Duke of York

From our correspondent in Johannesburg

The South African papers have provided a surprisingly refreshing breath of fresh air in contrast to the general gloom of Britain. Despite the expected conservatism and one-sided reporting, the strength of the South African working class forces its way through.

In many papers the two day stayaway and week of action has been hastily relegated to the inner pages. Not so the weekly *New Nation*, which leads with an alternative account of a "Pretoria siege", where a crowd of more than 100,000 made its peaceful way down the hallowed Church Street route in a march on the Union Building on Wednesday last week.

This was perhaps the most significant of actions which mobilised around 400,000, while the stayaway involved some four million. Absenteeism estimates ranged from 76% in the Western Cape to 95% in the Transvaal.

The actions were supported

in coloured and Indian residential areas, ranging from 80% in the Witwatersrand and 50% in Eastern Cape. (Figures from the *Weekly Mail* 7 August).

Demonstrations, sit-ins, occupations and marches to police stations were reported across the country in Pretoria, Johannesburg, Alexandra, Warmbath, Pietersburg, small northern Transvaal towns, Bloemfontein, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, East London, Port Elizabeth, and Grahamstown.

Some 50,000 demonstrated in Cape Town, calling for no taxation without representation. Among the buildings occupied was the Security Police interrogation centre, and the Department of Home Affairs.

In the Ciskei the military ruler Brigadier Oupa Gqozo failed to carry out his threat to stop the march of 50,000 people.

The South African Clothing and Textile Workers Unions (SACTWU) has won an agreement to a joint

union employer delegation to meet the Bophuthatswana government to lobby for union recognition in the homeland. This formed part of the settlement in the clothing industry which won wage increases of 14-15%. SACTWU organises 94% of the industry, and seeks to extend its control into the homelands.

The success of the action needs to be seen against a background of opposition not

just from the media, the government and employers, but also from the PAC, Azanian Peoples Organisation, NACTU and of course Inkatha.

At the same time it failed to mobilise effectively the mining, agricultural and public sectors which together employ half the country's workforce, and while 4 millions are estimated to have supported the stayaway, the largest (and probably over-

exaggerated) claim for participation in the actions was at the most 1 million, and maybe it was as few as 200,000.

Most papers agree that the government and ANC are now ready to talk again. Mandela will of course follow the Grand Duke of York and essentially march all the troops back down the hill again. The question is, will he be able to at least build on the success of the action?



## Irish students face jail

Maxine Brady, president of the Union of Students in Ireland, and a number of other leading Irish students, face jail for defying Ireland's anti-abortion law.

The students plan to defy a High court injunction which orders them to stop distributing information about abortion.

The High Court order was obtained by the Society for the Protection of the the Unborn Child. The Irish Labour Party described the ruling as "a considerable setback".

Send messages of support to USI, 16 North Great George's Street, Dublin.

## Stock exchange riot in China

One person died last Sunday, 9th, in riots outside

China's second stock exchange, in Shenzhen. Crowds fought police armed with electric cattle prods to get through and buy share application forms.

On Monday 10th, tens of thousands marched in the streets, denouncing corruption in the distribution of the forms.

Big profits are possible for a few - as China moves towards a free market economy.

Already over 50% of industrial production, and almost all agricultural production, is by private enterprise. According to *China Daily*, the Chinese "Communist" Party plans to formally adopt market economics at its forthcoming congress.

# Of verbiages and kings

By Paddy Dollard

Many readers expressed their appreciation of my efforts on your behalf a few months ago when I tracked down the London left's one-time favourite "professional Irishman", Gery Lawless. Lawless, you will recall, is now "Royal Affairs" correspondent for the "Sunday World", an Irish "News of the World" with an additional tackiness. Last week the "Sunday World" continued its Republican campaign to subvert the monarchy with a story from Lawless on an illegitimate son of the former King Edward (the Duke of Windsor), who abdicated



in 1937. Is this the true King of England? asked Citizen L. The Queen is "shocked" etc. The alleged true King of England is now 73...

# Labour rank and file defends union link

By Martin Thomas

Labour's rank and file activists are firmly against breaking the link with the trade unions.

The biggest section in the resolution book for this year's Labour Party conference, to take place in Blackpool between 26 September and 2 October, is on the trade union link.

24 Constituency Labour Parties and two trade unions have put in resolutions defending the link. A number of the CLP resolutions are based on a model text circulated by "Labour Party Socialists".

The TGWU's motion

## Summer SO

The next issue of *Socialist Organiser*, no.532, will be out on Thursday 3 September, after the August bank holiday. Then we will return to our normal weekly schedule.

defending the link is bland and general, while the motion from the Union of Communication Workers (UCW) has more teeth. A lot will depend on how the different motions are put together in a composite for debate on the conference floor.

Proposals to end the trade union vote in selections of Labour parliamentary candidates, and in Labour leadership contests, will not be put to the conference, but have been referred to a "working party".

The left should also be able to make a strong showing in the debate on trade union rights (or, as the resolution-book would have it, "people at work").

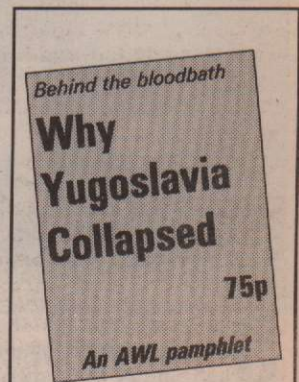
Resolutions demanding a "Workers' Charter" to guarantee the rights to organise, to strike, and to picket, have been submitted by four CLPs.

Every year for a while now, such resolutions have been countered by trade-union resolutions offering a "soft option" of limited restoration of trade union rights. Each year the platform has

backed the trade-union resolution and then ignored it.

The Labour election manifesto this April promised *nothing at all* on trade union rights.

This year, there is no "soft option" in the resolution book.



75p plus 18p p&p from AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

52 years after Trotsky's murder:

# Does Trotskyism have a future?

On the very eve of the Second World War, the German fascist dictator Hitler had a last meeting with the French ambassador Coulondre.

Soon, for the second time in a quarter-century, France and Germany would be tearing each other to pieces in war. Coulondre remonstrated with Hitler about the deal with Stalin under which Germany and the USSR had invaded Poland. It would mean war.

He conjured up for Hitler the memory of what had happened at the end of the last world war. Working-class revolt had swept across Europe. The revolutionary workers took and held power in Russia; they took power and were overthrown in Hungary and in Bavaria.

Europe was swept by strikes, factory seizures, and great mass movements of workers determined not to go on in the old way and desperately looking for a way to win socialism.

That, said Coulondre, is what you risk unleashing once again. To dramatise his point, and to evoke as vividly as he could for Hitler the horrors he was conjuring up, Coulondre pronounced the name under which he, and the European bourgeoisie, thought of the socialist revolution.

"The real victor (in case of war) will be Trotsky. Have you thought this over?"

Trotsky! Together with Lenin, Trotsky had led the Russian workers' revolution in 1917. He had opposed the tyrannical Stalin regime in the USSR. Now a hunted exile, he preached the need for socialist revolution as the only alternative to the barbarism into which capitalism and Stalinism were plunging the world. For the bourgeoisie of the world and for the Stalinists who ruled the USSR he personified the threat of working class revolution. Less than a

year after that conversation, Trotsky was struck down by an assassin sent by Stalin, the gravedigger of the Russian workers' revolution.

On 20 August 1940, in Coyocoan, a suburb of Mexico City, the Spanish Stalinist Ramon Mercader, posing as a co-thinker of Trotsky in order to get close to him, smashed Trotsky's skull with an ice-pick. Trotsky died the following day.

He left behind him a weak and tiny movement. That movement was a small splinter from the gigantic world communist movement, made up of those who had rallied to the Russian Revolution, and stayed with those - like Stalin - who controlled the "Soviet" state because they did not understand that a political and social counter-revolution had taken place within the collectivist property forms that continued to exist in the Soviet Union.

***"If those who call themselves Trotskyists are worthy of the great socialist fighter who died in August 1940, then Trotskyism, far from being a footnote in socialist history and an incidental casualty in the final collapse of bureaucratic Stalinism, will be able to shape the future."***

Trotsky's movement held to the original perspectives and programme of the Communist International, the world-wide party of socialist revolution that Lenin set up in 1919 - to the goal of winning working-class power in the advanced capitalist countries. But that programme could only be fought for effectively by a mass movement; those perspectives depended for their realisation on the living activity of millions of revolutionary workers. And the millions-strong world-wide army of "communism" was in the grip of the delusion that Stalinism was communism; organisationally it was in the grip of the Stalinist bureaucracy, which used lies, corruption, and secret police gangsterism to keep its hold.

When, at the end of World War Two, the great wave of working-class revolt Coulondre had threatened Hitler



Trotsky helped lead the the Russian revolution of 1917 and then fought the Stalinist counter-revolution. This photo was taken in the last week of his life

with did sweep Europe, it was controlled or repressed by the Stalinist apparatus. In Eastern Europe and China systems like that of the USSR were created; in the West the Stalinist movement helped the bourgeoisies, Stalin's then allies, rebuild their states - in France and Italy for example.

Stalinism expanded into new areas, covering one third of the world. Capitalism, which had seemed almost on its last legs in 1940, entered a post-war boom. The mass labour movements of the advanced countries settled in to live with capitalism. Capitalism experienced such lightning-flash revolts as the seizure of the factories in France by nine million workers in May 1968, but easily survived them.

The majority of the forces making up post-Trotsky Trotskyism continued to see the Stalinist states as degenerated or deformed "workers' states", socially in advance of

and superior to capitalism. Russia, Eastern Europe, and China were, they believed, "post-capitalist", in transition between capitalism and socialism.

Trotskyism thus seemed to be the embodiment of an idea whose time had come - and somehow passed it by; a movement whose programme, or the fundamentals of it, had been made reality by its enemies, and grotesquely twisted into horrible shapes in the process.

The majority of the movement adapted itself to Stalinism, especially to the new Stalinist formations like Maoism and Castroism. This was never uncritical adaptation - those who ceased to be critical ceased to be even nominally Trotskyist - never a surrender of the idea that the Stalinist states had to be democratised and transformed. But it was adaptation. It meant adopting the role of ideological satellites of the Stalinist states which embodied, by

their existence in "transition" from capitalism to socialism, an expanding post-capitalist world revolution.

Strictly speaking this was not "Trotskyism". At the time of his death Trotsky laid down different guidelines. At the time of his death he was close to identifying the Stalinist states as a new form of collectivist class society, and said explicitly that if certain things happened - which did in fact happen with the survival and expansion of Stalinism - then there was no alternative but to redefine Stalinism that way (see the articles collected in *In Defence of Marxism*). If Trotsky had lived and stuck to what he was saying in 1940, he would not have done what the mainstream "Trotskyists" did in the late '40s and after.

Trotsky would not have been a post war "Trotskyist". Trotsky's heroic rearguard struggle against

continued on page 4

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

**Karl Marx**  
Socialist Organiser  
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# A model dispute

Sometimes it's a pleasure to be proved wrong. In the previous column I wrote about the Alcan dispute, predicting a "long, bitter road" unless the action was spread to the company's other plants. Within a day of those words appearing in print, the Alcan strikers had won a famous victory.

Clear cut victories like this are few and far between just at the moment, so perhaps it's worth spending some time looking at this one. The first thing that struck everyone who visited the strike was how well organised it was: 24-hour picket rotas, regular mass meetings, a well-produced bulletin, a caravan for the pickets. Small things, perhaps, but vital for morale.

The other obvious factor was the high level of rank and file involvement and the democratic structure of the mass meetings. Every Wednesday, in the function room of a pub near the factory (the bar was closed!) the strikers heard report-backs from the full timers and the senior stewards. Then the meeting was thrown open to the floor for questions, suggestions, whinges and the occasional stream of consciousness. Wives and partners were encouraged to attend and a women's support committee was being talked about by the time the dispute ended.

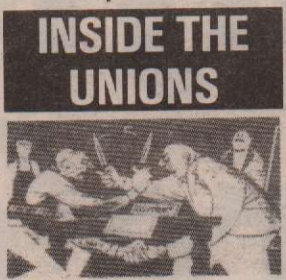
There was none of the usual arrogant "we know best" condescension from either the officials or the senior stewards. All contacts with management were faithfully reported back to the meetings. Even hardened right-wing AEU officials checked their every move with the rank and file every Wednesday.

And the stewards welcomed "outside" help and support (even from the much-reviled "paper sellers"). The convenor and the senior stewards were all fairly new to their positions and had only limited knowledge of the local labour movement. Early on in the dispute they made contact with the Birmingham Trades Council and the local Labour Party. As a result, a dispute which (for all its importance) could have remained an obscure, isolated struggle became a well-known cause celebre in Birmingham and beyond. The Trades Council connection was particularly important, resulting in a regular bulletin, invitations to branches and a healthy income for the strike fund.

Even so, the victory, when it came, took everyone by surprise. One minute management was toughing it out, showing no sign of making the slightest concession, the next, they'd given way on virtually all the unions' demands.

Maybe the Alcan national bosses realised they'd bitten off more than they could chew and started leaning on the local management. Certainly, the strike happened at a good time, when order books were full and business was experiencing a minor "blip" just after the election. But fundamentally, the Alcan workers won because they were solid, well organised and had a plant leadership they could trust.

I hope I'm wrong about a lot more disputes in future.



INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

**RECOGNITION**  
STRIKE BULLETIN OF THE  
ALCAN PLATE  
Shop Stewards

**NATIONAL TOUR STARTS**

**MEETING WITH ACAS**

**SURPRISE VISIT**

Alcan workers: a surprising but clear-cut victory

# The slump and fighting back

continued from front page

The financial empires built on the credit wave of the 1980s are also suffering especially.

All that means more people out of work, more ruined business-people, more pressure to keep wages down - which in turn means lower sales, and a worse slump.

The present downturn started early in Britain, when a big balance of payments deficit forced the Government to block the flow of credit. It started only late last year in Germany and Japan, and is likely to continue world-wide for a long time yet.

It is worse in Britain because of Tory Government policies. The Tories deliberately used the slump of the early '80s to make mass unemployment a bludgeon against the trade unions - at the cost of ruining manufacturing industry.

By contracting-out, privatisation, and cuts, the Tory Government is trying to reduce that core section of the working class who have stable jobs in boom or slump.

Decades of struggle by the labour movement forced the capitalist state to put health care, education, and other services on the basis of provision according to need, not according to what is profitable.

That not only guarantees health care and education

for those who would otherwise be too poor to pay hospital or school bills; it makes jobs in the public services safer.

The public service trade unions have survived the 13 years of Tory rule so far better, on the whole, than those in manufacturing industry. The Tories are determined that they should not survive the next 13 years!

The labour movement should use the base and the strength that it has in the public services to resist contracting-out and privatisation.

The Tories can be and have been pushed back by trade union action. Public service workers on the rail and Underground, in the civil service, and even in local authorities, have tremendous strategic power if only they take united action.

They can force the Tories to retain and even to expand public services.

We should fight for the present miserable cheap-labour Government "training" schemes to be replaced by genuine training and retraining, at trade union rates of pay, with training courses leading to recognised qualifications.

Both in the public and in the private sector, trade unions should also fight for a shorter working week.

This demand can be won. The engineering workers won a cut in their working

week, even under the un-militant leadership of Bill Jordan. Where trade unions are weaker, in the US or Japan, work hours are longer; conversely, strong trade union action can cut hours.

Capitalism is crazy: it throws millions of people into enforced idleness, only to use the threat of the sack to force those who still have jobs to work harder, for longer hours. Instead, the work should be shared out equally among all those who want jobs.

Such a campaign could unite the employed and unemployed. To organise the unemployed and save them from despair must be the labour movement's top priority.

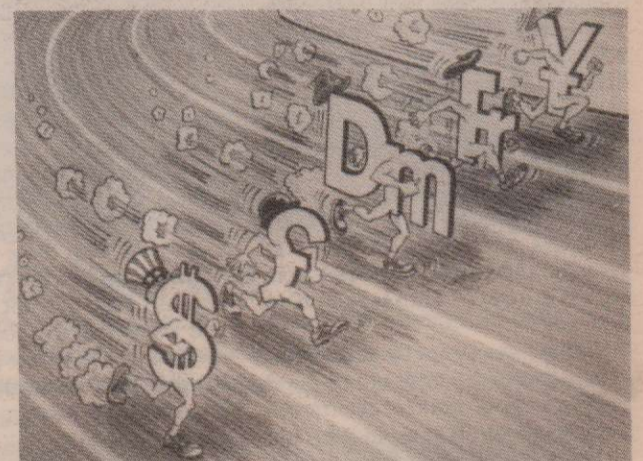
The employers and the Government will say that they can't "afford" jobs, training, and public services. We should reply: open

the books! If individual businesses really are bankrupt, open the books of the big wealth-holders in the banks and the City institutions!

Democratic debate, not a casino of competitive swindling, should decide where major credits and investments go.

"Only the expropriation of the private banks and the concentration of the entire credit system in the hands of the state", as Leon Trotsky wrote, "will provide the state with the necessary real material resources - and not merely paper and bureaucratic resources - for economic planning.

"However, the statisation of the banks will produce these favourable results only if the state power itself passes completely from the hands of the exploiters into the hands of the workers".



The slump is world wide, but worse in Britain

# The future of Trotskyism

continued from page 3

the Stalinist counter-revolution and the corruption of the world communist movement was the historic "Trotskyism". Post-Trotsky Trotskyism is something else again.

But that is now beside the point. For 43 or 44 years, from the late 1940s, the majority of the Trotskyist movement did not follow the course outlined by Trotsky. They identified Stalinism of various sorts with the "world revolution", and redefined the Stalinist states as progressive. Automatically they took sides with the Stalinist bloc in its imperialist competition with capitalist imperialism.

And now, 50 years after Trotsky's death, Stalinism has collapsed in Europe. It is revealed as nearer to being pre-capitalist than post-capitalist. Far from "defending and extending, in its own distorted way, the gains of the Russian Revolution", Stalinism must be judged historically to have had no effect for socialism and working-class emancipation but that of destroying labour movements, enslaving working classes.

For many, including many former Trotskyists, these facts are taken to mean that Trotskyism

is an idea whose time, though it never quite came, is now, nonetheless, irrevocably gone. When the Trotskyist mainstream, in the late 1940s, turned towards a more "positive" account of Stalinism, there was a mass exodus from its ranks. Something similar is likely to happen as the implications of the fall of Stalinism percolate through.

When Trotskyist groups such as *Socialist Outlook* are reduced to arguing for Stalinism in terms of the social welfare it allegedly gave, not only do they abandon the whole Marxist notion of the working class as the self-acting subject of history in favour of seeing the working class as the object of imaginarily benign bureaucratic dictators, they surrender the whole position of revolutionary socialism. If welfare reforms are the measure, then the great success story of "socialism" is not Russia but Sweden!

**S**ocialist Organiser has moved a long way from conventional, contemporary, "official", "majority", "Trotskyism" in the last ten or fifteen years. We are, nevertheless, Trotskyists.

Our movement has been from kitsch Trotskyism towards the ideas of authentic Trotskyism not away from Trotsky. We are

Trotskyists. We believe that the future of working-class politics lies with Trotsky, and with a cleansed and regenerate Trotskyism.

Trotskyism, which took over and fought for the ideas of the early Communist International, was no arbitrary or personal creation. The International itself inherited the progressive work and root ideas of the previously existing socialist movement.

The ideas of Trotskyism are the continuation and summation of the whole history of the socialist working-class movement.

**"Post-Trotsky 'Trotskyism' is dead? Go back to Trotsky!"**

In a post-Stalinist capitalist world wracked by slumps and economic dislocation, by famines and by peripheral wars these Marxist ideas - and new ideas developed out of them - are not only relevant, they are irreplaceable for the working class.

Socialist Organiser exists to practice and develop these ideas. We fight to rearm the

labour movement politically, so that it can finally settle accounts with capitalism and begin to build a socialist world.

We appeal to those Trotskyists who believe that the now collapsed or collapsing Stalinist states betrayed the hope of socialist progress to stop identifying Trotskyism with the patently false ideas grafted on to it after Trotsky's death. Post-Trotsky "Trotskyism" is dead? Go back to Trotsky!

We appeal to all those who call themselves Trotskyists to unite with us in common class struggle action and to join with us in an honest and open discussion about the way forward for Trotskyism.

The collapse of Stalinism and the present dislocations of capitalism offer Trotskyism the chance of a new beginning.

If those who call themselves Trotskyists are worthy of the great socialist fighter who died in August 1940, then Trotskyism, far from being a footnote in socialist history and an incidental casualty in the final collapse of bureaucratic Stalinism, will be able to shape the future.

Right now we need unity in action and honest dialogue - free from false pride and from charlatan pretensions - about our differences.

Trotskyism did not die on August 21 1940!



The human cost of this recession is very high: the priority of the government is to continue membership of the ERM

# The Tories, the ERM and the recession

**In the first of two articles, Peter Kenway looks at the government's economic policy and at the alternative which is enjoying increasing popular support.**

As far as economic policy is concerned, John Major's government is one which keeps its word. In spite of the fact that the often promised green shoots of recovery remain nowhere to be found, the government remains faithful to the economic policy with which it fought the election and which it had followed unwaveringly for the previous eighteen months. This policy is pursued in the face of formidable critics, notable not only for their political range (stretching from Baroness Thatcher, through the CBI to the *Guardian*, *Observer* and *New Statesman*) but also for the unanimity with which these critics espouse an alternative: if Britain is to escape from recession, they tell us, interest rates must be lowered and the Pound must be devalued. Between this alternative and the government, the government is more correct!

The human cost of this recession, which is now the longest, and which will be the deepest experienced since the Second World War, is very high. From its low point in April 1990, unemployment in the UK has risen from 1.6 million to 2.7 million this June. By the end of next winter the number unemployed will have passed three million (the previous post World War Two record set in 1986) and there is no reason to suppose that it will do anything except carry on rising.

To deal with the recession is not, however, an objective of this govern-

ment's policy. Instead, it has as its priority the continuation of Britain's membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) of the European Monetary System. More specifically, it is determined to maintain the position of the Pound within the ERM.

How does the ERM work? At its heart lies an agreement between European governments to maintain the parities, or rates, at which the different European currencies exchange for one another. Some fluctuation in the rates of exchange is allowed and since the announcement of the general election in March, the Pound has fluctuated quite widely, initially falling to close to the bottom of its range (worries that Labour might win), then rising sharply (euphoria over the Tory victory), and then recently falling back again (the prospects are still dreadful). Although the ERM allows for some joint action by European central banks to 'defend' weak currencies by buying them in the market, the point comes when that is no longer judged to be feasible and the country with the weak currency is obliged to defend its value by raising interest rates.

Not only is this government committed to membership of the ERM, it is also committed to maintaining the rate at which the Pound exchanges for other currencies. If that means raising interest rates then this government gives the firm impression that it would not flinch from doing so. The government, no less than its critics, understands what this would mean: further falls in investment; further increases in debt and therefore bankruptcy; reduced demand and therefore production; yet more job losses; rising homelessness.

There should be no surprise at the singular resolution with which Major's government is pursuing this policy. Officially, the policy is pursued in the interests of defeating inflation; this, we are told, is the key

to sound economic recovery. It is not so much that this argument is nonsense (which it is) but rather that it is not the real reason why the government sticks doggedly to the ERM. Major represents the interests of the institutions of finance capital: the banks, the insurance companies and pension funds, stockbrokers, securities houses etc. This group — the 'city' — is engaged in a fierce struggle to secure as large a slice as possible of the European business in financial services. In order to achieve this, a stable rate of exchange between the Pound and the other European currencies is essential with the ideal being a single European currency. The stability which the ERM affords is essential, if the institutions of British finance capital are to achieve their aim of securing a predominant position within Europe. It is the job of Major, the banker, to deliver this stability.

It goes without saying that these policies are vastly detrimental to the interests of the many millions who depend for their livelihood on their own labour. It must be understood, however, that the principal alternative which has been put forward is liable to be worse. This alternative is the complete opposite of the government's policy: instead of using high interest rates to maintain the value of the Pound, the government, we are told, should lower interest rates and devalue the Pound.

If these actions are to be anything more than merely cosmetic, they are likely to destroy the ERM or, at the very least, force Britain to leave it. Tory nationalists such as Thatcher would rejoice at this. For them, of course, a political blow struck against Europe and against the pro-Europeans who ousted Thatcher from office is the real objective.

What of those, however, who put this policy forward sincerely as being an essential part of the strategy for recovery? There are two objections. Firstly, the alternative policy could

not actually be realised. Undoubtedly, the government could determine that it was no longer going to defend the Pound's present exchange rates against other currencies. To announce this — even merely to hint at the possibility — would be sufficient for the financial markets immediately to mark the Pound down. Devaluation is therefore certainly possible. But would this allow lower interest rates? Historically, the evidence is consistent with the view that the UK is unable for any significant length of time to lower its rates below that of its main trading partner. These days, the single most important partner is Germany (accounting for some 16% of UK imports); the EC as a whole accounts for a little over half the UK's total trade. Inside or outside the ERM, the UK is obliged to follow Germany's lead, whether it wishes to or not.

Secondly, even if it were possible to achieve and sustain rates of interest lower than those in Germany, the UK is still in no position to recover from recession on its own. The reason for this is the deficit which the UK runs in its international trade, importing in 1991 some 8% more than it exports. Any sign of economic recovery in the UK would immediately worsen this position and any such worsening, particularly outside the ERM, is unlikely to be sustainable. Indeed, one of the remarkable aspects of the current recession is not its severity but rather how mild it has been in view of this continuing trade deficit. That the UK has been able to continue to finance this deficit (by attracting foreign capital) is unprecedented and that it has been able to do so is intimately connected with the ERM. Far from making the recession worse than if 'Britain had gone it alone' the ERM has, I think, ensured a less severe recession than would otherwise be the case. To leave it therefore could lead to quite the

opposite results from those intended, making things worse and not better.

I must say that it is becoming increasingly likely that this alternative policy will eventually be forced upon the government, with perhaps massive political consequences. If it should happen, however, do not be misled by those who would herald it as the first step on the road to recovery.

The basic flaw in the critique of this government's policy is the belief that the UK is in reality in any position to take sustained action to ease and to end the recession on its own. Countries such as Germany, the USA, Japan and perhaps even Korea do enjoy a certain autonomy of action; countries such as the UK or France whose political economy is based upon levels of private consumption sustained by productive activity elsewhere do not. The only thing at the moment which can lead to a sustained increase in economic activity in this country and a fall in unemployment is a renewal of a vigorous growth in world trade.

All talk to the effect that the government has 'surrendered' control over this or that aspect of economic policy whether to the German Bundesbank or the Brussels bureaucrats is to miss the point: the efforts to construct supra-national institutions and to devise rules of conduct to restrain national governments are efforts born of this economic interdependence. In that sense, Major's government is far more realistic and sober in its appraisal of what is possible than most of the critics to its right and its left. For, so long as we continue to view matters in terms of the interests of nation-states, then we will be obliged if we are serious to conclude that there is nothing that the individual nation-state alone can do. If there is to be progress, we must look elsewhere, both at more than Britain and less than Britain too.

# The Olympics: gone for gold

## GRAFFITI

**W**ell it's over. Two and a bit weeks of swimming, running, cycling, jumping, rowing, shooting and smiling stupidly in a synchronised manner has finally come to an end. And how was it for you?

Did you forget your long-held opposition to watching young men beating each other up? And did you start shouting at the telly "how can he possibly have won after 3 standing counts"? Did the tactics of the weightlifting take your breath away? Or were you one of those people who just wanted to watch the rippling muscles on the track and field, to idly speculate on the level of s.a.p. (steroid assisted performance)?

What's the Olympics all about anyway? Supposedly it's about the triumph of the human spirit over seemingly insurmountable obstacles. It's about internationalism. It's about "taking part".

One of the best images of this Olympics was seeing Hasiba Boulmerka of Algeria win the women's 1500 metres. She had been bitterly criticised by fundamentalists in Algeria for running at all. They had declared her competitive, assertive person, dressed in little shorts, "indecent". Boulmerka replied "I cannot wear the hijab on the track. It is a practical problem... I think leggings and a headscarf might spoil my running style". Well, indeed. For a moment you thought that maybe the thousands of women who fought against French colonial rule in Algeria did not do so in vain.

Unfortunately it will take more than Boulmerka - who after all made it clear she was running for Allah - to bring women in Algeria their liberation.

In reality, the Olympic games, is all about the triumph of - sometimes very petty - national political concerns, using sports people as pawns. And it is about money, big bucks sponsorship and raking the profits in from this huge public event.

**W**atching the women's gymnastics is at once exciting and grotesque. The sight of a young woman of 13 or 14 years with the body of a 7 year-old wiggling her hips to tacky flamenco is bad enough. Worse still is the realisation that - if she is from one of former Soviet-bloc countries especially - she has had her body systematically sat upon for years to bend it into shape. She will have been pushed to the limits of her coach's perception of her endurance, risking serious injury, not only because of her own ambition but also in the name of national pride. This systematic, hot-house cultivation of gymnasts has only abated slightly with de-Stalinisation.

The Chinese, of course, have no inhibitions. Behind their unprecedented success at these games in many events is their policy of taking 7 and 8 years-

olds with good bone-structure away from their homes (in very often the poorest regions of China) and stuffing them into special schools. Families faced with desperate poverty are, of course, inclined to agree to this happening. And what choice does a 7 year-old have?

Bigger, regional and global politics have often entered the Olympic arena. Or rather boycotted it. In 1984 the USA boycotted the Moscow games. In 1988 the then USSR boycotted the Los Angeles games.

The International Olympics Committee is an unelected body of businessmen and second-rate politicians. Its President is former Francoite, Juan Antonio Samaranch who personally lobbied for the readmission of South Africa to the games. For the IOC members this is all big business. Between 1989 and 1992 \$1.9 billion was grossed through selling television coverage alone.

**T**his was the first Olympics at which "professional" sportspeople were allowed to compete fully. The USA sent a full-strength professional basketball team. Nothing wrong with professionalism and being paid for competitive sport. It is good that the myth of amateurism, *Chariots of Fire*, and everything that went with it (snobbishness, lack of respect for the competitors etc.) is gone. With the exception of possibly the Gentlemen and Generals of the modern pentathlon team, everyone is a dirty "professional" these days. When Linford ran, it was literally for gold. But who's earning the really big bucks? It isn't the athletes - it's the fat cats and their associates on the IOC who are creaming off the profits.

All this professionalism, though, can go too far: when basketball whizz Michael Jordan (richest sportsperson in the world, I think) draped a Stars-and-Stripes around his body it wasn't out of love for his country - it was to cover up his Nike tracksuit for the benefit of his sponsors Reebok!

The Olympic Games is great: it is genuinely a good thing that people of 174 nations come together to participate in sport. But there is, as with everything, a nasty underbelly to the Games. The people who run the Games don't care about freedom and internationalism at all. All they want to do is make money on the backs of outstanding talent.



Politics in sport: Black Power, Olympics, 1968

# Not so tiny influence

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**T**he youthful features of Captain Valentine Strasser, Sierra Leone's head of state, adorn the cover of this Sunday's *Observer* magazine. Inside, one Anne Busby writes what is little short of an eulogy to the young military dictator and his National Provisional Ruling Council.

"He is an impressive figure - 6 ft 2 ins tall, handsome and intelligent", gushes Ms Busby. He is also, apparently, very popular. "He may not encourage the cult of personality but he cannot avoid it. He has already been branded *The Redeemer*". Ms Busby makes it clear that she believes Captain Valentine fully deserves such a title.

This is not the first time that this sort of stuff has appeared in the *Observer*: Southern African heads of state and regimes of varying degrees of nastiness regularly receive glowing write-ups in Britain's leading "liberal" Sunday newspaper.

*Observer* journalists, notably the excellent Julie Flint, who have occasionally drawn attention to the less than exemplary human

rights record of some of these regimes have had their stories disowned and denounced by the paper's proprietor, Mr Tiny Rowland.

The reason for this fawning is not hard to fathom: Mr Rowland is chief executive of Lonrho, the international trading group with extensive and substantial business interests throughout Southern Africa. His relationship with the African heads of state is not unlike Robert Maxwell's with the old dictators of Eastern Europe - though, of course, Mr Rowland's business activities are entirely proper and legitimate (lawyers please note).

By a remarkable coincidence, this week's Sunday Times reveals that Lonrho has established a secretive joint venture company with the Libyan government, combining the two sides' African interests, including the Ashanti goldmine in Ghana.

Omar Muntasser, the Libyan minister of finance, told the *ST*: "Lonrho has extensive holdings in Africa and we have a lot of activities in Africa. We said if we put our forces together - his (Rowland's) relationships in Africa and our financial resources - we can have a winning venture".

In a front page article, the *ST* quotes Colonel Gaddafi describing Rowland as his "good friend" and "business partner". Gaddafi was particularly impressed by Rowland's use of the *Observer* to help Libya improve its image in the



"Tall, handsome" man to do business with?

West.

Rowland personally penned two articles - one entitled "Why I'm doing business with Gaddafi" and the other backing Libya's stance over the Lockerbie bomb suspects - that appeared in the *Observer* on 3 May and 28 June this year.

Of course, the *ST*'s gloatingly detailed coverage is part of the long-running and increasingly bitter feud between the two papers and their respective editors. But, for once, the *ST* is on firm ground with its attack: whatever his other faults, Rupert Murdoch does not interfere directly into the editorial policies of his newspapers.

**T**he *Sunday Times* and Andrew Neil are on much weaker ground when it comes to their attitude to the British government and the economy.

On 9 August, the *ST* announced a five-month moratorium on criticism of

Chancellor Lamont and the Government's economic policies. It soon became apparent that this self-denying ordinance was the result of a personal appeal to editor Andrew Neil from John Major.

The *ST* has not been convinced by the Government's economic policies (or, rather, lack of them). Andrew Neil still believes that Mr Lamont is leading the country to disaster. It's just that the *ST* has decided to give the Government a break and to be nice to Messrs Major and Lamont for a few months.

As Ian Aitken commented in the *Guardian*: "This looks dangerously like a swizz on the paper's paying customers, not all of whom buy it solely to read about Princess Di and Dr Goebbels. Some of them, bless their cotton socks, must pay their 80p to learn what Mr Neil thinks about the economy".

# Women's wage war

## WOMEN'S EYE

By Fiona Monkman

**T**he popular perception of a typical local government worker is of a middle aged man in a suit earning upwards of £16k.

Results of a low pay survey recently carried out by my employer, Barnsley Council, amongst its white collar sections tell a different story.

Sixty five percent of the workforce are women and out of them seventy seven percent are on low or poverty pay. Part-time staff who form an entire quarter of the workforce are virtually all women suffering poverty wages.

The problem of low pay amongst local government women workers is endemic and looks set to continue as our union, NALGO, "reluctantly" accepted a pathetic 4.1% offer, even rejecting a proposal to let all the members have a say in the ballot for industrial action.

The claim for a flat rate of £1000 won at last year's

annual conference was intended to begin to address the problem of low pay. Last week's acceptance of the 4.1% offer amounted to a measly sum of £222 for the poorest section of our membership.

My boss advised me to accept the offer. But then he would - he's just made £1500 out of it.

**"My boss advised me to accept the offer - but then he would - he's just made £1500 out of it."**

People speaking in favour of acceptance explained how, although our members wouldn't go for industrial action this year, next year we must really fight for the objectives within our low pay strategy.

What they appear to forget

was that the leadership were mandated to do that *this* year. Instead what we got was a bundle of stickers, a few posters and an attempt to minimise a lobby of the negotiations meeting to the point of non-existence. Not exactly the sort of fighting talk likely to grip the members and openly expose the scandal of low pay affecting nearly 40% of them.

At a recent union meeting for women members in my department a number of issues were discussed, from childcare to time off to care for sick dependents. The level and types of training available to women in the lowest paid, dead end jobs created the most dissatisfaction. All the points raised contribute towards the trap of low pay and the union must be serious about fighting all of them. But to fight them they must involve the low paid workers themselves. This means:

- Recruiting them, at first, if necessary. Women working part-time to fit in with domestic commitments are often less likely to join a union let alone get involved

in it.

- Making sure union meetings are organised in work time or, when this is not possible due to the nature of the work, proper childcare provision should be arranged.

- Separate, extra, women's meetings could be arranged along with active campaigning women's groups at branch level, organising around local issues.

- Encouraging women from sections of low paid workers to become involved in the union at an activist level. As these women are often in junior positions and are likely to be more closely supervised, ensure the branch doesn't inadvertently discriminate against them by failing to adequately negotiate proper time off for trade union duties.

Low pay is a crime our bosses continue to get away with and it is the women who suffer from low pay that we must organise to fight it.

**Rebecca Van Homan is on holiday and will write again in the next issue.**

# The hawk in the dovecote

**The Labour Party victory in Israel's General Election in June, has shifted political prospects in the Middle East. The new government has already frozen new building projects for Jewish settlements in the West Bank, and promises to end the ban on Israeli citizens talking to the PLO. George Bush's officials hope for an Israeli-Arab peace treaty in time for the US presidential elections in November.**

**How much of a shift in Israeli opinion do the elections show? Adam Keller reports.**

At an early morning hour on June 23, all crossing points between Israel and the Occupied Territories were sealed off, and the passage of Palestinians into Israel forbidden for the coming twenty-four hours: Israel was preparing for general elections. While the future of the Occupied Territories was a central issue in these elections, the Palestinian population had no part in this democratic process. Tight security measures were employed to prevent Israel's disenfranchised subjects from using knives or bombs to express their point of view.

Already the previous elections - those of 1988 - were held under the influence of the intifada, then one year old. And already at that time, it was becoming increasingly clear to the Israelis that military

means would not eliminate the intifada; that negotiations of some kind would have to begin sooner or later. In effect, the leaders of Israel's two big parties - Labour and Likud - were competing for the position of chief Israeli negotiator.

The 1988 elections gave a small - but decisive - margin to Likud leader Yitzchak Shamir. For many of his voters Shamir was the tough negotiator, who would drive a hard bargain with the Arabs and obtain the best possible deal. And indeed, Shamir is a past master in the art of holding his ground. But unlike the pragmatists who voted for him, Shamir was a dedicated man, totally committed to preserving Israeli rule in the whole of "Greater Israel", and keeping each and every inch of territory captured by Israel in 1967.

Since any conceivable agreement with the Arabs would entail considerable territorial concessions Shamir intended to either avoid entering negotiations altogether, or prevent such negotiations from reaching any conclusion. Thus, in early 1990, Prime Minister Shamir wrecked James Baker's plan to start Israeli-Palestinian negotiations at Cairo.

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait gave Shamir an unexpected respite, as the world's attention shifted to the Gulf; but as soon as the war ended, Baker came back, with new plans for negotiations. Shamir made every effort to stall - but after six months of constant American pressure, he had no choice but to go to the Madrid Peace Conference. Thus, it was Shamir out of whom a historical concession was wrung - to start negotiations with a Palestinian delegation, unofficially representing the PLO. By doing so, he gave such talks legitimacy among the Israeli public.

Having started negotiations, Shamir's policy was clear: to wage prolonged battles over every procedural detail, to obstruct wherever possible, while at the same time continuing with an increased pace the construction of new settlements. Indeed, after his elections defeat Shamir openly admitted this, in a statement which got worldwide headlines: "I would have let autonomy negotiations drag on for another ten years, and in the meantime half a million Jews would have settled in Judea, Samaria and Gaza."

In the months after Madrid, Shamir's policy got entangled in growing contradictions. Trying to please both the Americans and the settlers, he ended up losing both: because Shamir continued with settlement activities in the Occupied Territories, President Bush denied Israel the Housing Loan Guarantees; and because Shamir agreed in principle to negotiate on Palestinian autonomy, his extreme-right coalition partners broke away, forcing him to call new elections.

At the same time, discontent was growing among the Likud voters. Most of them had never really been staunch believers in the "Greater Israel" ideology. They started to feel more and more insecure in daily life - with any Israeli, at any time, being a potential target for a knife-wielding Palestinian. If anything, they wanted to get rid of the Gaza Strip, the poor and overcrowded part of the Occupied Territories from which most Palestinian assailants come. They did not regard settlements and settlers as a particularly worthy cause - certainly not one worth the sacrifice of ten billion dollars in loans. In short, Shamir was striving with all his might to perpetuate a status-quo which his voters found increasingly intolerable.

Hard-hit by the deteriorating economy, Likud supporters in the slum neighbourhoods felt bitter at the Likud functionaries who, since the Likud came to power, succeeded only in improving their own living conditions. This phenomenon was dramatically underlined by the publication of the State Comptroller's report, detailing instances of widespread corruption among Likud officials.

A further factor undermining the Likud's electoral position was the deep dissatisfaction among the immigrants from the Soviet Union - the very same people whom Shamir had hoped to make use of in the fortification of Greater Israel. The immigrants failed to be impressed by the Likud's Russian-language propaganda, in which the Labour Party was called red, leftist, Bolshevik, and Leninist.

Even more than native Israelis, the immigrants suffer from the deteriorating economy, with 40% of them unemployed - and they



Palestinian resistance continues. The new Israeli government will not immediately meet their demands

blamed the party in power. As many pointed out when asked by media reporters: we know what it means to have a Likud government, we don't yet know about Labour. When elections came, Labour gathered four seats from the immigrants' votes; Likud - only one.

In its downfall the Likud dragged with it other groupings proclaiming the "Greater Israel" ideology. Like the Likud, the extreme right contested the elections in an extremely divided and fragmented condition, with numerous fiercely competing parties and splinter groups. Most of them failed to get any parliamentary representation.

The only right wing party to do well was Tzomet, headed by former army chief-of-staff Rafael Eytan. Like the others, Eytan advocates Greater Israel and an Iron Fist policy against the Palestinians. But unlike the Techiya, which made these issues the sole theme of its election campaign, Eytan downplayed them. He concentrated on such issues as electoral reform, a "clean" government and opposition to the stranglehold of the Orthodox parties upon Israeli politics - issues on which his programme was virtually indistinguishable from that of the left-wing Meretz alliance.

Eytan's Tzomet Party registered a dramatic success, raising its representation from two to eight seats. Many of Eytan's new voters were, apparently, disaffected Likud voters who did not go as far as voting Labour.

Once the results were announced, Eytan lost no time in joining the winning side. Already on elections night he opened negotiations with the undoubted

victor, Labour leader Yitzchak Rabin and declared his willingness to serve as a minister in Rabin's government.

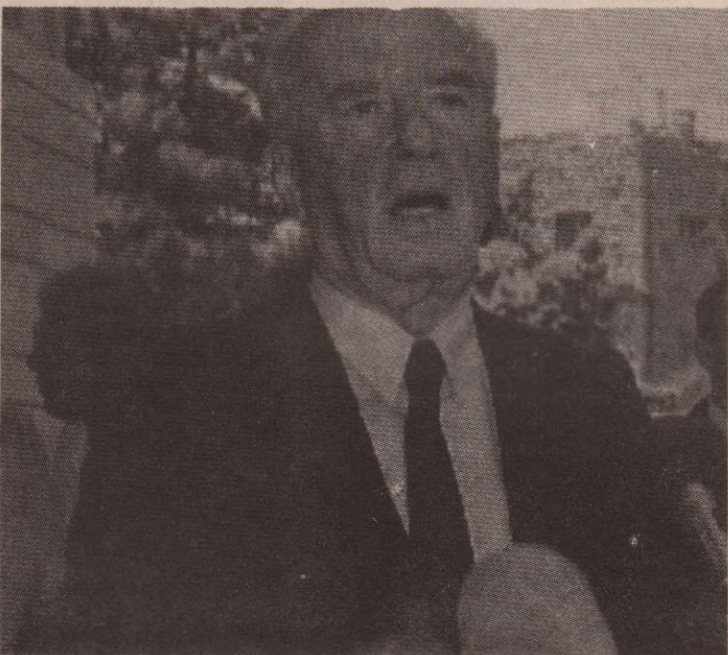
In the 1977 general elections, the then-ruling Israeli Labour Party was defeated and went into opposition. During the following decade, party leader Shimon Peres made enormous efforts to lead his party back to power, but repeatedly failed: the closest he got was a Labour partnership with the Likud in two consecutive governments. In the process, former hawk Peres started hatching complicated peace plans none of which came to anything, due to the Likud veto in the "National Unity" governments.

Inside the Labour Party, Peres' leadership was challenged by the more hawkish Yitzchak Rabin. Rabin's tough image in the Israeli public was considerably enhanced since the outbreak of the intifada, when Rabin - acting as Defence Minister in Shamir's government - gave the infamous order to "break the bones of Palestinian rioters."

In early 1992, Labour's 160,000 strong membership participated in primary elections to select a new party leader and the party's parliamentary candidates. The results were rather puzzling: Rabin was elected party leader, beating Peres by a considerable margin; but most of the top slots on the Labour slate went to prominent doves, whose views were far different from those of Rabin.

The answer to this seeming paradox soon became evident: many of the doves themselves supported Rabin, having become convinced that he was indeed the only one who could lead the party to victory.

Continued on page 14



Rabin may represent a shift in opinion but he was also the one to give the order "break the bones of the Palestinians"

# How women invented solidarity

## The human revolution

**Marxist anthropologist Chris Knight outlines the themes of his controversial new book, which argues that a women's "sex strike" was central in the transition from ape to human being.**

Most anthropologists have tacitly assumed that human culture was established by men. The "Man the Hunter" myth has dominated palaeoanthropology, now, almost since the inception of the discipline. Through the 1960s and 1970s, it was taken as self-evident that the sexual division of labour, with males hunting and provisioning females, emerged at least three million years ago, in a process linked with the emergence of bipedalism, tool-making and the evolving brain.

In the past decade, there's been a revolution in archaeology and palaeontology, leading to the view that all this is nonsense, that the early hominids were ape-like creatures leading ape-like lives, and that it was only in an extremely recent "human revolution" that culture as we know it emerged. Leading archaeologists Lewis Binford and Olga Soffer are now showing that in Europe, at least, there is no evidence that males were hunting meat for females until at most 50,000 years ago. It seems that Neanderthal males did a bit of hunting, but tended to eat most of the meat themselves!

Leading palaeontologist Chris Stringer of the Natural History Museum and most up-to-date archaeologists are now agreed that the Neanderthals were not our

ancestors and were not culturally "modern". The dominant view today is (a) that the human species emerged in a "revolutionary" way, (b) that this revolution began in Africa about 100,000 years and was consummated on a global level some 60,000-40,000 years ago, and (c) that only during this revolution did symbolic language and culture emerge. Those primatologists, sociobiologists and others attempting to work out the internal dynamics of this revolution, moreover, stress that *women's* interests and initiatives must have been paramount. This has little to do with feminist political thinking. The scientists' confidence on this score is rooted partly in standard sociobiological theory: among *all* primates, it's female reproductive strategies which tend to "drive" social-evolutionary change.

**"Women's power was based on their solidarity, and on the fact that they had the right to rupture their sexual relations with men at any time."**

The human revolution happened. The details of precisely how it happened have not yet been agreed. My work as a Marxist is essentially about the details — about the social and political dynamic of that revo-

lution. When Chris Stringer and others talk about a "Human Revolution" it's little more than a formal term, which anyone can interpret pretty much as they like. Stringer himself relies mainly on bones and genes, and it's less easy to see the politics in those. Lots of people can talk about "the Human Revolution" without thinking things through as Marxists would do. They don't mind the concept because they don't see what it's got to do with politics.

But the moment *Marxists* start trying to think about a "revolution" in the Ice Age — they are bound to start wondering about the social dynamics, the conflicts, the struggles of conflicting forces. And for some Marxists, this is a problem. For it can't possibly be "class" that was at issue at this early stage. So what can it have been?

Well, the only *theoretically possible* answer is that of Engels' in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. The dynamic can only have been sexual. There must have been a sexual revolution which led to what Engels termed the "primacy" of women in the "communistic household". And that's breathtaking in its implications. It means that if you accept the idea of a "Human Revolution" and then think it through, it has a logic of its own. You are taken straight to Engels' whole theory. Engels was right after all. This is how (quoting Arthur Wright), Engels described how communistically organised Iroquois women wielded their power:

"Usually, the female portion ruled the house... The stores were held in common: but woe to the luckless husband or lover who was too shiftless to do his share of the providing. No matter how many children, or whatever goods he might have in the house, he might at any time be ordered to pick up his blanket and budge; and after such orders it would not be healthful for him to attempt to disobey. The house would be too hot for him and... he must retreat to his own clan..." (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*)

Women's power, in this account, was based on their *solidarity*, and on the fact that they had the right to rupture their sexual relations with men at any time. None of this is new at all. It is just that the new palaeoanthropology converges with sociobiological theory to suggest that Engels was *more* resoundingly and irrefutably right than he himself could possibly have known.

My book starts from the idea that to be fully-human is to be conscious, and *that consciousness in*



"Females" became "women" when they established their own pride, dignity and solidarity. Women of the Automobile Workers Union in South Africa get on

any meaningful sense has something to do with the class struggle. What has that got to do with the Ice Age? The answer is that the class struggle as a determinant of "consciousness" didn't begin yesterday, or even a few hundred years ago. As both Marx and Engels fully realised, if our struggle is traced back far enough into the past, it will be found to take other forms, sexual contradictions being among the most central.

The contradictions which led to revolutionary transformation can be traced ultimately to the fact that complex learning depends on large brains. These need time to develop. Besides involving an unusual degree of infant helplessness following birth, such brains also need a prolonged childhood in which sufficient learning can take place. The evolution of large-brained *Homo sapiens* therefore brought with it dramatically intensified *childcare* burdens. If these were not to defeat the mothers who were primarily responsible, it was vital for evolving females to ensure that the opposite sex contributed more support than had ever been contributed by male primates, including hominids, before.

To understand this, you have to realise that male primates — for example gorillas and chimpanzees — don't provide food for their offspring. They leave that entirely to mothers. If we suppose that, initially, evolving human males were equally reluctant provisioners, and that human evolution involved contradictions and struggles around

such issues, then in my view the mysteries of human cultural origins begin to dissolve.

If females needed to get males to hunt for them, they would have had to link sex with success in the chase. To grasp the main logical possibilities, let's begin by reviewing the situation among chimpanzees.

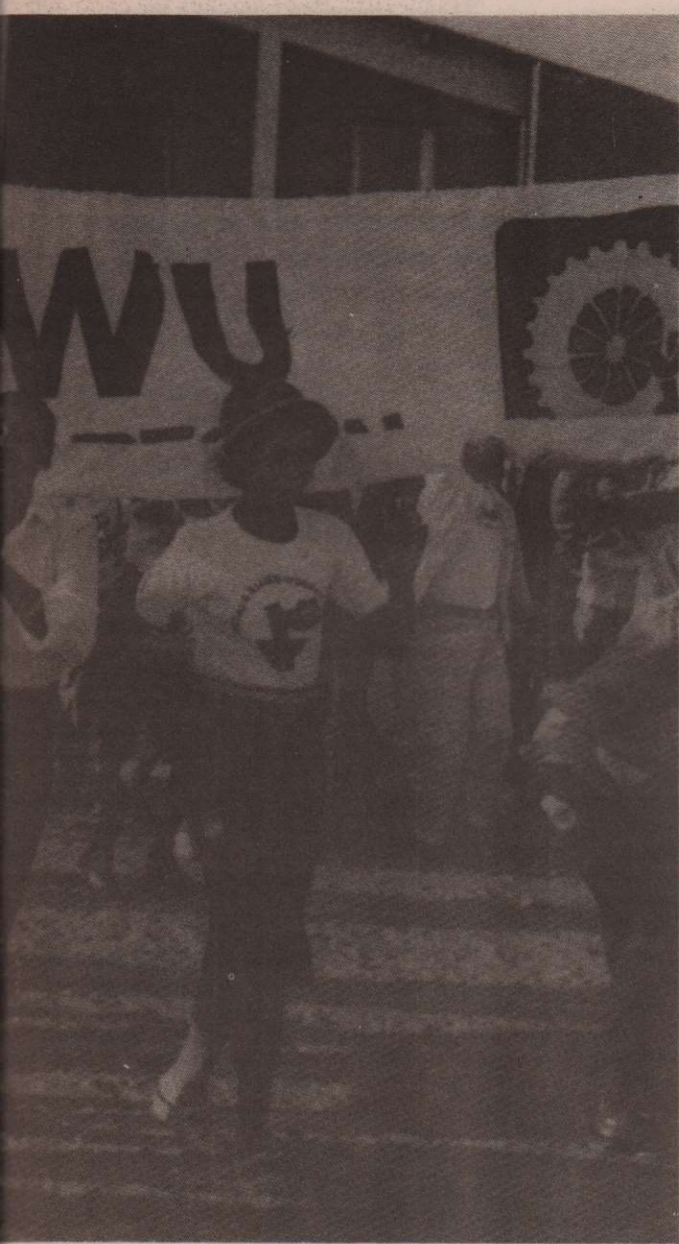
**"Solidarity enhanced women's consciousness, as if making them more intelligent. The solidarity stemming from strike action enhanced women's menstrual synchrony, enabling them to experience their body-clocks as a source of collective strength."**

When a male chimp has caught a small antelope, monkey or other animal, a female will sometimes rush up to him and sexually present her hindquarters. If the male is



"Women's work" has not always been defined by a rigid sexual division of labour





power'. Women continue to find power today through organised

rested, the female may obtain a piece of his meat, which she will be eating on the spot, perhaps the copulation is still proceeding. Usually, if a second female arrives at the kill-site, she will be in competition with the first for the male's morsel. This strategy generates little if any interfemale solidarity; it prompts males to compete with one another using meat to attract females for sex.

Human females, I am arguing, did the exact opposite. Following the retreat of the last Ice Age some 10,000 years ago, they did not chase meat-possessing males. Instead, they stood firm with their territory and declined to move. We tell this from the archaeological evidence of their home-bases, fires and tools. Unlike Neanderthal females, members of our species at this point stopped moving endlessly from camp to camp. For much of the time, they doubtless relied partly on their own gathered food. But as when they needed meat — as emphatically did each winter — they adopted a totally new strate-

Instead of endlessly travelling and hunting, they made their menfolk do much of the necessary travelling for them. Instead of running to the kill, they made the meat come to them. The trick was in essence simple. They signalled "No!" to any male who approached with meat. This resistance met with a wall of collective hostility, generated by the logic of the situation. There would have been no point

in signalling "No!" to a lazy or meatless male if the female concerned knew that her sister or female neighbour was going to signal "Yes!" at the same time. The male would just cheat and go to her rival. In other words, the strategy of signalling "No!" would have meant choosing the right moment, making sure that all females in the vicinity were in this together. The women's "No!", then, within this strategy, must have been a *collective* signal in order to be effective.

Women, as they became conscious and cultural, had a ready-made biological heritage for exactly such a strategy. The human female conceals her ovulation, so that no male can tell precisely when she's fertile. She loses more menstrual blood than any other primate, so that her main biological signal occurs at the point of non-fertility; she can have sex at any time in her cycle, or refuse sex at any time; and she tends to synchronise her cycle with all other females who are in close proximity.

Furthermore, the average length of the female menstrual cycle indicates an ancient tradition of synchronising using the moon as a clock: unlike a chimp cycle, which is on average 36 days in length, the human cycle averages 29.5 days — precisely the time it takes for the moon to pass through its phases as seen from the earth.

Solidarity enhanced women's consciousness, as if making them more intelligent. Biologically, the solidarity stemming from strike action would have enhanced

women's menstrual synchrony, enabling them to experience their body-clocks as a source of collective strength. "Females" in fact became "women" when they established their own pride, their own dignity, their own power. Empowered by finding themselves in solidarity with one another, women collectively drew on their own biological resources to give their menstrual blood a wholly new, collectively constructed meaning as a symbol of *absolute inviolability*. Women would undoubtedly have chosen each period of synchronised menstruation as the best moment to go collectively "on strike". Such a "sex-strike", timed according to the menstrual and lunar cycle, would have signalled the beginning of each month's preparation for collective big-game hunting.

Under such circumstances the flowing of the blood, far from symbolising weakness or disability, would have been felt as the symbolic expression of women's power and solidarity (including solidarity with men as sons and brothers) within each clan. And I should add that if such *blood-solidarity* or *clan-solidarity* in some ways felt like modern class solidarity — as Engels certainly thought — then the blood of sisterhood may have prefigured the red banner of socialism today. Blood-redness in all cultures tends to symbolise defiance and power. The colour of our own flag — red with our own class blood — is no coincidence.

In the course of cultural origins, the rule against rape was to revolutionary womanhood what the inviolability of the picket-line is to revolutionary communism. It was the first cultural rule, the one to be established at all costs, and the foundation on which all other rules were to be built.

I make no apology for drawing on the findings of "right-wing sociobiology" in order to arrive at such conclusions. Marx did the same thing in his own time: he took classical political economic theory — which was clearly being used to justify the existing system of class oppression — and instead of ignoring it, looked into its *internal* contradictions. He was able to make revolutionary use of it. Sociobiology looks at human sociality in the pre-cultural period and sees parallel everywhere with bourgeois economics. It is powerful precisely because of this — because it claims to show that the predatory and competitive realities of contemporary society have parallel in "nature".

My view is that behaviour motivated by the requirements of "selfish" genes really is what drives Darwinian natural evolution. There's no point in denying that. The important thing is that humans became human by *overthrowing* that logic of nature. We got into culture, which is different. Culture, based on solidarity, reconstructed our "nature" completely. That's what the human revolution was all about, and why it's so important to claim it as the beginning of our revolutionary heritage. We won the revolution once. We can do it again.

**"Blood Relations" by Chris Knight is published by the Yale University Press, price £40.**

## Percy Bysshe Shelley

The great ideas of the French Revolution, which opened in 1789, exploded across the world — the cry for liberty, equality, fraternity rang out everywhere. Irish Catholic peasants, Black Haitian slaves and British industrial workers alike responded to those ideas and took up arms to win them.

The workers developed their own version of these ideas using them against the new bourgeois ruling classes as well as against kings and landlords. The independent working class outlook on the world — Marxism — would eventually emerge from within this current of ideas.

In Britain, the ruling class responded to the Revolution with a savage repression against the people. It lasted more than 30 years. These, roughly, were the 30 years during which Percy Bysshe Shelley lived (1792-1822).

Shelley believed in a pure, radical, levelling application of the French Revolution's ideas. With his friend Byron and others, he defended the workers and agitated against the Establishment. In the House of Lords, Lord Byron defended the primitive working class machine-breaking — "Luddite" — revolt, and wrote a Luddite anthem: "And down with all kings save King Ludd!" Shelley wrote the "Masque of Anarchy" in response to a massacre of peaceful demonstrators in Manchester in 1819 ("Peterloo"). In short, Shelley was a radical incipient socialist before socialism had come into existence, and before the working class movement had emerged from its earliest primitive forms of organisation and methods of action.

He was accidentally drowned in 1822, not quite 30. His friend Byron died fighting for Greek independence from Turkey two years later. Karl Marx's daughter, Eleanor, reported this as her father's opinion of Shelley:

*"The real difference between Shelley and Byron lies in the following: Those who understand and cherish them, consider it fortunate that Byron died in his thirty-sixth year; since if he had lived longer he would have become a reactionary bourgeois. On the other hand, they regret that Shelley died at twenty-nine, since he was a thoroughgoing revolutionary and would always have belonged to the Socialist vanguard."*

Sean Matgamna

### Freedom

Men of England, heirs of Glory,  
Heroes of unwritten story,  
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,  
Hopes of her, and one another;  
Rise like Lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number,  
Shake your chains to earth like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you  
— Ye are many — they are few.

What is Freedom? — ye can tell  
That which slavery is, too well —  
For its very name has grown  
To an echo of your own.

'Tis to work and have such pay  
As just keeps life from day to day  
In your limbs, as in a cell  
For the tyrant's use to dwell,

'Tis to see your children weak  
With their mothers pine and peak,  
When the winter winds are bleak,  
They are dying whilst I speak.

'Tis to hunger for such diet  
As the rich man in his riot  
Casts to the fat dogs that lie  
Surfeiting beneath his eye;

'Tis to let the Ghost of Gold  
Take from Toil a thousandfold  
More than e'er its substance could  
In the tyrannies of old.

'Tis to be a slave in soul  
And to hold no strong control  
Over your own wills, but be  
All that others make of ye.

And at length when ye complain  
With a murmur weak and vain  
'Tis to see the Tyrant's crew  
Ride over your wives and you —  
Blood is on the grass like dew.

Then it is to feel revenge  
Fiercely thirsting to exchange  
Blood for blood — and wrong for  
wrong  
Do not thus when ye are strong.

What art thou, Freedom? O! could  
slaves  
Answer from their living graves  
This demand — tyrants would flee  
Like a dream's dim imagery:

Thou art not, as imposters say,  
A shadow soon to pass away,  
A superstition, and a name  
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

For the labourer thou art bread,  
And a comely table spread,  
From his daily labour come  
To a neat and happy home.

Thou art clothes, and fire, and food  
For the trampled multitude —  
No — in countries that are free  
Such starvation cannot be  
As in England now we see.

Thou art Justice — ne'er for gold  
May thy righteous laws be sold  
As laws in England — thou  
Shield'st alike the high and low.

Thou art Wisdom — Freemen never  
Dream that God will damn for ever  
All who think those things untrue  
Of which Priests make such ado.

Thou art Peace — never by thee  
Would blood and treasure wasted be  
As tyrants wasted them, when all  
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

Science, Poetry, and Thought  
Are thy lamps; they make the lot  
Of the dwellers in a cot  
So serene, they curse it not.

(Excerpts from "The Masque of Anarchy", 1819)

### Song to the Men of England

Men of England, wherefore plough  
For the lords who lay ye low?  
Wherefore weave with toil and care  
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed and clothe and save,  
From the cradle to the grave,  
Those ungrateful drones who would  
Drain your sweat — nay, drink your  
blood?

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge  
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,  
That these stingless drones may spoil  
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,  
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?  
Or what it is ye buy so dear  
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow another reaps;  
The wealth ye find another keeps;  
The robes ye weave another wears;  
The arms ye forge another bears.

Sow seed, — but let no tyrant reap;  
Find wealth, — let no imposter heap;  
Weave robes, — let not the idle wear;  
Forge arms, — in your defence to bear.

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;  
In halls ye deck another dwells.  
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye  
see

The steel ye tempered glance on ye.  
With plough and spade, and hoe and  
loom,  
Trace your grave, and build your  
tomb,  
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair  
England be your sepulchre.

### On Robert Emmet's Grave

No trump tells thy virtues — the grave  
where they rest  
With thy dust shall remain unpolluted  
by fame,  
Till thy foes, by the world and by  
fortune caressed,  
Shall pass like a mist from the light of  
thy name.

When the storm-cloud that lowers o'er  
the day-beam is gone,  
Unchanged, unextinguished its life-  
spring will shine;  
When Erin has ceased with their  
memory to groan,  
She will smile through the tears of  
revival on thine.

(22 year-old Robert Emmet organised an Irish uprising against British rule in 1803. It went wrong and, captured, he was publicly hanged, cut down alive, disembowelled and then chopped into pieces. Shelley wrote this in 1812.)

***"Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it"***



"Ethnic cleansing", the vile term used for what the Serbs are doing in Bosnia, is new. What it describes is not new. The biggest "ethnic cleansing" in modern European history was perpetrated fewer than 50 years ago – with the consent and agreement of the British, American and Russian governments. The victims of that "ethnic cleansing" were Germans: 13 million Germans were driven out of their homeland – where their ancestors had lived for 700 or a thousand years – at the end of the Second World War.

Three million Sudetenland Germans were driven out of the Czech state and up to ten million out of East Prussia. Large areas of what is today Poland were cleared of their German inhabitants: large parts of pre-War Germany became, and still are, Polish territory, newly colonised by Poles.

The crimes of the Nazis were avenged on entire German populations, including the smallest children. Mass racism in Europe did not die with Hitler.

# The Balkan question and Social Democracy

Mass murder, the driving out of whole populations and all the other horrors that now in Bosnia go by the name of "ethnic cleansing" have a long history in the Balkans. There, many peoples and fragments of peoples have been thrown together and mixed by centuries of conflict, conquest and counter-conquest.

For more than a century socialists – in the first place the socialists of the Balkans – have discussed what to do, how best to resolve these conflicts. The Russian socialists, who faced similar problems of ethnic and national conflicts in parts of the Tsar's empire took part in that discussion. The following article by Leon Trotsky appeared in the paper Trotsky published in Vienna in August 1910.

At the end of June [1910] there was held in Bulgaria's capital, Sofia, the second "All-Slav" congress. The significance of this event may be summarised as follows: Political bankrupts from various Slavonic countries gathered together in order to proclaim their bankruptcy to the world at large.

In meetings held in St. Petersburg and then at the Prague congress of 1908 the new "Pan-Slavist" movement took the stage to the sound of drums and trumpets: it undertook to reconcile Poles and Russians, Ruthenians and Poles, Serbs and Bulgars, to put an end to friction and enmity between the bourgeois classes of all the Slavonic nations and to set the edifice of the new Slavdom upon a foundation of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Since

then two years have gone by, and very poor results had to be reported to the congress held in Sofia. During this period all the contradictions within Slavdom succeeded in attaining unprecedented acuteness. In "Slavonic" Russia the counter-revolution put persecution of Poles and Ukrainians on the order of the day: the new western zemstvo and the scheme to cut off the district of Chelm are the final word of the Polish policy of constitutional tsarism. In Galicia the oppression of the Ruthenian nationality by the Polish gentry and bourgeoisie led, almost on the very eve of the Sofia congress, to a bloody battle inside the walls of Lvov University. If relations between Bulgaria and Serbia have not worsened in this period, they have certainly not improved.

In view of these facts, the speeches delivered in Sofia about the solidarity of all Slavs did not even sound hypocritical, so openly was mutual hostility and barefaced insolence expressed in them. The Cadets, who until recently were leading the All-Slav choir, drew back in dismay and bewilderment, making room for more direct and immediate servants of tsarism. Miliukov and Maklakov stayed at home. Guchkov, Count Bobrinsky, and Cherep-Spiridovich attended as Russia's representatives. Kramar, the leader of the Young Czechs, bustled about trying to improve outlets in the Balkans for the products of Czech industry. All touchy questions – concerning Poland, the Ukraine, the South Slavs, the Balkans – were hushed up by mutual agreement: this was more convenient for all participants in the All-Slav comedy.

Outside the congress, however, in the streets and squares of Sofia, all the questions of international politics, and first and foremost the Balkan Question, were presented clearly, openly, and honestly. This was done by the Bulgarian Social Democrats.

At a mass meeting conducted by Blagoev and Kirkov a resolution was adopted on June 20, before the Slavonic congress met, which tore

the mask from the speculators in Pan-Slavism. Not content with this, the Bulgarian Social Democrats invited to their annual congress at the beginning of July representatives of the Slavonic Social Democratic parties, so as to show the Balkan masses in a striking way that there are two Bulgarias, two Serbias, two Russias – in each case a reactionary-dynastic one and a revolutionary-proletarian one.

In this way the regular congress of the Bulgarian Workers' Party was this time transformed into a splendid demonstration of international solidarity of the proletariat, which found expression not only in fervent ovations and reciprocal greetings, but above all in the fact that the delegates of all the parties represented in Sofia – Bulgarian, Serbian, Russian, Czech, and Ruthenian – proceeded from the same premises and arrived at the same conclusions in deciding how to settle the Balkan (Eastern) Question.

Two aspects need to be distinguished in what is known as the Eastern Question: first, it is a question of the relations between the nations and states of the Balkan Peninsula; second, it is a question of the conflicting interests and intrigues of the European capitalist powers in the Balkans. These two

questions are not at all identical. On the contrary: the real solution of the purely Balkan Question runs entirely counter to the interests of the European dynasties and stock exchanges.

The Balkan Peninsula, which is approximately as big as Germany but has only about one-third as many inhabitants (22 million), is divided between six independent states: Greece, Turkey, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro, together with the Austro-Hungarian provinces of Dalmatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina. In the six independent states, each of which has its own dynasty, army, currency, and customs system, there live many nations and races, divided into separate fragments: Greeks, Turks, Romanians, Bulgars, Serbs, Albanians, Jews, Armenians, Gypsies... The frontiers between the dwarf states of the Balkan Peninsula were drawn not in accordance with national conditions or national demands, but as a result of wars, diplomatic intrigues, and dynastic interests.

The Great Powers – in the first place, Russia and Austria – have always had a direct interest in setting the Balkan peoples and states against each other and then, when they have weakened one another, subjecting them to their economic

## IN DEPTH

and political influence. The petty dynasties ruling in these "broken pieces" of the Balkan Peninsula have served and continue to serve as levers for European diplomatic intrigues. And this entire mechanism, founded on violence and perfidy, constitutes a huge burden weighing upon the Balkan peoples, holding back their economic and cultural development.

Thus, the Serbs are forcibly partitioned between five states: they form one small "kingdom" and one tiny "principality," namely, Serbia and Montenegro, separated from each other by the sanjak of Novibazar, which, though inhabited by Serbs, belongs to Turkey; many Serbs live in the Macedonian districts subject to Turkey; finally, a large proportion of the Serbs are included within the frontiers of Austria-Hungary. A similar picture is offered by all the other Balkan nationalities.

This peninsula, richly endowed by nature, is senselessly split up into little bits; people and goods moving about in it constantly come up against the prickly hedges of state frontiers, and this cutting of nations and states into many strips renders impossible the formation of a single Balkan market, which could provide the basis for a great development of Balkan industry and culture.

On top of all this is the exhausting militarism that has come into being in order to keep the Balkans divided, and which has given rise to the danger of wars fatal to the peninsula's economic progress — wars between Greece and Turkey, Turkey and Bulgaria, Romania and Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia...

The only way out of the national and state chaos and the bloody confusion of Balkan life is a union of all the peoples of the peninsula in a single economic and political entity, on the basis of national autonomy of the constituent parts. Only within the framework of a single Balkan state can the Serbs of Macedonia, the sanjak, Serbia, and Montenegro be united in a single national-cultural community, enjoying at the same time the advantages of a Balkan common market. Only the united Balkan peoples can give a real rebuff to the shameless pretensions of tsarism and European imperialism.

State unity of the Balkan Peninsula can be achieved in two ways: either from above, by expanding one Balkan state, whichever proves strongest, at the expense of the weaker ones — this is the road of wars of extermination and oppression of weak nations, a road that consolidates monarchism and militarism; or from below, through the peoples themselves coming together — this is the road of revolution, the road that means overthrowing the Balkan dynasties and unfurling the banner of a Balkan federal republic.

The policy followed by each of these pint-sized Balkan monarchs, with their ministers and ruling parties, has as its ostensible aim the unification of the greater part of the Balkan Peninsula under one king. "Greater Bulgaria," "Greater Serbia," "Greater Greece," are the slogans of this policy.

Actually, though, nobody takes such slogans seriously. They are semiofficial lies put out to win popularity among the people. The Balkan dynasties, artificially installed by European diplomacy and lacking any sorts of roots in history, are too insignificant and too insecure on their thrones to venture upon a "broad" policy such as Bismarck's when he united Germany by blood and iron. The first serious shock could sweep away for good the Karageorgeviches, Coburgs, and other crowned Lilliputians of the Balkans.

The Balkan bourgeoisie, as in all countries that have come late to the road of capitalist development, is politically sterile, cowardly, talentless, and rotten through and through with chauvinism. It is utterly beyond its power to take on the unification of the Balkans. The peasant masses are too scattered, ignorant, and indifferent to politics for any political initiative to be looked for from them. Accordingly, the task of creating normal conditions of national and state existence

**"The Balkan bourgeoisie, as in all countries that have come late to the road of capitalist development, is politically sterile, cowardly, talentless, and rotten through and through with chauvinism."**

in the Balkans falls with all its historical weight upon the shoulders of the Balkan proletariat.

This class is as yet small in numbers for Balkan capitalism is everywhere still hardly out of swaddling clothes. But every step forward along the road of economic development, every additional mile of railway line, every new factory chimney that arises in the Balkans, increases and rallies the ranks of the revolutionary class. Alien to every kind of ecclesiastical and monarchical superstition and to all bourgeois-democratic and nationalistic prejudices, the young Balkan proletariat, filled with vigor and enthusiasm, is utilising, in the first steps that it takes on its historic road, the rich experience of its elder brothers in Europe.

The Social Democratic parties of Bulgaria and Serbia, the most mature representatives of the labor movement in the Balkans, are fighting tirelessly on two fronts: against their own dynastic-chauvinist cliques and against the imperialist plans of tsarism and the Europe of the stock exchanges.

A federal republic in the Balkans, as the positive program of this struggle, has become the banner of the entire conscious proletariat of the Balkans without distinction of race nationality, or state frontiers.

The Balkan conference held last winter in Belgrade, which was attended by representatives of the Serbian, Bulgarian, and Romanian Social Democratic parties, of the Social Democratic groups in Macedonia, Turkey, and Montenegro, and also of the Serbian Social Democratic proletar-

ians of the southern provinces of Austria-Hungary, worked out the general principles of the Balkan policy of the proletariat, directed towards the abolition of Balkan particularism and militarism, national conflict, and foreign oppression.

The second Balkan conference, which is to be held this winter, will have the task of forming close organizational links and indicating the forms to be taken by joint political actions on the part of all the Social Democratic parties in the Balkans.

In this way there is arising before our eyes, out of the chaos and darkness of the Balkans, a united section of the Socialist International.

This fact is extremely important for the workers of Russia. From now on not a single attempt by tsarism to interfere in the fate of the long-suffering peninsula will take place without a firm rebuff from Balkan Social Democracy. To the lies of the bourgeois parties about Slav brotherhood, accusing us of betraying the interests of the Balkan Slavs, we can now counterpose an incontrovertible fact: the proletariat of the Balkans is not with them but with us. Along with us it is fighting against tsarism, which has now, through the Russo-Japanese agreement, freed its thieving hands for brigandage in Persia and intrigue in the Balkans. Along with us it has declared ruthless war upon Pan-Slavism, both the crudely Asiatic variety and the liberal Cadet one.

The historical guarantee of the independence of the Balkans and of the freedom of Russia lies in revolutionary collaboration between the workers of Petersburg and Warsaw and the workers of Belgrade and Sofia.

*Pravda*, [Vienna], No. 15, August 1 (14), 1910

## Notes:

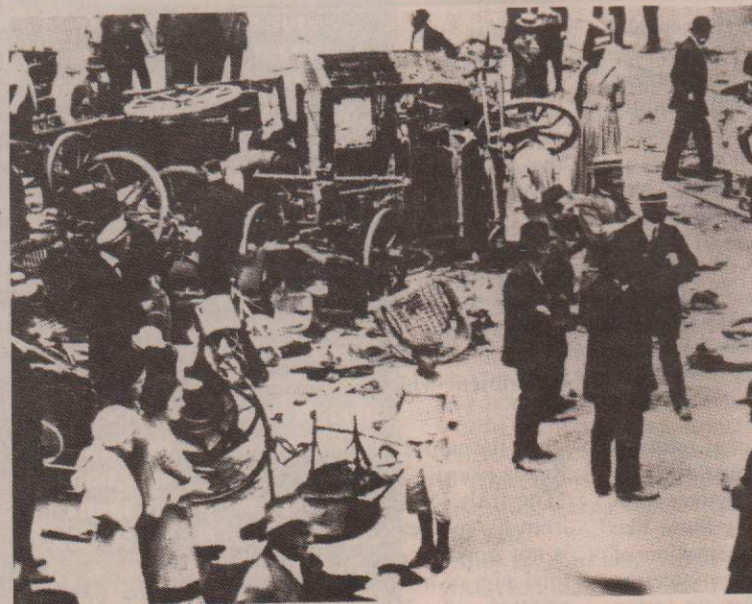
**Pan-Slavist:** in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the idea of unity of all Slav peoples (Russians, Serbs, Poles etc.) was a tool of Russian imperialism in its efforts to win domination in Eastern Europe and to do down its rivals in that area — the decaying Turkish empire and the Austro-Hungarian empire.

**Cadets:** the bourgeois liberal party in Russia.

**Tsarism:** Russia was then ruled by a Tsar, or emperor.

**Dalmatia:** the coastal part of Croatia.

**Bismarck:** as Chief Minister after 1866 of Prussia, the biggest of the then-divided German states, he led Prussia into two wars culminating in the unification of Germany in 1871.



Reprisals against Serbs in Sarajevo after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austro-Hungary

# Genetics and racism

## SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

(Continuing an occasional series on genetics inspired by the 1991 Reith Lectures of Professor Steve Jones)

In his fifth lecture, Steve Jones directed his gaze to the past of genetics, a rather disreputable past in which people's prejudices were cloaked in "scientific" justifications.

A common misunderstanding of evolution was that there was a "great chain of being" or a ladder of ascent. Living things started off simple and got more complex and therefore better. It was perhaps an answer to those who objected to being descended from apes — yes, we were descended from apes but we were more evolved than them.

Unfortunately (but inevitably, since racism seizes on anything available to justify itself) this idea intruded into the study of humans and of human "races". Humans themselves were in groups at different stages of evolution, with the Africans at the bottom of the ladder and the (north!) Europeans at the top.

This reasoning is behind the naming of the condition now known as Down's syndrome as "Mongolism". Children with this condition were thought to have slipped back down the ladder of human evolution to the "level" of the mongoloid people (ie the east Asiatic people). The fact that all human groups can have children with Down's syndrome did not interfere with this belief (in Japan, Jones tells us, Down's syndrome is referred to as "englishism").

In the pre-Darwinian world, the races were thought to be distinct because they were descended from different ancestors — according to the Bible, for instance, the sons of Noah. The theory of evolution was seized on to argue that the "races" were biologically distinct human groups that had perhaps evolved to fit best in their specific environments. Anthropologists sought to identify physical traits that were associated with particular races, such as skull shape. They tried to identify the homelands and trace the routes of migration of the hypothetical "pure" races that had mixed to produce the modern groups of people.

As Jones points out, it is a small step from classifying people to judging them. The early anthropologists predictably found that people like themselves were at the top of the evolutionary tree. This is not because they were particularly bad people: primitive peoples have often called themselves "the men", "the only men", "the best men", or "us". Other peoples were therefore "them" or "not men" etc. It is an interesting example of this that the Welsh word for Wales, *Cymru*, means "us" or "ourselves", while the English word ("Wales") means "foreigners".

Undoubtedly, the views of some biologists provided ammunition for racists. Imprisoned after the "beerhall putsch", Hitler read the

standard German textbook of genetics which contained the phrase "The question of the quality of our hereditary endowment is a hundred times more important than the dispute over capitalism or socialism". Hitler took this to its logical conclusion by sterilising or killing those considered unfit to breed, though of the "Aryan race", and exterminating tens of millions of Jews, Romanies and Slavs.

Genetic arguments were also to the fore in the free, democratic and egalitarian lands of the USA. Advice from biologists led President Coolidge to say "Biological laws tell us that certain divergent people will not mix or blend. The Nordics propagate themselves successfully. With other races, the outcome shows deterioration on both sides".

The first Immigration Act passed in 1923 was designed to keep the racial composition of the USA the same as it had been in the late 19th century, when most immigrants were from the British Isles, Germany and Scandinavia. It was particularly used to keep East European immigrants out, leaving them in the hands of the Nazis. The Act was not repealed until 1966.

The science of genetics has however provided no support for and much evidence against racial prejudice. If true races existed, matching perhaps differences in skin colour, then a genetic atlas of the world should show a pattern in the distribution not only of the ten or so skin colour genes but also of at least some of the other 50,000 genes operation in a human being.

Now, patterns in the distribution of skin colour genes are clearly linked to the intensity of sunlight, the major factor in the evolution of paler skins being the need of the body to make its own Vitamin D. This requires ultra-violet light which is less available in the colder north.

A theory of human races could just as easily be based on, say, blood group. But what are we to make of the fact that less than 10% of the English are group B while up to a third of central Russians and West Africans have the B gene?

Another gene with a global pattern is that for alcohol tolerance. There is a trend in its frequency from east to west, with many Japanese people unable to tolerate alcohol.

The evidence from the study of human gene distribution gives no biological justification for the concept of race. The overall genetic difference between "races", say, Africans and Europeans, is no greater than that between different countries in Europe or Africa. Africans as a whole are more genetically diverse than are the rest of the people of the world, but that reflects the greater time that they have been in their continent. The rest of the world's people are descended from a small group of emigrants who left Africa fairly late on in the history of humankind.

Despite long-seated prejudices, we are more closely related to each other than most other populations of animals.

# Russia: threat from the "anti-capitalist" Right

## Stan Crooke surveys the growth of extreme nationalism in Russia

According to Sterligov, one of the leaders of the growing "national-patriot" movement in Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev betrayed Russia, and the entire USSR, at the behest of the American government: "The CIA said: 'It must be so'; the Soviet Union (under Gorbachev) replied: 'It will be so'".

Sterligov's allegations are supported by *Pravda*, which recently claimed that resolutions adopted by the 28th congress of the Soviet Communist Party were based upon recommendations from American politicians.

The Organisation of Communists of the Republic of Tatarstan — one of the many local Stalinist parties still in existence after the official banning of the Soviet Communist Party — has likewise blamed the collapse of Russia on "reactionary forces in the West, and their agents Gorbachev and Yeltsin".

In the national-patriotic paper, *Dyen*, Shurygin lists some of the betrayals of Shaposhnikov, head of the Russian armed forces and a hate-figure for the national-patriots. In the aftermath of last year's attempted putsch, he sacked dozens of officers who "unlike himself, honourably carried out their orders during the days of the Committee of the State of Emergency"; and he has "surrendered without a fight millions of people and tens of thousands of kilometres of land".

The Russian minority populations in the ex-USSR republics have been left "one after another to face animal-like nationalists of all varieties. Our people are abandoned as hostages, they are surrendered to occupying forces".

The national-patriots try to build on resentment against Boris Yeltsin and his government — otherwise known as "the provisional government of occupation", the "Yeltsin band" or "the ruling Moscow mafia".

According to Vlasov, a regular contributor to *Pravda*, the Yeltsin government has "subordinated the country to the interests of the Western 'market', it has destroyed the state, it has criminally weakened the army, and delivered a cruel blow to national culture, which forms the essence of the Russians as a nation".

And, as a result of "the unconditional subordination of the partyocrat-democrats to instructions from Washington", Yeltsin supports UN sanctions against Serbia — "an act of betrayal of a people which historical fate has linked with Russia and the Orthodox Church".

The pan-Slavism of the most extreme wing of the national-patriots knows no limits. According to Vasilyev, apparently working on the principle that any people presumed hostile to Jews merits membership of the Slav nation, even Palestinians have Slav blood in their veins.

Yeltsin's policies, claim the national-patriots, also allow national minorities within the country's borders greater influence on Russian affairs. According to Sterligov, 90% of Germans and 76% of Jews in Russia support the privatisation of land as against only 21% of Russians.

"It is understandable that Germans and Jews above all are interested in the purchase of Russian soil. But Russians should not forget certain historical facts," comments Sterligov, referring to Jewish land-ownership and control of commerce — in pre-war Galicia.

Growing Western influences are also held responsible for the degeneration of Russian



Demonstration of anti-Yeltsin "anti-capitalist" reaction in Moscow, February 1992

cultural standards. The Russian sculptor Klykov applauded a national-patriot picket of a TV station on the grounds that it showed that the Russian people had "found within itself the strength to challenge the truly satanic dogmatism which floods out from television screens".

According to the national-patriot Zyuganov: "Out of 150 cinemas in Moscow, only three were showing Russian films this week. I call this an 'intellectual and cultural concentration camp' for the Russian people".

Russians, complains Vlasov, are also turning their backs on their own literature: "No-one reads Tolstoy, Gogol or Chekhov any more. The classics of our native literature have not been re-published for between five and seven years. There is no demand for them".

"The attacks on the Russian Orthodox Church, the faith of our fathers, are increasing," writes Klykov. "Just look at how our towns are full of foreign and other missionaries. The prophetic words of Jesus Christ, 'They will come in my name and deceive the people', have come true. They have arrived — these fake prophets".

The national-patriots oppose the capitalist market from the standpoint of Russian nationalism. Echoing the Russian populists, and anarchists of the nineteenth-century, they reject the "free market" as something alien to Russian national traditions.

"The (Russian) people and society could not accept the market as other peoples have accepted it... For the majority of the indigenous population of Russia, the market appears as something alien... The country has ended up under the economic power of non-national forces, alien to and, if not hostile, then at least indifferent to the idea of Russia", writes Vlasov.

As Volodin puts it in *Dyen*:

"In this (i.e. introducing market reforms) the liberals have adopted a revolutionary and extremely rapid pace, just as their communist predecessors, especially those like Trotsky, did so in the implementation of their programmes. The national-patriots have always warned that Russia today requires not revolution but gradual reforms".

The national-patriots advocate a "Third Way" — a rejection of "naked capitalism" and "utopian socialism", whilst at the same time "going beyond the limits of these two discredited models, taking from each of them only their positive aspects".

The national-patriots reject bourgeois democracy, too, as non-Russian. To quote Vlasov again:

"Democratic government, by virtue of its ideology, is non-national in its entirety and, consequently, amoral. It is outside of Russian history... The democrats cannot achieve a consciousness of national pride. The path followed by the democrats will destroy Russia".

**"Imperial thinking is apparent in the national-patriots' slogan of 'Moscow — the Third Rome'."**

Against "this background of disintegration, collapse and treachery", however, the "national forces which promise a resurrection of the mother-country" are gaining in strength. Their starting point is the belief that Russia, and even the Soviet Union, can never be truly destroyed.

According to Gusov, for example, "the geopolitical space which was Russia and the Soviet Union" continues to exist as an "inner form". That "geopolitical space" existed not for 75 years but for "several centuries in the field of activity of a cosmic experiment which we are unable to perceive".

For the writer Rasputin, the concept of Russia likewise possesses a cosmic quality: "The truly Russian person is inseparable from his mother country. For him, Russia is not simply a place of residence, it is the total sum of his essence — physical, moral, spiritual and psychic, it is the total cosmic fullness of his existence. If we mean anything in this world, then it is only through

fulfilling and giving expression to Russia".

The paper *Russkoye Voskryeseniye* expresses the issue even more crudely:

"Russians must rule Russians! I can assure you that this is not fascism or racism but common sense. You can establish whatever system you want... and call it whatever you want — Leninism, Stalinism, socialism, communism or KGBism. Provided that it is free of Yids".

The new national Russian state will be a unitary one — according to Sterligov, the idea of republican autonomy was invented by Trotsky in 1912 as a way to attack the Russian nation — but where its borders will lie is open to debate.

As far as General Makashov is concerned, for example: "For me, Russia is the successor of the USSR from the Baltic to the Kurile Islands, where all peoples live in friendship and respect for one another. If this is an empire — then I'm for such an empire!".

Such imperial thinking is also apparent in the national-patriots' slogan of "Moscow — the Third Rome": after the Rome of the Roman Empire, and then Constantinople of the Byzantine Empire (the second "Rome"), the "Third Rome" will be Moscow, capital of a "Euro-Asian" Empire lasting for all eternity — "The Third Rome exists, there will not be a fourth".

The national-patriots are becoming an increasingly well-organised and increasingly violent force in Russian society.

Sterligov has appealed for "all patriots to form cells in their enterprises and in the areas where they live... all officers of the army to remember the traditions and honour of Russian officers".

The officially-banned "Plenum of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party" has appealed for "communists to work together with healthy social and patriotic forces to oppose any further collapse of the economy and worsening of people's lives". The Ostankino TV station picket was one result of such joint work by Stalinists and national-patriots.

The national-patriot organisations have also begun to establish squads of stormtroopers. The National Republican Army has its "Volunteer" brigades, the Russian Communist Workers' Party has its "workers' militias", and the Russian People's Assembly has its "Cossack" squads.

Whilst *Dyen* carries appeals from Russian politicians advocating a struggle for power through extra-parliamentary and illegal means, including the use of violence, *Pravda* carries articles declaring that "the battle for power is inevitable, its hour is close... We will not spare our enemies. And the Russian-Orthodox saints will not condemn us for this".

The national-patriots' ideas are a continuation of a well-established tradition — Russian-nationalist opposition to Western capitalism dates back to the nineteenth century, the idea of a "Third Rome" dates back to the sixteenth.

Their anti-capitalist rhetoric and calls for a strong state provide a basis for joint work with Stalinist forces, foreshadowing their role as the footsoldiers of an attempted coup by sections of the armed forces and the ex-KGB in Russia at some point in the future.

The forces of socialism in Russia remain weak and disorganised. But either they rally substantial sections of the working class behind the banner of socialist class struggle, or Russia will continue to march towards a dictatorship of the military and the national-patriots.



Tom Cruise as Joseph Donnelly

# The death of a dream

## Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews *Far and Away*

**"F**ar and Away" is not exactly what you'd expect. It sounds like one of those American Dream, Irish-immigrant-making-good sagas, but it's darker

and bleaker than that. Even the triumphal ending feels ambivalent.

Set in the 1870s, it's the story of Joseph, an Irish peasant, who flees to America with Shannon, the daughter of the landlord who has bled his family white. Joseph is slow and uneducated, and unwilling at first to leave his homeland. It's Shannon who has the spark and the fire.

But disappointment awaits.

America is not the Promised Land; it's hell, a place where immigrants are first fleeced, then exploited, and, finally, left to starve.

**"Disappointment awaits. America is not the Promised Land; it's hell, a place where immigrants are first fleeced, then exploited, and, finally, left to starve."**

Fresh off the boat, Joseph and Shannon fall into the hands of a crafty Boston-Irish ward boss, who houses them in a brothel, gets them work plucking chickens, then prods Joseph into bare-knuckle fighting. While he's winning, life is good; when he loses, out they go, on to the streets, destitute.

Shannon's dream is to grab some land in the Oklahoma land race, and she infects Joseph, the landless peasant, with the same wish. Quite why a wealthy landlord's daughter would want to swap luxury in Ireland for a life of sweat and toil in America is never explained. Shannon wants to be modern, that's all.

They get their land, but at what a price! The trials they have suffered hardly make it worth it. Of course, we've seen Joseph go all misty-eyed about the wonders of land, the way Scarlett's Irish father did in

"Gone with the Wind", but that was a huge plantation with slaves, to boot, not some puny small-holding. It doesn't add up.

Tom Cruise isn't bad as Joseph. He shows us the ferocious urge to rise from his class that is at the heart of all these mythmaking American sagas. Shannon is less clear. She's feisty, but we can't see into her, the way we can see into Joseph.

The movie wobbles a bit from farce to tragedy, from realism to romance, with quite a few stops in between. The fight scenes are horrific. The camera swoops and weaves until you feel vertiginous and punch drunk and menaced, the way the fighters must have felt as their faces and bodies were smashed to pulp.

The movie strives for authenticity by showing how *really* rough it was for immigrants, but that undercuts the romantic stuff about making good, fresh starts, and all the rest. It turns the American Dream inside out.

In the land race scenes, we see family after family drop out through accident or injury. We see stony-faced American Indians watch the Palefaces grab *their* land. We hear cynical voices saying only one in ten will get anything; the others are dopes, dupes.

In the face of that, the Dream dies. It's simply too late to make inspirational, courage-of-immigrants sagas. It's too late for the myths of the West now we know they *are* myths. When we see America now, when we see how many are excluded from any kind of dream, we can't cheer on Mr. Everyman, even in a historical film. We know he isn't Everyman, he's one of the chosen few.

## Work of folly

Stan Crooke reviews *"Legion of the Rearguard"* by Conor Foley (Pluto Press).

Foley's *"Legion of the Rearguard"* — the IRA and the modern Irish state — is a very uneven book.

The first twenty years of the IRA's existence are dealt with in 200 pages. The last fifty are skipped through in just 15. I don't know whether Conor Foley got bored writing the book. But I certainly got bored reading it.

More substantial histories — Coogan's and Bowyer Bell's — have long been available; and entire books written on episodes Foley rushes through in a single chapter.

The lack of originality of Foley's book is confirmed by a perusal of the footnote references: most of them refer to secondary literature, rather than to original and previously unused source material.

Nor does the book live up to its claim to be an account of the IRA's "internal ideological dynamic". It is a poor potted history of Southern Ireland and of Southern Irish political parties, mixed up with the standard IRA hagiography.

As history, the book is lightweight and superficial. But that does not save the author from trapping himself in some typically Foleyesque contradictions.

Foley calls his book a riposte to the "effete assault" of the revisionist school of Irish history. Meantime, he endorses arguments advanced by the self-same revisionist school.

He rejects, for example, the idea that Southern Ireland is a "neo-colony of Britain" and, even more heretically, suggests that "the main obstacle to (British) disengagement would be Unionist opposition".

Foley defines republicanism as standing not just for Irish unity but also for "a different political and social order" and describes the IRA as "republicanism's most uncompromising defenders".

But in his brief treatment of the IRA in the 1950s, he sums up the IRA's politics as "idealistic, socially conservative, and devoutly Catholic". What happened to the "different political and social order" which the IRA supposedly stood for?

The author regards the IRA of today as continuing the tradition of Wolfe Tone. But Tone stood for the unity of "Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter". The fact that today's IRA does not is simply ignored by Foley.

Other arguments — often only half spelt-out and never argued for with any intellectual rigour — which Foley puts forward are, at best, pretty dubious.

Is it really true, for example, that Sinn Fein in Southern Ireland is "competing for the left-wing vote with both Labour and the Workers' Party"? Or is it rather the case that Sinn Fein is competing with Fianna Fail for the traditional republican vote?

And, however accommodating James Connolly may have been towards Irish nationalism, it is surely going too far to claim that he argued "socialism in the Irish context could be described as a form of advanced nationalism".

Running true to form, Foley attempts to face two ways at the same time in his book.

On the one hand, are glimpses of reality, such as the politically independent nature of Southern Ireland, or the problem of communal divisions in Northern Ireland as an obstacle to Irish unity. On the other, pro-Republican cheerleading, the suggestion that socialism is a form of nationalism, and the dewy-eyed portrayal of an Ireland "still haunted by the ghosts of the soldiers of the Legion of the Rearguard".

All in all, this is not so much a book of Foley as a work of folly.

## Bad Blood

Dan Katz reviews *Secret History "Bad Blood"*, Channel 4, Monday 10 August

Beginning in 1932 a terrible government-organised crime condemned 400 black men from Alabama to slow, painful deaths.

Poor, uneducated, country people who had contracted syphilis were conned into a medical experiment.

They were told they were being treated for the illness — at that time an epidemic in America — but in fact they were tricked. Even after the discovery that penicillin would cure syphilis, they received no help.

The state medical authorities were conducting an

experiment into the untreated effects of syphilis. To make sure they got "good" results they even stopped the men getting medical help.

The black men were chosen because the state thought they could get away with killing them. In 1932 80% of America's black people lived as second class citizens in the "Jim Crow" segregated south. The majority were deliberately denied decent education and hounded by lynch law.

These black men were treated like laboratory rats by a racist establishment which still refuses to admit it was wrong. The experiment was only stopped in 1972.

# Alliance for Workers' Liberty meetings

**Sun 16 August**

"Revolutionaries and the trade unions." North London AWL meeting. 8.00, Queens Head, Acton Street, London WC1

**Mon 17 August**

"Is Marxism relevant today?" Sheffield AWL meeting. 7.30, SCCAU, West Street

"500 years of resistance." Liverpool

AWL meeting. 7.30, TGWU Buildings, Islington, Liverpool

**Wed 19 August**

"Are riots the answer?" East London AWL

meeting. 7.30, Davenant Centre, Whitechapel Road. Speaker: Jeni Bailey

**Thu 20 Aug**

"Israel after the elections." Glasgow

AWL meeting. 7.30, Partick Burgh Halls

**Events**

London Alliance for Workers' Liberty "Cannon School" on the revolutionary party

• What do we mean by "revolutionary party"? • A history of the Bolsheviks • "Entryism" • A history of the Fourth International • The post-Trotsky Trotskyists • Cannon on trade unionists and revolutionaries.

Saturday 5 September Reading list, venue and other details from Mark, 071-639 7965.

Socialist dayschool

Saturday 5 September, 10.30-4.30, Labour Rooms, George St., Burton-upon-Trent

Fighting racism

Saturday 15 August

500 years of resistance festival. Speakers include Jean Bertrand Aristide, Manning Marable, Daniel Ortega. 12 noon-2pm, Liverpool University.

Saturday 22 August

Demonstrate against the racist murders of Siddik Dada and Mohammed Saswar. 12.30, Platt Fields, Rusholme, Manchester.

Demonstrations

Saturday 31 October

Lesbian and Gay Rights demonstration. London. Organised by the Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition. Information: 69 Cowcross Street, London EC1.

Wednesday 4 November

No to student debt! demonstration. Organised by Manchester Area NUS. Details: 061-272 8483.

Saturday 21 November

Anti-Asylum Bill march. London. Details from Nirmala: 071-251 5675.

**Support the Joint Sites Committee**

The collection by the building workers' rank and file group, the Joint Sites Committee, at our Workers' Liberty '92 event raised £82.50.

Contact the JSC at: Flat 1, 720 High Road, London N12.

## Fidos of the left

**PLATFORM**

By Mark Osborn

A comrade in my AWL branch once related his worst political moment: trying to convince a person not to leave revolutionary politics while simultaneously fending off the sexual advances of this bloke's mongrel dog.

I don't like dogs. They have no moral standards. They sniff at everything. They root out everything dirty and smelly. They'll roll on their back, perform tricks, debase themselves for anyone willing to scratch their belly.

Socialist Action are the Fidos of the left. It really is something

special to see one of them trotting two paces behind Ken Livingstone, or hanging around to lick a bureaucrat or panting eagerly around Marjorie Thompson from CND.

Their sycophancy is part of their political method which, essentially, consists of egging on important people. They provide people to do the leg work for campaigns which means they are tolerated by some. They give "advice".

This, I suppose, is a caricature of the idea of the "lever of a small group". They see themselves as catalysts and in their case they are, by now, a very small group.

In order to relate to "important" people they let principles slip. They now have made the connection, through the appalling *Morning Star*, to the

Stalinist soft-left in the Parliamentary Labour Party and the unions.

In order to hang on "to power" inside a campaign they will lie and carve. For them the end justifies the means. It led to the grotesque mess of the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf.

Take the Anti-Racist Alliance, for example. *Socialist Action* has produced a pamphlet in support of ARA. It mentions *Socialist Organiser* three times, each time reproducing the same lie: "The SWP supported by *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Outlook* reacted to ARA by trying to split the movement by relaunching the ANL".

Leaving aside an assessment of ANL and ARA — no, we did not help to set up the ANL. Yes, it is right that, after the SWP set up

the ANL, we called for the building of both. For us the issue is quite simple — the general rule is we support all anti-racist organisations while calling for one unified organisation.

What's happening here? *Socialist Action* are "inoculating" people in ARA against us — and against *Outlook* for that matter. They do not want us involved and so they lie. Anything goes.

What's the left coming to? It is now common to hear SWP members saying the AWL "supports the killing of Palestinians by the Israeli state" or "supports the witch-hunt against *Militant*". *Socialist Outlook* invents quotations from our paper in order better to deal with us.

The marginalisation of the left has helped produce these degenerations... what a mess.

## The hawk in the dovecote

(Continued from page 7)

Upon taking charge of the Labour campaign, Rabin charted an aggressive elections strategy, aimed at penetrating traditional Likud strongholds in the slums and Development Towns. In propaganda full of nationalist phraseology and constant displays of the Israeli national flag, Rabin was presented as "a national leader who stands above factions and parties; the only man who can unite the people and lead the country." Old photographs of Rabin in military uniform, as the victorious Army Chief-of-Staff of 1967 were dug out and prominently displayed. In particular, Rabin boasted of the role he, as well as other former generals in the Labour leadership, had played liberating East Jerusalem and placing it under Israeli rule that would last forever.

Still another ploy was used to bolster Rabin's image as a popular leader. Broad hints were made that Rabin is, in fact, the natural successor to the late Menachem Begin, since the present Likud leaders are too narrow-minded to assume Begin's mantle.

Four or eight years ago, such extravagant claims by a Labour Party leader would have been received with ridicule if not outright hostility.

However, in these elections it fell on ground already prepared by the Likud leadership's alienation of its own grass roots support.

On May 24, a hitherto tranquil elections campaign was disrupted by a sudden crisis. In Bat-Yam, one of Tel-Aviv's less thriving suburbs, an Israeli teenager was stabbed to death by a Palestinian from Gaza. The murder touched off several days of riots, with mobs shouting "Death to the Arabs!" raging in the streets, shops and construction sites in search of Palestinian workers. Even after all Palestinians fled the town, large-scale rioting continued for several more days, with the television showing each night new clashes between unemployed youths and the Bat Yam police.

Rabin's reaction was swift. The Labour leader failed to voice any condemnation of the racist violence; instead he swung into a furious attack upon the Shamir government, accusing it of failing to ensure the security of daily life in Israel. A frequent refrain was: "Send the Gazan workers back to Gaza."

At the same time Rabin also clearly indicated his intention to evacuate the Israeli troops holding down

the Gazan population — an idea known to enjoy wide popularity among the Israeli public, including rightwingers. Rabin's mixture of racism and dovishness apparently appealed to the Bat-Yam voters — more so than the solutions offered by the extreme right, whose activists converged on Bat-Yam in the hope of making electoral capital. When the votes were counted, it turned out that Rabin scored 41% in Bat-Yam — considerably above his national average.

During his elections campaign, Rabin made few direct references to the American loan guarantees and to Shamir's failure to obtain them, not wishing to appear as endorsing an outside pressure upon Israel. Instead Rabin claimed that he is opposed to settlements because of internal Israeli reasons having nothing to do with the American demands.

In opposing the settlements, Rabin did not scruple to take up wholesale the arguments used, over the past decade, by Peace Now: "The settlements constitute, both an obstacle to peace and an enormous waste of resources, which would better be spent for social purposes inside Israel". Still another Peace Now argu-

ment extensively — and successfully — used in Labour propaganda was to connect congestion and road accidents on Israel's major highways with the Shamir government's concentration on building new roads for settlers in the Occupied Territories.

Unlike the peace movement — which is opposed without distinction to all settlements — Rabin proclaimed himself opposed only to "political" settlements, while being in favour of maintaining and even strengthening "strategic" ones. Apparently, the "strategic" settlements are those on the Golan Heights and near the Jordan River — the areas Rabin intends to keep under Israeli rule. In addition, Rabin pledged to continue settlement in and around annexed East Jerusalem.

Rabin's attack on the settlements placed Likud wholly on the defensive; even Likud hard-liner Ariel Sharon was driven to lame and half-hearted apologies, explaining that the settlements don't cost so much.

Yitzchak Rabin had one clear objective throughout his whole campaign: to prove to the Likud voters that he was the tough negotiator for whom they were looking; that he would nego-

tiate with the Arabs from a position of strength, while continuing to fight terrorism; that he would reach an interim agreement with the Palestinians within nine months; and that he would get the loan guarantees and improve relations with the United States — strained by Shamir nearly to breaking point.

Some Likud voters — not very many, in fact, but enough — were convinced, and shifted their vote to the Labour Party. Others felt indecisive and stayed home on elections day, depriving the Likud of additional, crucial Knesset seats. Together with its overwhelming support among the Russian immigrants, Labour obtained 44 Knesset seats, with the Likud trailing far behind with 32.

Meretz, Rabin's ally to the left, gained 12 seats, having

also done well among the immigrants. The anti-Likud block was completed by the parties drawing most of their votes from the Arab citizens of Israel: the Hadash Communists, with three seats and Abd-el-Wahab Darawshe's Arab Democratic Party, with two. Altogether, these parties command 61 seats in the 120 member Knesset — a slender, but sufficient majority.

The television broadcast showed Labour Party headquarters in Tel-Aviv, where jubilant crowds were singing "Long live Rabin, King of Israel!" — a scene reminiscent of the Begin adoration manifested on the night of Likud's coming to power, fifteen years earlier.

(This article is abridged from "The Other Israel", a newsletter available from: PO Box 2542, Holon, Israel 58125.)



INDUSTRIAL

# Anti-cuts fightback grows

By Tony Dale,  
Manchester NALGO

In the London boroughs of Newham, Greenwich, and Islington, white-collar council workers are taking action against compulsory redundancies.

Newham NALGO's entire membership, 2400 workers, are now on all-out indefinite strike. In January Newham council made poll tax workers redundant. The NALGO branch have been in dispute

over the sackings. Initially poll tax workers struck, then they were joined by housing benefit workers.

Newham council threatened to sack the strikers. The council's agenda clearly included taking on and trying to break NALGO. In response, NALGO successfully balloted its entire membership.

Greenwich NALGO has a similar bitter dispute over redundancies. The council sacked nine workers when it closed a Social Services Family Centre in April. Since then Greenwich NALGO members have had an extensive rolling programme of selective strikes.

A recent union meeting voted to request the national union to organise a ballot on indefinite strike action by the whole branch.

Islington NALGO has had a

similar rolling programme of strikes because the council wants to scrap all agreements guaranteeing no compulsory redundancies, and introduce criteria for who will lose their job based on sickness records, "conduct", "performance", and length of service.

Selected key groups, including poll tax and housing benefit workers, are on all-out strike. Neighbourhood Office staff voted to be balloted to join the indefinite strike. The action by selected groups has been combined with a series of council-wide one-day strikes.

Over the years, Labour councils have gone from opposition to the Government in the heady days of the early 1980s, to attempted peaceful coexistence with the Tories, to carrying out the Tories' cuts with vigour.

## We need a national one day anti-cuts strike

Following the Tories' election victory, many Labour councils have ripped up their promises of no compulsory redundancies.

Greenwich, Newham, and Islington councils have been quick off the mark, and are in the limelight today. But other councils are waiting and watching eagerly to see how these struggles turn out.

Defeat for Newham, Greenwich and Islington will spell disaster for council workers elsewhere when faced with redundancies. Victory in these disputes will make many councils think twice about redundancies.

These disputes have a national importance. NALGO has a national anti-cuts strategy on paper, but in practice the nation-

ally union usually does no more than support branches in dispute over cuts. Leaving branches to fight alone will only encourage the employers.

A national solidarity campaign should be organised on the basis of: no redundancies! defend public services! no privatisation! Wider solidarity action is needed. A London-wide one-day strike would be a step forward.

There is a London-wide day of action against NHS cuts on 21 August. This should be turned into a health workers' and council workers' day of action.

A campaign should be launched now for a national one-day strike against compulsory redundancies and in defence of public services. This could act as a kickstart for a real anti-cuts campaign.



Striker at Charing Cross Hospital

## MSF strike against health cuts

By Amelia Street

Members of the MSF union in Riverside Health Authority, in Charing Cross Hospital, struck for three days on 5-6-7 August.

These workers are mostly laboratory scientific officers who perform tests such as blood counts, examining tissues through microscopes, etc.

The management have announced 200 redundancies at

the hospital, many of them compulsory. Nobody knows who the victims are, or in which departments they work. There has certainly been no consultation on the matter - hardly surprising when, it is alleged, the Chief Executive of the Riverside Health Authority gave four senior managers one hour to clear their desks recently.

There were two ballots for strike action. The first was successfully challenged by the Health Authority, on the

grounds that the wording was not specific enough, so the ballot was re-run. The ensuing publicity resulted in a higher turnout and a two to one vote in favour of strike action!

The other unions on site, and at the other hospital affected, the Westminster Hospital, which has lost its casualty department, "supported" the action. There was talk of a one-day strike on 7 August, but it did not happen. Instead a rally was held during the lunch hour, with little evidence of support among the workforce. It is alleged that news of the intended action was poorly circulated.

At the time of writing, I don't know whether emergency cover was provided. Similar actions have had emergency cover in the past, with the strikers deciding what is an emergency.

There was a lot of support from other MSF branches in London, many of which sent banners and delegations. Passing cards sounded their horns in support, and members of the public offered good wishes to the pickets.

### "Build the struggle to defend jobs and conditions"

By Ray Harris, NALGO District Officer

On 30 July, London health workers stopped work to march from St Clements to Mile End and then Whitechapel to protest against planned redundancies. A joint campaign by NALGO, CoHSE and NUPE has been set up to organise London-wide action and a day of action has been called for 21 August.

NALGO officials had authorised a full day of strike action, but with redundancies threatened, many workers feared victimisation, and so the march was organised instead. The day before the march, a circular from management to department heads advised of the day of action, but it seems that there will be no disciplinary action.

This may encourage union members to be more confident in building the struggle that will be necessary to defend jobs and conditions.

## Why Newham NALGO must win

*"With the election of a fourth term Tory government the issue of cuts and compulsory redundancies is one that will happen more and more. NALGO nationally seem to realise that we have to hold the line against compulsory redundancies in Newham. If we can turn Newham council round, it will be much easier to fight other councils and to show that NALGO is serious about fighting redundancies"*

Dave Buxton, Shop Steward,  
Environmental Health

## Ashworth Hospital and the Prison Officers Association: what should socialists say?

By Richard Bayley,  
York NALGO Health

The gory details that have emerged from the official inquiry into brutality at Ashworth Special Hospital should provide food for thought for socialists.

Ashworth, along with Broadmoor and Rampton, is part of the Special Health Services Authority, the body that runs top security hospitals for mentally disturbed offenders.

And, going by the accounts of ex-patients, Ashworth is the best of the Special Hospitals! Already, as a result of the

inquiry, seven members of the Prison Officers' Association at Ashworth have been suspended, with another five cases under review. Allegations include ritual humiliation of patients by nurses, beatings, and the systematic use of stripping and isolating patients as a means of control.

The POA argues that the inquiry was a stitch-up, designed to break union influence and make staff carry the can for bad management. They can cite as evidence an unpublished Government report from 1988 which stated that "fundamentally the wrong union" had gained a grip on the three hospitals. But here "trade union power"

was not the ability of workers to control their own working conditions, but the right of nurses to abuse and mistreat vulnerable people in their care. The presence of the POA in these hospitals points to the fundamental problem - despite the NHS label, the institutions are essentially prisons.

The inmates have no release date. That is determined by a psychiatric service which, in these hospitals, is fundamentally pessimistic about any improvements in the condition of the patients. A good gauge of the doctors' attitude at Ashworth is the fact that four consultants publicly defended the most bru-

tal actions of the nursing staff at the inquiry!

The Special Hospitals house some of Britain's most notorious offenders, such as Ian Brady, Peter Sutcliffe, and Dennis Nielsen. They are not, however, full of serial killers. Only 20% of Ashworth's inmates have been convicted of any crime. A quarter of England's Special Hospital population are there because no services were available in their own locality.

The only justification from a socialist viewpoint for detaining someone in an institution is if they are a physical threat to others (or, perhaps more debatably, a threat to themselves). Those deemed mentally ill face the threat of being barred from being believed or listened to.

The current best practice in psychiatric care gives clear rights of advocacy to a patient "sectioned" under the Mental Health Act. Some hospitals even have legal departments on site. At least this ensures that doctors are forced to justify the continued detention of a patient.

By contrast, to be in a Special Hospital means a prison regime, the threat of violence, and subjection to the most outdated and reactionary psychiatric "theory".

The Special Hospitals must go! Their patients should be properly in the NHS, with full standards of care and full civil rights. If they have to be detained, it should be in Regional Secure Units as close as possible to family and friends. The Government must come up with the cash to enable this to happen.

## BT: less staff, less pay

By a British Telecom engineer (NCU, Westminster)

July saw 18,000 BT workers take voluntary redundancy, with more to leave later.

This mass exodus is called "Release 92", and is a more generous version of the deal negotiated between BT and the NCU in 1991.

The disadvantages in working for BT, constant reorganisation, lack of promotion prospects, and poor job security, have convinced many workers that they have no future in BT; and so the initial response to "Release 92" was overwhelming. Nearly half of all BT workers expressed an

interest in voluntary redundancy; and so many thousands have been refused "release".

The redundancy terms were most generous to younger workers with short periods of service, who are cheap to get rid of.

Meanwhile, for those workers remaining, management are increasingly heavy-handed, and the workplace atmosphere has become intolerable as workers are being expected to do more and more work.

BT is laughing all the way to the bank. Staff costs are a large part of their overall costs. With 24,000 workers leaving this year, profits will be up - at the cost of decent jobs for thousands of people.

The (not so) new realist approach of the BT unions has been to avoid confrontation with management's propaganda about "overstaffing" and putting profits before services. The BT pay offer does not reward greater productivity, being a measly £204 a year plus 3% for NCU-represented grades.

This offer is being balloted on soon, and many branches are recommending no to the pay offer and yes to industrial action.

The NCU London Broad Left is actively opposing the BT offer by organising a protest lobby of the BT centre on 20 August at lunchtime.

## Fightback at the British Library

By a British Library worker

As reported in the last issue of Socialist Organiser, the threat of Market Testing hangs over almost 1,400 jobs in the British Library. On 3 August, staff at the largest London site - the British Museum building - packed out a meeting called to discuss the issue, and to hear speakers from the three biggest Civil Service unions: NUCPS, CPSA and IPMS.

The mood of the meeting showed a willingness to fight. The coolest reception was given to the IPMS speaker, who suggested that we shouldn't be too hasty or seek to alienate library management. It was pointed out to him in no

uncertain terms that he was talking about a management who had not even told us that Market Testing was going to happen (the news broke first in the Guardian), and one which had already imposed its own cuts.

IPMS represents curatorial and technical staff and organises a significant number of library workers. Its national leadership puts its faith in winning in-house bids: many of its ordinary members are not so naive. It is vital that IPMS members put pressure on their leaders to give full support to the fightback that is not building.

Many of the library's lowest paid workers are in the front line of the Market Testing initiative. These are the so-called "support" grades of the NUCPS union (security

staff, messengers etc) and the typing grades organised by the CPSA. They have already been identified as prime candidates for contracting out; but the process will not stop there.

One of the tasks now is to ensure that staff of all grades, across all the unions realise that Market Testing is going to affect them. Isolated groups and grades must not be left to fight alone. To this end, the unions are establishing an action committee which can progress the campaign outside of the routine, day-to-day "bureaucracy" of Branch Committees and similar structures. There is a lot of work to be done, but the fight against Market Testing is underway!

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## Racist thugs must be stopped

# Unite to fight the fascists!

**Alliance for Workers Liberty tour**

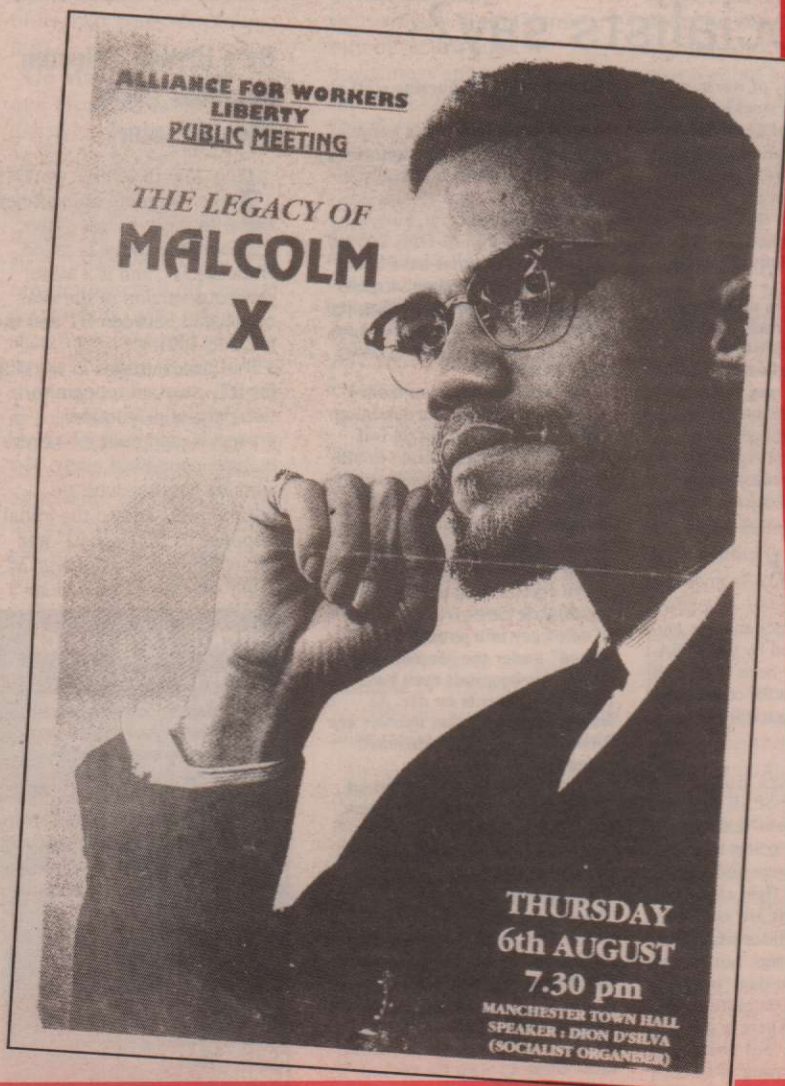
## The legacy of Malcolm X

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty is holding a series of meetings on the legacy of Malcolm X.

There has been a very good response to the meetings held so far. 35 people attended the AWL forum in Manchester, and 30 in South West London. AWL college organisations are planning meetings for the forthcoming academic year.

80 copies of Socialist Organiser were sold at the Anti-Racist Alliance festival held in Brixton, South London, on 1 August.

**Next meeting**  
**Sunday 6 September**  
8:00pm Queens Head, Acton Street, London. Organised by North London AWL  
**Speaker: Dion D'Silva**



*Janine Booth, who was physically assaulted by a fascist last week while selling Socialist Organiser at Brick Lane in East London, discusses what should be done about them.*



Hamlets Council.

At Brick Lane market itself, the fascist paper sale has to be stopped – and socialist paper sellers defended from fascist attacks.

Fascists appear to have established a regular paper sale at Brick Lane market on Sunday mornings. Last Sunday, "Flag" and "British Nationalist" were sold on the corner of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road, whilst gangs of Nazis stood around protecting the sellers – probably 30-40 in all.

They seemed to be selling quite a lot of papers, as well as intimidating any passer by they did not like the look of. Whilst selling Socialist Organiser, I received a torrent of homophobic abuse from the fascists followed by a smack in the face. A police officer and a stallholder both told me to move on and stop causing trouble!

It is very alarming that fascists have the confidence to openly sell their filthy propaganda on the streets – and the muscle to physically police the area around them.

Brick Lane market is in Bethnal Green – part of Tower Hamlets Borough, whose Liberal Democrat council has evicted Bangladeshi tenants in an openly racist housing policy.

Institutional racism such as this legitimises racist views, and gives space for the fascists to win support.

The BNP are standing in a forthcoming by-election for Tower Hamlets Council. It is important for anti-fascists to leaflet and canvass the area, exposing the BNP as Nazis and convincing people not to vote for them.

Campaigning against the fascists must reach out to local people and must be organised alongside the local Black communities. The Labour Party should run a high-profile anti-racist election campaign, aimed at mobilising people against the fascists, and exposing the racist practices of the Liberal Democrat leaders of Tower

### Victory against the fascists

Last Saturday, 8 (August) Anti-fascists from various organisations drove off Nazi paper sellers in Halifax.

On Saturday 15 August, the neo-Nazi British National Party is holding a demonstration in Halifax. They are protesting against "Asian youth beating up whites", and want to "reclaim Halifax for whites".

Anti-racists will march against them. Assemble 10.30, Saturday 15 August, People's Park, Halifax.

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