

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Inside this week



Ireland: an open letter to trade unionists

pages 4 & 5

Fighting the pro-life gangsters



page 7

France: the collapse of the left

centre pages

APRIL 2nd

WELCOME

back,



SOLIDARITY!

Miners, rail and bus workers strike together!

see page 2

Welcome back, solidarity!

THIS FRIDAY 2 April is set to go down in the history of the British working class movement as the day when solidarity strike action returned to haunt the Tories and their capitalist friends. Miners, railworkers and London busworkers will hold a synchronised one-day strike. Their protest will be joined by other groups of workers up and down

the country — council workers, civil servants, postal workers, teachers and health workers.

Friday's action will represent a new stage in the revival of the working class movement.

Last October, hundreds of thousands of trade unionists took to the streets to protest against the government's crazy pit closure programme.

Now, five months later, what

started off as a broad political movement, challenging the Tories dogma that 31 pits must close, throwing 50,000 workers on the scrapheap, while people need energy for industry and fuel for their homes, has started to take the shape of an industrial army preparing for battle.

14 years of Tory rule, two devastating slumps and the worst anti-union laws on the continent

of Europe have not stopped workers seeing that it makes sense to join forces and strike together.

Every socialist and trade union activist should now focus their energy on drawing their union into action alongside the London busworkers, rail and mineworkers.

Workers in the public sector face cuts, sackings, sell-offs and

a pay freeze. In the private sector the bosses are determined to push through wage cuts, speed-ups, mass sackings. As the example of Timex shows they are now starting to look seriously at large-scale trade union de-recognition.

There is now an unanswerable case for workers to synchronise and co-ordinate the fightback. If the leaders of the TUC and those

of the national unions refuse to link up the struggles, then the trade union rank and file must do everything they can to co-ordinate action.

Despite all the talk of the "death of socialism" and the collapse of the trade unions, one thing is clear.

Workers must fight and our strength is our numbers. "An injury to one is an injury to all".

"We can build on the growing militancy"

Steve Kemp of Stillingfleet NUM says the miners can win.

"WE'VE GOT to keep up the pressure on the government.

We are doing it right. We've got the railworkers and the London busworkers to strike alongside us. That's a big step forward, we've now got to keep that mood to fight and build on it.

"We don't want to just have a one day strike every five weeks — that will just dissipate people's energy and encourage the

Tories — it would be completely out of context with what is needed.

"We want one day of action every two weeks at least — a more compact policy.

The Tory laws are hard, but there are ways round them. People should look for excuses and reasons to get official action alongside the miners.

If we get that commitment from other unions then I feel sure that we can create a mood that can be tapped into. If the miners and railworkers don't get more support then things will stagnate.

"We can really build on the growing militancy around us".

Where the rank and file could move

HUGE POSSIBILITIES exist for other groups of workers to link up with the miners, railworkers and London bus workers.

Here are just a few:

* Every union representing public sector workers should declare itself in dispute with the government over the 1.5% pay freeze. It makes no sense at all to wait for each separate settlement date to come along. The Tories have made it clear there will be a pay freeze. The national union leaderships should declare themselves in dispute now and ballot for action on pay alongside the miners. Action is needed now, not in six months time!

* Train drivers should press for their union, ASLEF, to seriously campaign for a huge yes vote in next week's strike ballot. The ASLEF leadership should then co-ordinate the days of strike action alongside the RMT and NUM.

The leaders of the main civil service unions CPSA and NUCPS are backing the Tories' attempts to cut

civil service pay. The NUCPS executive has accepted the government's miserable 1% offer while the leadership of CPSA are recommending acceptance in a postal ballot.

The first step for CPSA members is to win the biggest possible vote rejecting this deal. Despite the leaders' treachery it is still possible to win action alongside the miners.

Groups of civil servants should push for national backing for local strikes against "Market Testing" (the first stage of contracting out).

* Post workers in London face massive job losses. The newly formed UCU London District Council should press for strike action to stop any closures or compulsory redundancies.

* Workers in local councils should try to link up action over cuts in services and redundancies to the miners' and railworkers' synchronised strikes.

Over 80,000 local authority jobs are at risk this year alone.

After 2 April

THE DECISION by the miners', railworkers', and London busworkers' leaders to organise their strikes on the same day is the first bit of positive leadership seen from the top trade union officials for a long time.

It underlines the need for socialists to get into the labour movement, to organise, to demand that the Labour and TUC fight, and build rank and file movements which can oust or outflank them when they don't.

The "Labour Must Fight!" campaign launched by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty last December is more relevant than ever. It calls for the Labour and TUC leaders to deliver:

* Solidarity with the miners. The TUC should call official days of action to back up the miners' strikes.

* Rebuild the Health Service! Stop the Tory cuts! Labour must commit itself to reversing all Tory cuts in health, education, and other public services.

* Support all workers in struggle! Smash the Tory 1.5% pay limit. Occupy to stop closures!

* Free our trade unions! Support workers in conflict with the anti-union laws! Labour must commit itself to repealing those laws and replacing them with laws guaranteeing the right to organise a union, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.

If the TUC leaders had any spark in them, they would now organise a Public Sector Alliance and plan for coordinated strikes across the whole public sector to stop contracting-out, restore cuts, and break the 1.5% pay limit. The Labour Party leaders would back this up with a campaign of rallies, demonstrations, and parliamentary obstruction - going far beyond their small efforts over Maastricht - to demand a new General Election.

Norman Willis's TUC, and John Smith's Labour Party, are very unlikely to do that. But every bit of action we can push them into is important and progressive - as long as, simultaneously, we organise the rank and file caucuses and networks which can take the struggle further.

We will fight to save all 31 pits says Ken Capstick

"We are now at the most crucial point in our campaign. For five months now the Tories have been trying to hoodwink people into believing they are carrying out a serious review into energy policy. We now know that is not the case. They never had any intention of doing any such thing. The announcement on Thursday did not reprove any pits, or save any pits. It was an announcement of 31 pit closures with the loss of 70,000 miners' jobs and jobs in related industries.

It was no different from the announcement last October and we are telling Michael Heseltine: 'We are not going to wear it!' We will continue to fight for all 31 of our pits."

Ken Capstick, National Union of Mineworkers, was speaking at last Saturday's Houghton Main rally, 27 March

Bill Morris attacks the "modernisers"

BILL MORRIS, general secretary of the TGWU — still the largest trade union in Britain — has come out with comments recently which reflect growing trade union opposition to proposals from Labour leader John Smith that would severely weaken the party's links with the unions.

Morris is the first of the major trade union leaders to openly and clearly attack party "modernisers". He told a *Tribune* dinner earlier this month:

"The attack on the trade union link has little to do with a search for new ideas or a new identity. It was rather a lazy search for new scapegoats."

Morris added: "From the point of view of ordinary trade union members, this is an issue of democracy also. Can Labour ask people to give their collective support through the payment of the political levy and then tell them that they cannot contribute to developing party policy or that they be debarred from expressing a view as to who should lead the party or represent it in parliament?"

"If the electoral college is considered undemocratic, we should be in the business of democratising the college, not excluding from the college."

To underline this point Morris comments in the latest T&G bulletin. "The [union's] General Executive Council clearly accepted the vital need to maintain the link between the trade unions and the Labour Party."

So far so good.

But Morris's pronouncements still lack clarity. By focussing on "political levy payers", rather than the trade unions as collective entities, he is still leaving the door open to proposals that would destroy the trade union link by replacing collective trade union representations with occasional ballots of "registered sympathisers".

And in reality the proposal for "registered sympathisers" is simply a Trojan Horse for those who want to destroy the link altogether.

Even those who want to introduce these new arrangements say that it can't possibly be in place in time for the next round of parliamentary selections. In reality, the battle at this year's party conference has to be between those who want to defend collective trade union representation in something like its current form, and those who want to kill it.

Morris will have to decide

Left wins at NUS

As we go to press, on Tuesday night (30 March), the news comes in that *Left Unity* candidate and *Socialist Organiser* supporter Kevin Sexton has won the election for Vice-President Welfare of the National Union of Students. (For main report on the NUS conference, see back page). This victory is a major blow to the plans of the NUS's right-wing Labour leaders to make the student movement safe for the Tories. Full report on the NUS conference next week.



Three women, Sally Morton, Prakash Chavrimootoo (with her son) Prem and Mamta Chopra met recently in Birmingham at an event organised by the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign. All three women have been forced to leave violent marriages for their own safety within the first year of their marriages and therefore fell foul of the Tories' "12 month rule". Now they face deportation.

For more details contact Muhammed Idrish, 021-551 4518. Photo: Mark Salmon

Russia: crisis will flare again

THE Russian crisis seems to have gone off the boil, for now, but it continues to simmer.

Both sides, Yeltsin and the Parliamentary majority which opposes him, draw back at the last moment from outright confrontation.

There was not the necessary two-thirds Parliamentary majority to impeach Yeltsin. Tens of thousands of Yeltsin supporters took to the streets in the biggest trial of strength since the neo-Stalinist coup of August 1991 was defeated.

There is to be a referendum, but one that is defined and controlled by Yeltsin, who has posed the questions and set conditions in such a way that Yeltsin probably cannot lose. The referendum is a pseudo-democratic swindle: too much always

depends on which questions are posed and on how they are posed.

The crisis has boiled down, but nothing is resolved. The crisis will flare up again. Those in control do not dare allow democratic elections.

It is to be hoped that

enough Russian workers are learning the lesson that capitalism is monstrous, and Stalinism bankrupt as well as monstrous — and that a third force, for working class democratic socialism will grow up between the Yeltsinites and the neo-Stalinists.

Push for change in mental health

A NEW INQUEST is due soon into the case of Orville Blackwood, killed in Broadmoor by lethal injections.

Since 1992 his family and friends have campaigned for the truth to come out about Orville's death, and for justice for people — and especially black people — caught up in the mental health system.

They are organising a day-conference to discuss the issues on Saturday 10 April, 11am, at Lambeth Town Hall in Brixton.

Speakers will include Orville's mother, Clara Buckley, consultant psychiatrists and speakers from America.

Registration costs: £40 statutory bodies; £30 voluntary groups; individuals £3 waged/donation unwaged.

For more information or to book in advance contact: The Orville Blackwood Community Campaign, c/o Brixton Community Sanctuary, Talma Road, London SW2; telephone: 071-924 0913.

Kath Crosby

It is with great regret that we report the death of long-standing socialist and Labour Party activist, Kath Crosby.

We send our condolences to Kath's family and friends.

Funeral service: 11am, Monday 5 April, West Norwood Crematorium. Memorial meeting: Lambeth Town Hall, evening of 5 April.

The roots of the deadlock in Northern Ireland

Blame the British ruling class!

John O'Mahony, an Irish socialist living in England, writes an open letter to British trade unionists

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

LIKE EVERYONE else whose human feelings are not blocked or numbed by national hatred or chauvinistic self-righteousness, you are horrified and angry over the IRA bomb in Warrington which exploded in a crowd of weekend shoppers and killed two children.

I understand those feelings, and I share them. So, evidently, do most Irish people, here and in the two parts of Ireland. Upwards of 20,000 people marched through Dublin last Sunday to condemn the IRA's bombing campaign.

What happened in Warrington was monstrous and unforgivable. The so-called Irish Republican Army, who think they are Irish patriots, are a disgrace to Ireland and to Irish Republicanism. That they now say, faced with a howling gale of outrage, that "they won't do it again" - in *British* cities - shows how far they are from coherence or sense.

Does the outcry against this killing of small children surprise them? Or did they think they could go on letting off bombs in crowded streets without things like this happening?

As *Socialist Organiser* has said more than once in the last few months, the miracle is that there has not been a massacre on the scale of the Birmingham pub bombs of 1974 or the Enniskillen Remembrance Day slaughter of



Through the Army and the armed RUC, Britain has applied heavy repression to maintain the untenable status quo

Protestants/Unionists in 1987. Instead there was the "small" massacre of the children in Warrington. Yet condemning a deed like War-

"The real villains are the British Establishment. Their 'law and order' prescription has killed far more children - Irish children - than the Provisional IRA's bombs."

rington is easy. It is even cheap. Northern Ireland Protestants cannot but reflect that most of those who condemn Warrington have been pretty blasé about numerous horrors in Northern Ireland, where over 100 children have died during the last 20-odd years. Northern Ireland Catholics and many of the Irish in this country will remember how little comment the killing of small Catholic children by police and army plastic or rubber bullets in Northern Ireland has evoked.

More needs to be said. If you'll let me, I want to say some of it.

I came to England as a child. As a working-class socialist, that is, an

internationalist, I believe - and I have believed it all my life, from the age of 16 - that I have more in common with you than I have with any member of the Irish boss class.

Still, I am Irish. I consider myself an Irish patriot and an Irish Republican - in the older sense of "patriot", one who loves his own people, without hatred or animosity towards any other people; and the proper Irish (Wolfe Tone) sense of Republican, one who believes in uniting the peoples of Ireland in a democratic state free from outside control and from any form of oligarchic domination.

As an Irish patriot, my quarrel with the Provisional IRA is that they divide the people of Ireland.

Their military campaign is counter-productive and anti-Republican. "Success" for it could only mean sectarian civil war and repartition in Northern Ireland.

It would be good if the IRA's latest terrible deed in Warrington should provoke such popular anger as to stop their futile military campaign. It would be good - but it is not likely!

THE MASS OUTRAGE and the choking angry sense of horror are real: but the campaign is being orchestrated and used. *It is being used by the Establishment in defence of the status quo in Northern Ireland, and in support of the idea that the status*

quo is the best thing possible.

It is not! The two dead children in Warrington are being used to sell a great lie. It is because the status quo is not livable for the people of Northern Ireland that the IRA thrives and the Orange sectarian assassins who have killed five people since the Warrington bomb find refuge in the Protestant community.

We have been here before. Something remarkably similar happened 15 years ago.

A mass movement for "peace", the "Peace People", mushroomed overnight into a strong political force, and then declined.

That movement too was set off when young children were killed - by an IRA car out of control in Belfast after a fight with police.

The children's aunt, Mairead Corrigan, and another woman, Betty Williams, organised the outpouring of helpless anger in a demand for "peace".

Nothing came of it. People marched on big demonstrations, called for peace, and prayed for it - but they had no idea of how to get peace. They found themselves being used by the Establishment as a political bludgeon against the Provisional IRA, and as an emotion-charged vehicle for reinforcing the great lie that the status quo in Northern Ireland would be all right, if only the "men of violence" would go away.

The IRA is not a fundamental

cause of these horrors. It is a symptom, a by-product.

That "peace movement" was not even an effective bludgeon against the IRA. The Provisionals bent a little with the wind of public anger. But when the peace movement, impotent to do anything, subsided, the IRA was still there, and it is there now.

Will it be different this time? I hope so, but I doubt it. The "peace" movement in the South of Ireland is new - the war in the North spilling over into the South in an unexpected and for the Provos an unwelcome way.

But the IRA does not depend on opinion in the South. Their electoral support there is less than two per cent. What matters is their support in the Catholic ghettos in the North.

At the end of the day, all this outcry will not affect events - unless it should prove to be the prelude to an attempt to introduce internment in North and South simultaneously. That must be a real possibility. Will it do any good? No!

READ THE following, which I take from an editorial in the *Sunday Express* (28 March).

"Yesterday Irish Premier Albert Reynolds reacted to this new mood by calling for a renewed effort to

continued on page 5

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

Karl Marx

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Militant: making up ideas as they go along

AT A MEETING OF THE CPSA Broad Left (BL) National Committee (NC) last Saturday, *Militant* supporters voted to expel CPSA Presidential Candidate, Mark Serwotka, from the BLNC and drop him from the BL National Executive Committee slate. By what right the BLNC can "suspend" an elected member was never explained. Mark was voted on to both at 1992 BL Conference.

Mark was expelled from the BL earlier this month. For public relation reasons, the *Militant* effectively, voted to defer Mark's expulsion until 1993 BL Conference! It now appears that *Militant* have even given up trying to make their actions appear consistent. They simply make or break the rules as they go along.

Socialist Organiser supporter Mark has committed the ultimate sin against the *Militant*. He has dared to stand against the "Unity" candidate Albert Astbury, backed by the BL and the soft-left/Stalinist alliance BL84. Astbury is a right-wing independent, standing on a set of vague, meaningless policies and accountable to no-one. His candidature is part of a limited and fruitless "Unity" deal between BL and BL84 made not on policies to fight the Tories but on mutual support for Astbury and one Vice-President apiece. The *Militant* have one "argument" to justify their actions; getting rid of right wing President Marion Chambers equals "getting rid of the right wing" and will lead to "a mood change amongst the members".

These claims are ridiculous. The right control the NEC and most appointed full-time officer posts. Even without Chambers they will continue to control the union. Furthermore the *Militant* miss the point. At a time when the union movement is set for a revival, our task is to build for national strike action to defeat our biggest threat, Market Testing, rather than watering down policies in order to secure a couple of positions at the top of the union. Through being brought into activity against the Tories CPSA members will have more chance of defeating the right wing. For its part, the left in the CPSA must pull together all those opposed to the right to build left unity around policies, not stitched-up deals which exclude many on the left and non-aligned activists.

Socialist Organiser supporters at the meeting were subjected to a barrage of abuse, including being branded "scabs" by *Militant* supporter appointed full-time CPSA officer, John McCreadie. For the *Militant*, abuse is a substitute for the arguments which they clearly do not have.

Socialist Organiser did not brand *Militant* as "scabs" even when in the early and mid-1980s they used their union position to send strikers back to work, refused to spread disputes and flouted BL decisions to organise strikes.

Militant's hysteria stems from their bankrupt reformist politics which place little faith in the members' ability to change things and a lot in *Militant* running the union from the top down. Mark Serwotka's campaign, based on the need for national strike action to defeat Market Testing and the 1% pay offer, has struck a chord with the membership whose jobs, wages and conditions are on the line. In virtually every office where members are offered a choice between Astbury and Mark, Mark has won the nomination. Mark's campaign aims to change the mood of the members by giving them the confidence to fight Market Testing — a fight which the Tory-stooge right wing are refusing to lead — and to build genuine unity on the left, based on a plan of action to defeat the Tories and the right.



Strikes by CPSA and NUCPS against the Tories' miserable 1% offer could key in with rising militancy in the public sector. But the union leaders have gone for accepting 1% Photo: John Smith, Profile.

Civil Service union leaders give the Tories a helping hand

The leadership of the civil service trade unions gave the Tories a huge helping hand this week.

As the miners, railworkers and London busworkers prepared to strike this Friday (2 April) the leadership of CPSA and NUCPS were doing their best to help the Tories.

Inevitably, both groups of officials want civil servants to accept a 1% pay offer which amounts to a pay cut in real terms; and they want to push this deal through immediately giving a green light to the Tories to continue their attack on public sector workers.

Mark Serwotka, left candidate for CPSA President explains why civil servants should reject the 1% offer.

THE government has used its 1.5% public sector pay limit to offer CPSA members the pittance of a 1% offer this year. This figure was arrived at by deducting 1/2% from last year's pay deal, a deal which was recommended to us by our "Moderate" NEC.

Incredibly this same "Moderate" NEC is urging us to vote yes to the 1% offer. Members will undoubtedly be outraged that our union leaders, many of who are on scales approaching £40,000, are urging us to accept a pay rise that for some low paid members will be less than £1 a week!

The decision to recommend a yes vote is also a savage blow to all other public sector trade unionists, particularly the miners and railworkers who have decided to strike on 2 April. Our pay date of 1 April is the first of the big public sector pay rounds since the government's decision to keep pay rises to 1.5%. To fail to oppose

this offer, and actually recommend its acceptance, is a stab in the back for the millions of public sector trade unionists who believed there is a need for us to all take action together.

The NEC only two weeks ago put in a three point pay demand, claiming 4%, £2 flat rate pay increase, and a suspension of the Market Testing programme. What has changed in two weeks? Why are they now telling us to accept 1% and they are saying that the fight against Market Testing is a separate matter? Since the original circular the signs have been very favourable. Timex workers in Scotland are on strike. The miners and railworker will strike on 2 April. The white collar workers at Ford have asked to strike, and the firefighters union the FBU, have signalled that they will fight against the 1.5% pay limit.

We should be using these favourable developments to build for a

massive rejection of the 1% offer. We should link up the issue of our pay to those of defending jobs and of opposing Market Testing. This campaign should start with a 1 day national strike and lead on to national strike action. This type of action in the civil service, along with the rest of the public sector, can defeat the government.

Members should reject the treacherous advice from our NEC. We should use the elections later this month to remove these "traitors" from office, and elect a Broad Left leadership of the union. We should build links between civil servants and other public sector workers at local, regional and national levels to build a campaign that can win. The miners' day of action on 2 April is the ideal opportunity to start this.

**Vote No to 1%!
Support the miners on 2 April!**

Blame the British ruling class!

continued from page 3

find a political settlement in Northern Ireland. So far as it went, his reaction was welcome. But it is all so predictable.

"What is required now is not some great new hunt for some great new political initiative. There is only one solution to the current slaughter...

"The entire pressure of both governments should instead be directed against the gunmen. They are the sworn enemy of both countries. They have no political justification whatsoever for their disgusting trade. They are driven by a blood lust, not some high-flown moral crusade".

That note, that tone, that attitude, that "law and order" prescription has, I believe, killed far more children - Irish children - and adults - Irish adults - than the Provisional IRA's bombs ever did. It is the age-old voice and tone and prescription of the British Establishment - of those who are responsible for what is happening in Northern Ireland and for what happens when Northern Ireland comes to Warrington.

The Provisional IRA is a symptom, a by-product, of something else. The real villains do not speak in the slogans of the Provisional IRA but in the voice of the *Sunday Express*, and of the British Establishment of which it is one of the ornaments.

These things need to be said now, and it is fitting that *Socialist Organiser* should say them - since we have had to spend a lot of space in recent years belabouring the Provisional IRA and criticising the historical ignorance, romantic political stupidity, and habitual irresponsibility of the British left where Ireland is concerned.

For where do the Warrington, London, Manchester and other bombs come from? Where does the Provisional IRA come from?

The Provisional IRA arose, won large-scale support (about a third of the Catholic half-million in Northern Ireland support it), and most likely will continue to keep that support, because of what the British ruling class has done to Ireland.

The men and women of the Provisional IRA, people who start out dedicating themselves to the high and splendid ideal of the unification and independence of Ireland, wind up planting bombs in British shopping centres or shooting down Protestant Irishmen who do not share their politics or their tradition - often shooting them in their own houses in front of their small children - because of what the British ruling class has done to our country.

The British ruling class - with the once reluctant but now case-hardened support of the Catholic Irish boss class, Ireland's yahoo bourgeoisie - have locked the people of Northern Ireland into an impossible constitutional arrangement, into a Northern Ireland which is a narrow bearpit for its two antagonistic communities, Protestant and Catholic, and for all of its people.

The Catholic minority in that Six Counties entity is now a massive

40%. They have always been the majority in about half the land area of the "Protestant state", in the areas adjoining the "little Republic" of 26 counties.

THOSE CATHOLICS were kept against their will in a hostile state. For the first 50 years they lived as second class citizens, terrorised by British-armed Protestant-sectarian special police and subject to special laws under which they could be interned without charge or trial, and many were.

When they revolted in the late 1960s - at first demanding equality within the Six Counties state, or, as some of them said, "British standards" - they were met with the heavy hand of first the Orange and then the British state. Internment camps were set up. Large-scale repression hit the Catholics with such force that it drove many of them to acceptance of the Provisional IRA.

On 30 January 1972 in Derry the British Army opened fire on an unarmed political demonstration, killing fourteen, among them a number of teenagers.

Since then there has been - essentially - deadlock. The Six Counties state is maintained at whatever cost. It is now a giant ghetto and an economic slum. The British state guards the border and patrols the streets, as of a great prison compound.

Prospects? The 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement gives Dublin a political say in the running of the Six Counties. It has changed nothing very much.

Now, there is - let us be clear about it - in Ireland a real minority problem: the problem of how the one million strong Protestant minority relates to the Catholic majority on the island. The decisive opposition to a united Ireland comes not from Britain but from one million Irish people.

The evidence suggests that Britain would like to get out. But Britain is locked into maintaining the Six Counties/26 Counties status quo, than which it is hard to imagine a worse "solution" to Ireland's minority/majority problem.

"The people of Northern Ireland are victims of Britain's brutal imperialist 'settlement' of the 'Irish Question' in 1921-22."

Instead of the peoples of Ireland being allowed to work out their own relations to each other, establishing a *modus vivendi* over time, Ireland was artificially split in two by partition - and in such a way that the Catholic minority in the Protestant state is a much bigger proportion of the Six Counties population than all the Protestants of Ireland would be as a proportion of a 32-counties United Ireland.

That alone shows up the absurdity of the present arrangements - out of which came desperate men and women with bombs to kill children in Warrington.

Britain, the British ruling class, created this monstrous arrangement. They - the fathers and grand-fathers of those whose voice echoes in the *Sunday Express* editorial - did not do it by sweet reason or by democratic parliamentary procedures. They carved up Ireland by way of a bloody terroristic war against the supporters of the democratically elected Dublin government, whose territory they occupied. British gangs - the Black and Tans are the best known - raged around Ireland shooting at random, pillaging and burning rural factories, towns, and even the whole centre of Cork City.

They got the Irish bourgeoisie to agree - temporarily, they said - to the present partition by the credible threat to wage, as the only alternative, a renewed "terrible and bloody" war against the people of southern Ireland, which the British Army was still occupying.

"The two dead children in Warrington are being used to sell the great lie that the status quo in Northern Ireland would be all right if only the 'men of violence' would go away".

During those 1921 negotiations, in which nationalist Ireland's representatives talked with a British gun to their heads, and a powerful British army still in occupation of all Ireland, the British state was making detailed plans for that war. The plans included - as has since been revealed by way of official state papers - preparations to round up a proportion of the southern Irish population and imprison them in "concentration centres".

ALL THE PEOPLE of Northern Ireland - Protestant majority as well as the artificially created Northern Ireland Catholic minority - are now the victims of that brutal imperialist "settlement" of the "Irish Question" in 1921-22.

The history of Ireland's relations with England is, as I guess you will know in general, a terrible history. It is a history of the conquest and then the enslaving and repeated robbing - with vast recurrent slaughters - of the people of the smaller island. Wars of genocide were waged; for centuries the whole Catholic people were treated as the South American Indians were treated by the Spanish conquistadors or the South African black people by the whites.

And, after the Celtic people of Ireland, surviving the massacres and the centuries of slavery in our own



In January 1972 the British Army killed 14 unarmed demonstrators in Derry. Those deaths - and the death of Johnathan Ball (right) - are the result of Britain's use of force to uphold a structure which breeds conflict and despair

country, finally won a half-acceptable settlement with the powerful British Empire 70 years ago, it proved not to be a settlement. Partition bred strife, hatred, and murder. It is not, as the canting hypocrites in the British press say, a collective Celtic Irish neurosis about ancient wrongs that generates continuing conflict. Not ancient wrong but continuing present wrong generates events like Warrington.

The British ruling class's continuing crime against Ireland - and against the people of guiltless Warrington and other places - is that it continues to maintain an untenable status quo.

What, you will ask, is the alternative, given that the fundamental problem in Northern Ireland is the determination of the one million Protestants that it should remain as it is?

The only way out is through the creation of a free United Ireland within which the Protestant-majority areas would have regional autonomy. Ties of some confederal sort between that United Ireland and Britain would give further guarantees to the Protestants that this solution aimed to do away with the oppression of the Northern Catholics, but not to replace it by making the Protestants a new oppressed minority.

The programme of a federal united Ireland is not a magic solution to be presented to Westminster and Dublin - but it is the only solid political base on which a united Catholic-Protestant workers' movement can be built and can give answers to the national and communal conflicts which are torturing Ireland, and, now, killing British children.

Our concern - yours as well as mine, as trade unionists and socialists - is not with the uniting or the separation of territory. We are concerned with the uniting of people.



The great Irish Republican James Connolly - the trade union leader whom the British ruling class shot at the public urging of the Dublin Catholic capitalists - once rebuked ancestors of the Provisional IRA, saying: "Ireland apart from her people means nothing to me".

The task is to find a way of uniting the Irish people. Our ideas about some form of federal Ireland would allow socialists - British as well as Irish - to talk to our class in Northern Ireland across the sectarian divide.

I put nothing forward as a panacea, or an "easy" solution. No such thing exists. Above all else, however, British socialists and trade unionists need to resist the British ruling class - whose ideas are also expressed within the right wing of the Labour Party.

Resist their propaganda. Know that more repression in Northern Ireland is not the answer. Don't let the *Express* and the *Sun* and the other callous lying hypocrites brainwash you.

Maintain and develop the unity of British and Irish workers in the labour movement of this country. Argue for a consistently democratic solution to the majority-minority conflict in Ireland, and specifically in Northern Ireland.

The Provisional IRA is a symptom, not the root cause, of Northern Ireland's problem. The British Establishment - and their Irish bourgeois collaborators - are the biggest villains in this tragedy.



You would not trust your country to this man

The other Paul Foot

GRAFFITI

A BIZARRE STORY of twins separated at birth has emerged in the last week. It concerns Daily Mirror columnist Paul Foot, and his identical twin, an SWP devotee, who by a strange twist of fate is also called Paul Foot.

Paul Foot (*Mirror*) could be seen last week standing outside the Mirror buildings giving out samizdat copies of his banned column, campaigning fearlessly for a free and open press.

How very different this is to the actions of his estranged twin brother. Paul Foot II is part of the leadership of the SWP. One of the joys of Paul II's life is to breeze contemptuously past people giving out leaflets, banned documents, and articles refused publication in *Socialist Worker*, outside SWP events. Paul II is noted for his speaking public-school man's disdain for this motley crew of people, many of whom have been expelled from the SWP for having views at variance with leaderships.

Their ranks have recently been swelled by some who were too quick and vocal in pointing out that the "General Strike Now" slogan carried by *Socialist Worker* for 15 minutes last October was as credible as a Serbian ceasefire. Paul Foot II will not be championing their rights to a hearing inside the SWP or to a dissidents column in *Socialist Worker*.

Perhaps if they were to meet up over a glass of champagne, Paul Foot (SWP) could learn a few lessons on democracy from Paul Foot (*Mirror*).

K IM CAMPBELL, a 46 year old lawyer (what else!), is tipped to be the first female Prime Minister of Canada. Like the neighbouring US President she has admitted to smoking cannabis when a student, "and I inhaled the smoke" she admitted, unlike Clinton who claimed he didn't. This must make her a more suitable candidate for high office than Clinton. Well, would you trust your country to someone who couldn't even smoke a joint properly when they were a student?

N OW THAT Clinton is reneging on his election pledge to allow lesbians and gay men equal rights in the military — he's setting up a special congressional committee to waste as much time as possible in the hope that everyone will forget about the issue

— the forces of the homophobic right are organising.

A group of officers — it includes four retired four star generals — called the "Defence Readiness Council" is to lobby their way through the American political system. Other groups are less subtle in their approach, such as the tactfully named Back in the Closet, whose national organiser Harley David Belew promised: "we will not stand idly by and watch the fascist perverts from hell sodomise our US military".

L ABOUR'S PLANT Commission on electoral reform is deadlocked. The issue? Which voting procedure to be used in the commission to decide what kind of voting procedure should be proposed!

If voting in the commission is by first-past-the-post then it will probably recommend first-past-the-post, because those who want reform are split between two options. First-past-the-post has seven votes, next to six wanting a mixed member system (extra seats for under-represented parties) and three for a supplementary vote system (first and second choices in individual constituencies). If the first-past-the-post system is rejected (because the majority are in favour of some kind of reform) then the least favoured option, the supplementary vote, becomes favourite because the first-past-the-post supporters will support it as a second preference. Clear so far?

But the mixed vote system has an ace up its sleeve. It is claiming the vote of Lord Underhill, a member of the commission who was so enthused by its three years of deliberation that he died.

I T IS LITTLE surprise to me that fundamentalist US Christians are setting their sights on the former Soviet Union (CIS), rushing in hot on the heels of market capitalism. 50 million Bibles have been sent to Russia and the Ukraine and that is only a start.

In some parts of the CIS the local pagans can now listen to 24 hours a day of fundamentalist radio. The biggest born again Bible school in the world, the Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, has set up a Russian branch. An evangelist group called CoMission is implementing a "five year plan" (their phrase, honestly) to put a Christian teacher into every public school.

After a taste of this, it is surprising that some Russians want to return to Stalinism?

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

P AUL FOOT'S tongue was not entirely in his cheek when he compared himself to the Gary Cooper character in "High Noon", saying "This place is too small for them and me together". There's certainly no doubt about who the bad guys in the black hats are: Mirror Group chief executive David Montgomery and his faintly ludicrous side-kick, the *Daily Mirror* editor David Banks.

Ever since the former Murdoch hatchet man Montgomery took over last October, the *Mirror* has been in crisis. Forty journalists have been sacked or driven to resignation, the NUJ chapel has been virtually smashed, morale is at rock-bottom and circulation is plummeting. Even Montgomery's repeated

protestations of loyalty to the Labour Party have not allayed the suspicion that his plans include the "depoliticisation" of the *Mirror* and its associated titles.

Now Paul Foot is taking a stand. In some ways, the "High Noon" analogy isn't entirely ridiculous: he's on his own and showing quite a lot of personal courage. On Tuesday 30th he resigned from the *Mirror*, probably just before being sacked.

L AST FRIDAY, Foot's weekly column failed to appear. This was because it attacked Montgomery, Banks and the new regime at the *Mirror*. It began: "After months exposing callous sackings and victimisations across the country, I devote my page today to the astonishing events at the *Mirror*". Foot went on to list journalists who have left and described the management's systematic union-bashing. He added "All is gloom and fear. No-one knows where next the axe will fall".

When, unsurprisingly, Banks refused to publish the column, Foot distributed specially-printed copies to journalists and passers-by outside the *Mirror*'s Holborn office. He promised to "confront" the management "next week with a column

whose content will not be dissimilar to the one I have presented today".

Banks responded with a snide (and probably libellous) statement announcing that Foot was being sent home on 'sick leave' (and full pay of £55,000) and was being "encouraged to seek professional help to deal with his growing sense of isolation".

Like I said, Montgomery and Banks are most certainly the guys in the black hats. But is Footie entirely cut out for the Gary Cooper role? I'm not so sure. For one thing,

there's that nagging question, why didn't he force a similar showdown with Robert Maxwell?

Foot is understandably sensitive to criticism on that point, and argues that at least Maxwell didn't try to smash the union or interfere in his column. The thousands of ripped-off Maxwell pensioners and the sacked Pergamon workers might well question Foot's sense of priorities on that score.

Gary Cooper he ain't. But, of course, I wish him well against the guys in the black hats.



Foot handing out his samizdat

Putting words in Malcolm X's mouth

RACE AND CLASS

By Martin Thomas

L AST WEEK I looked at *Militant*'s pamphlet on Malcolm X, and this column will examine *Socialist Outlook*'s, "The Revolutionary Quality of Malcolm X".

The bulk of the pamphlet is an article by the American socialist Steve Bloom, and I think Bloom is right on one point: we should learn more from what Bloom calls Malcolm's "methodology" than his detailed conclusions.

Time was when political thinkers would simply have a "method", but Bloom must make Malcolm "have an ology"! What he means, however, is Malcolm's "uncompromising honesty and incorruptibility" and I think it is true: those qualities are what makes Malcolm's "Autobiography" a great book, even though it also contains almost none of the quasi-socialist politics of Malcolm's last months.

Bloom however, goes on to compare or even equate the "methodology" with that of "Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trot-

sky, Rosa Luxemburg, James P Cannon..."

This turns Bloom's valid point into nonsense. Marx, Trotsky, and the rest were honest and incorruptible: they also had the advantage of working out their ideas within a vast body of theory, each of them adding to what the previous ones had developed. Even Marx, who pioneered "Marxism", consciously based himself on the previous work of great thinkers and researchers, whose writings he studied minutely.

Malcolm did not have that advantage. When he tried to analyse the "economic exploitation" of the mass of black people in the US, what seemed to him most clear, and what he mentioned in his basic documents of his Organisation for Afro-American Unity, was greedy landlords and shopkeepers. Relations between workers and employers did not figure. A Marxist sees the *fundamental* exploitation in the surplus value squeezed out of black workers by employers, an exploitation which underpins all others, and relative to which all overpricing, cheating, and so on is secondary. To see that we have to analyse and dissect what lies behind a "fair price" for anything, and a "fair wage".

Not everything is as it seems to a person educated in capitalist America, even if he looks at it honestly and unblinkingly. And the *method* to see how things really are comes from a whole scientific tradition, not revelations made by or attributed to individual seers!

Bloom compounds his nonsense-making by giving a detailed list of Malcolm's "programme and strategy for the Black movement".

Malcolm himself emphasised that "The importance of these [OAAU] meetings... is not so much to spell out any programme; you can't give people a programme until they realise they need one... what we would like to do... is to go into our problems, and just analyse and analyse and analyse..." But Bloom gives Malcolm a programme. He sums it up as "revolutionism" plus "the need for the Black community to rely only on itself to resolve its problems", and endorses it - *with one criticism*.

Bloom criticises "Malcolm's continuing adherence to religious ideology as the basis for building an organisation". The criticism is unjust: Malcolm's main efforts in his last months went into the *secular* Organisation of Afro-American

Unity. To cite this unjust criticism, and to ignore the crucial criticism which Bloom's teacher George Breitman made clearly but without shrillness — that Malcolm never agreed with Marxists about the *working class*, or the centrality of black and white workers' unity — suggests that those Marxist ideas about class struggle as central have become blurred in Bloom's own mind.

Indeed, Bloom makes Malcolm more "Black nationalist" than he really was. In his last months Malcolm still insisted on autonomous black organisation, but he rejected the idea that the "Black community [could] rely only on itself to resolve its problems".

"When the day comes when the whites who are *really* fed up... learn how to establish the proper type of communication with those uptown [in Harlem] who are fed up, and they get some coordinated action going, you'll get some changes. *And it will take both*" (emphasis added).

Malcolm had not identified white *workers* as the crucial group to unite with, or *class struggle* as the basis to unite on, but he had rejected the narrow "Black nationalism" which Bloom puts in his mouth.

Anti-abortion gangsters come to Britain

By Jean Lane

THIS WEEK militant anti-abortionists in an organisation called Rescue America will come to Britain and picket family planning and abortion clinics. Their activities in America, apart from picketing clinics, have included screaming abuse and brandishing pictures of aborted fetuses at women going into them, and storming operating theatres to prevent abortions taking place. Staff who work in the clinics have been subjected to abusive phone calls, called 'Nazis', and have had their photographs taken, turned into posters and displayed in town centres.

One of these so-called 'Pro-life' campaigners shot a doctor dead on a Rescue America picket two weeks ago. The member clinics of the International Planned Parenthood Federation in America have told the offices in Britain to expect fire bombs and acid attacks. At the weekend, Federation staff were already being photographed on their way into work, by an 'advance party' of eight.

Women don't make the decision to go for an abortion lightly. It is not a pleasant experience. And they generally subject themselves to it because the alternative is too horrendous to contemplate. Either the woman is too young and still dependent on her own parents, too old for the birth or upbringing to be safe, too poor for either the mother or the baby to have any kind of quality of life. Whatever the reason, women who have fought for the woman's right to choose whether or not to have a baby have always upheld that she should be able to control her own body and fertility, rather than be at the mercy of doctors, the church or some other arm of the state — or, for that matter, some religious crank brandishing pictures of fetuses on draining boards when she is at the most vulnerable she will ever be in her life.

Women For Choice have always maintained that the majority of unwanted pregnancies could be avoided with better sex education and more research into contraception methods. Abortion is an undesirable necessity, not a method of contraception. They have also upheld that dangerous, late abortions could be avoided with a better



Pro-choice demonstrator in the US where anti-abortionists are losing ground

funded and more efficient National Health Service. Most late abortions are so because of the slowness of the referral system and even because of conscious delaying tactics of anti-abortion doctors, thereby putting the woman's health at risk.

Today, sex education in schools is under attack from those who do not want young people to have an informed choice about how to behave and who, despite 8,000 pregnancies amongst girls under 16 years of age every year, do not want them to be issued with contraceptives.

Millions of pounds are spent on developing cosmetics. L'Oreal, for example allocates £110 million a year (twice as much as Britain spends on breast cancer screening) and employs 1,500 people to carry out research into their products which have the sole purpose of making women look alluring and sexually attractive. Boots, however, the main purveyor of contraceptive devices, invests around £2 million a year and

employs 200 research scientists to 'develop a variety of products'. What proportion of this goes to health and what to beauty I do not know; but even if all of it were spent on the development of fail-safe contraception, it would be a drop in the ocean compared to the massive cosmetics industry, the advertising of which is aimed almost entirely at young women. Once they have achieved the goal the advertising industry tells them is paramount — i.e. they get their man — all helpful advice is dropped. "You made your bed, now lie in it".

Ironically, the Rescue America

"One of the so-called 'Pro-life' campaigners shot a doctor dead on a Rescue America picket two weeks ago."

operation is aimed mainly, so far, at the International Planned Parenthood Federation, an umbrella organisation for contraception, sex education as well as information about abortion around the world. They do not run abortion clinics, but liaise and gather information from services from 140 different countries.

A spokeswoman from the IPPF explained, "They have chosen to picket us because we are an international organisation. Since Clinton got elected in America, they feel they are losing ground, so now they are going further afield to try to get more publicity. We are the biggest family planning organisation in the world". She added, "We prefer it if they do picket us rather than a clinic where they can harass the women going in who are already feeling very vulnerable".

The aim of IPPF is to "ensure

every child born is wanted and loved, and the incidence of unplanned pregnancy is reduced, through provision of quality family planning advice and services". Rescue America, however, prefer to describe them as "the biggest enemy of the human race after its ally, Satan".

If Rescue America were really against abortion, rationally they should be helping the IPPF develop its sex education and contraception services. These are what prevent unwanted pregnancy and therefore abortion, not pickets, physical attacks, verbal abuse or ignorance or cut backs in our health service. These people are not against abortion so much as women's rights. And they are not for life so much as ignorant existence. They are anti-progress, right-wing, religious cranks and should be condemned as such.

The National Abortion Campaign in Britain plan to mobilise and to inform clinics in danger as soon as they hear of any attacks. They have dealt with Rescue America before. Three years ago, in Manchester, NAC performed escort duties outside a clinic under attack and also organised a demonstration in the city centre. Mandy Coates of NAC said, "Our action was very successful. Rescue America got no support. They were completely marginalised and went back to America with their tails between their legs. We hope to send them the same way this time". She also told *SO* that since news of this new arrival of Rescue America to Britain they have been inundated with calls from people expressing their support, and angry at the threat to their rights.

"These people are from the Bible-belt of America. Their wacky views will not get so much of a hearing over here." Indeed, Don Treshman, the director of Rescue America, got very little audience for his views when he was arrested and since he might be deported.

The deportation of one man, however, will not stop the attacks on abortion provision, whether from loonie groups like Rescue America, or from the forces within Britain like Life and SPUC who would have provision stopped by law. Women must defend their right to choose. Contact the National Abortion Campaign: 071-923 4976.

The National Abortion Campaign

Cabaret For Choice

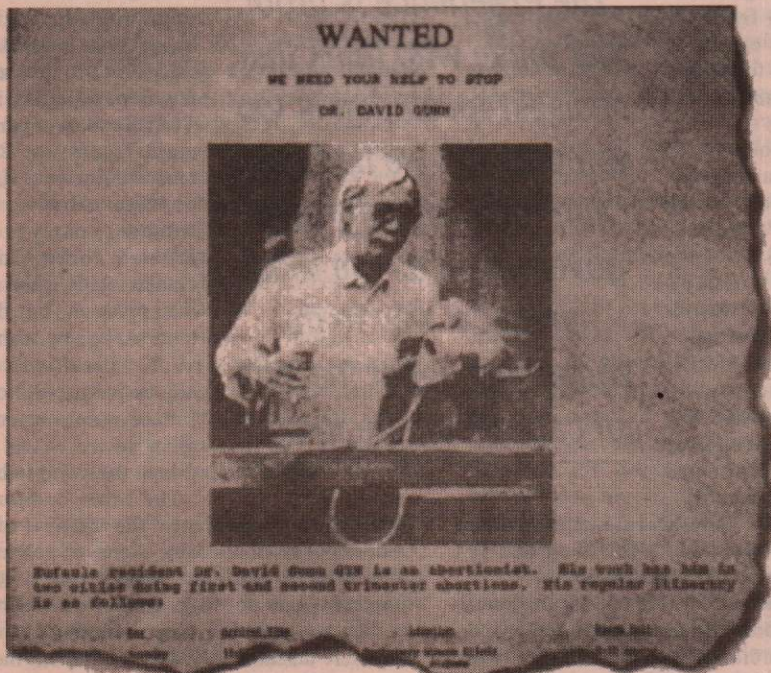
Sunday 25 April 1993
Hackney Empire
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7.30 (doors 6.30)

Tickets £8 (£5 concessions)

With Val Lehman (Bea Smith from *Prisoner*); the Well Oiled Sisters, Mark Thomas, Hank Wangford; Jenny Lecoat; Rhona Cameron; Donna McPhail; Patience Agbabi; Frank Chickens; Jungr and Parker; Melanie and Olly Blanchflower; Adeola; Mother's Ruin

Details from NAC: 071-923 4976, The Print House, 18 Ashwin Street, London E8 3DL.

To raise much-needed funds for the NAC and its campaigns



Anti-abortion vigilantes put out a "wanted" poster for doctor David Gunn — then one of them shot him dead

Ban on fascist books is folly

POLITICAL FRONT

By Colin Foster

THE ANTI-NAZI League has been campaigning to get books by David Irving removed from university libraries in Manchester and London, and has succeeded in getting them banned from the shelves and put in reserve stacks, according to a report in the *London Student* newspaper.

David Irving is a fascist and a Nazi apologist, and for the Anti-Nazi League — which is run by the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) — that is reason enough for the ban.

From a principled socialist point of view, however, the ban is utter folly.

The idea of removing books which "might give offence to some people" — to quote the words with which the head librarian in London justified his ban — is calculated to exclude anything outside a bland liberal consensus. It can be used to ban socialist or feminist books as easily as fascist books.

The slogan "No Platform for Fascists!" has no grip here. To stop fascists getting a menacing and strong-looking presence with a paper sale on a street corner is one thing; to ban fascist books from libraries, quite another. Fascists do not recruit by getting people to study in libraries!

The ban can only give fascists a political boost by enabling them to campaign under the slogan of "freedom of speech".

If Irving's books are to be banned, then are all other books by fascists to be removed too? Books by fascists such as the poets W B Yeats and Ezra Pound, or the philosopher Martin Heidegger?

Who decides which books by fascists should be allowed, and which not? If that censor is allowed to read the books, then why not the rest of us?

How do we study fascism, and learn how it grows, the better to be able to combat it, if we can't read what fascists write?

And what about books like Irving's on the British air force's bombing of Dresden in 1945, which killed some 135,000 people, almost all civilians? Should the British government be protected from exposure because the writer exposing them is a fascist?

Of course, a university librarian anxious for a quiet life is an easier target than a fascist streetfighter in East London. And that must be the real reason for the ANL/SWP's campaign.

As with their campaign for a boycott of the film *Romper Stomper* — made by anti-Nazis, and showing Vietnamese immigrants in Australia fighting back successfully against a disintegrating and demoralised fascist gang — the ANL/SWP is just looking for an easy way to make a noise and gain publicity, not for serious action against fascism.

France, 1981 to 1993

The collapse of left

Martin Thomas looks at the lessons of the ignominious defeat of the Left in France's parliamentary elections on 21 and 28 March

IN 1981, A SOCIALIST PARTY government was elected in France with great hopes and acclamation. The French Left had ended 23 years of solid right-wing rule, and it had done it on a manifesto far to the left of anything the British Labour Party has ever offered (except perhaps in 1945).

The Left victory was, indirectly but clearly, an after-effect of the tremendous general strike of May-June 1968. That general strike broke the morale and the authority of the Gaullist right-wing political machine which ran France.

On the left, its immediate effect was greatly to increase the strength of the various revolutionary groups. But in the early 1970s it had another effect. Hundreds of thousands of young people who had been radicalised by 1968, but now reckoned that revolution was too remote to be worth working for, joined the reformist parties.

The Communist Party grew from 350,000 members in 1966 to 703,000 in 1978. The Socialist Party grew from a miserable 61,000 in 1971 to 200,000 in 1978.

In 1972 the Socialist Party and Communist Party agreed a "Common Programme" for a "Union of the Left". The alliance won voters to the Left, and especially to the Socialist Party, which was a more plausible immediate reforming party of government than the Communist Party. From a low point of only 5% in the 1969 presidential election, the Socialist Party rose to 30% or more.

The Communist Party did not gain votes, and even lost a little from its traditional 20% or so. While militant workers joined the Communist Party, the mass of workers voted Socialist.

Still, by the late 1970s, the Left could command nearly 50% of France's votes. What finally tipped the scale in the May 1981 presidential election was not a further shift to the left, or a working class upsurge — in fact, the Left parties and working-class militancy had declined somewhat since the late '70s — but a further disintegration of the Right, with the sections of the centre going over to the Socialist presidential candidate, Francois Mitterrand.

In the parliamentary elections which followed in June, the Communist Party declined from 86 parliamentary seats to 44, but the Socialist Party rose from 107 to 273, and the Left alliance had a big parliamentary majority.



Mitterrand: radical promises in 1981, austerity by 1982

"A Left government was elected with great hopes. But a big trade deficit and the accompanying threats and agitation from financiers was enough to break the Government's weak reforming will."

Regis Debray, who had become famous as an advocate of Che Guevara's strategy of revolutionary guerrilla warfare in Latin America, became a presidential adviser. Ronald Reagan's government in the US voiced loud alarm and dismay over the presence of "Communist" ministers in the new government.

Many on the revolutionary left were up to their ears in illusions: *Socialist Challenge*, the forerunner of *Socialist Outlook* exclaimed excitedly that the Left victory was "an historic opportunity for socialism", and their comrades in France, the LCR, denounced the more sober-minded revolutionaries of Lutte Ouvrière for "sectarianism" because they had a "scowling expression" amidst the general rejoicing.

The Left had promised sweeping nationalisations, progress towards a 35 hour work week and longer holidays, an increased minimum wage, other welfare benefits, and government-propelled economic expansion to create full employment.

It started with some reforms. A lot of firms were nationalised, in banking, insurance, and across industry. The state came to dominate steel, coal, chemicals, aerospace, telecommunications, computers, electronics, and a large part of the car industry — accounting in all for half the total output of France's big manufacturing firms.

The legal working week was cut from 40 hours to 39 hours, and workers got a fifth week's annual holiday. Some welfare benefits were increased.

YET UNEMPLOYMENT continued to rise. It rose more slowly than elsewhere in Western Europe, but it rose to two and a half million. And France developed a big trade deficit (more imports than

exports), which threatened to bring a collapse in the value of the franc.

That — and the accompanying threats and agitation from financiers — was enough to break the Government's weak reforming will. In June 1982, only one year after taking office, the Socialist/Communist Government declared a "pause" in reforms. In March 1983 it announced a complete switch to a policy of "austerity".

Soon it was throwing tens of thousands of steelworkers and coal miners out of jobs — doing the same thing as Margaret Thatcher's Tory Government was doing at the same time in Britain, and in no very different way.

The Communist Party left the government in July 1984, but with a whimper rather than a bang. Despite its growth of membership in the 1970s, the Communist Party had been decaying internally for many years. Now that almost no-one in France could believe that the USSR represented a better model of society, the Communist Party had nothing to set it off politically from the Socialist Party except an evil reputation for Stalinism and a bombastic and blustering style.

An opinion poll in April 1984 gave a startling picture of the decay of the Communist Party electorate. Only 35% of the Communist Party's diminished army of still-faithful voters had a good opinion of the USSR. Only 36% had a good opinion of Marxism. 40% wanted less state economic intervention, 45% wanted public spending cuts, 47% thought that the more liberal attitudes of the 1960s and '70s on sex were a bad thing, and 51% supported state aid to Catholic schools.

The schools issue was a big one for the Socialist Party — if only because a very large proportion of the Socialist Party's activists were schoolteachers in the state schools — but they failed even on that. In 1984 they abandoned

their efforts to stop state aid to the Catholic schools.

They tried to regain political ground on other non-economic issues, by co-opting Green and anti-racist leaders, but with little effect.

In new parliamentary elections in 1986 the Right won a narrow majority. Under France's constitution, however, the President, elected for a seven-year term, has as much power as parliament, or even more. The two years of "cohabitation" — with Francois Mitterrand of the Socialist Party as president, and right-winger Jacques Chirac as prime minister — proved miserable for the Right. In 1988 Mitterrand won a second term as president and called new parliamentary elections which brought the Socialist Party back into government.

Discarding all the promises of 1981, Mitterrand presented himself as the advocate of "normalcy" and stability — of austerity and cuts, maybe, but no more cuts than were necessary.

Chirac could only continue what the Socialist Party had been doing since 1982-3, and add a few denationalisations. To this day France's mainstream Right remains in a mess. It has no large, cohesive, well-rooted party like Britain's Tories. Chirac's Gaullist RPR is the nearest approach, but it has been shaken by scandals; and "Gaullism" — aggressive promotion of France as an independent great power — has little grip in the world today.

The other component of the right-wing alliance, the UDF, is only a coalition of small, unstable cliques of politicians.

The Right's landslide parliamentary victory this year comes not from a big rise in their vote — they got only 40%, less than they got when they were defeated in 1981! — but from the disarray of the Left and the rise of new political forces.



"The experience is proof that those who think that socialist revolution is too remote, and we had best aim for a left-reformist government as the most practical way to do something about the evils of capitalism, are fools."

reformism



Gaullist leader Chirac: the French Right is still badly organised

The Greens have gathered some protest votes which might otherwise have gone to the Left. But the biggest new force has been the fascist National Front.

IN 1981 FAR-RIGHT candidates totalled just 0.35% of the vote in the parliamentary elections. The National Front's first breakthrough came soon after the Left government's turn to austerity, at a by-election in September 1983. Then in June 1984 it won 11% of the vote in the Euro-elections. It has held on to that score ever since, sometimes doing better, rarely doing worse.

The NF's programme for the 1993 parliamentary elections makes their appeal clear: send immigrants back to the countries they came from, reserve jobs and welfare benefits for French people, restore the death penalty, denounce the Maastricht Treaty.

Many politicians on the mainstream Right wanted to make alliances with the NF. For now, the mainstream Right has settled on a policy of refusing such alliances — but trying to undercut the NF by increasing "respectable" racism. The axis of French politics has been shifted a long way towards open racism.

Even in 1981, the mainstream Left was never anything but chauvinist and nationalist. It promised a total ban on immigration! Far from criticising this policy from the left, the Communist Party was even more anti-immigrant than the Socialist Party. In early 1981, a Communist Party mayor in Vitry, near Paris, led a gang of thugs to smash up an immigrant workers' hostel — and the Communist Party justified his action, billing it as a protest against richer right-wing municipalities who "dumped" immigrant workers on the poorer left-wing municipalities.

The Left always promised to keep France's nuclear weapons, and never promised to give freedom to France's significant remaining colonies or to stop France's considerable neo-colonial intervention in West Africa. The Socialist Party did talk about giving immigrant workers the vote, but has never done anything about it.

The bulk of the NF's votes have come from the mainstream Right (it has taken away a very large proportion of the Gaullists' traditional working-class support) or from young people voting for the first time. The story that NF voters are mostly ex-Communists is a right-wing myth. Nevertheless, the deep-seated, long-standing chauvinist corruption in the politics of the

Left — and especially of what was the militant core of the Left, the Communist Party — must have helped to create the conditions in France's political culture for the NF to emerge as the main "radical" response to the debacle of the Socialist Party's reforming efforts.

There has been working-class resistance to the austerity. There was a big upsurge of student protest, and a sizeable strike wave, in late 1986, under the "cohabitation" regime; and, in 1990, a big youth revolt, starting in the secondary schools.

But, on the whole, the Socialist Party and the Communist Party have dragged the working class down with them.

Trade unionism in France has been weak since the 1950s. An appearance of strength was kept up by laws passed after the Second World War, which established the right of workers (all workers, unionised or not) to elect "delegates" or shop stewards, and gave those "delegates" legal protection. The unions were given a legal monopoly over candidates for the "delegates". They could thus maintain at least a show of representing the workforce with only a tiny handful of actual union members, and no rank-and-file involvement in union affairs.

The Mitterrand years — with permanent mass unemployment and the rundown of traditional industries — have cut union membership from 10 or 15% of the workforce to maybe as low as 5% today.

The big workers' party which might have organised and led a left-wing resistance to the Socialist Party government, the Communist

Party, was corrupted, demoralised, and discredited, both by its record in France and by its connections with the USSR. Both Communist Party and Socialist Party were too undemocratic for any serious debate on the record of the Left government to develop inside them. And the revolutionary left groups were not strong enough to fill the gap. They were dragged down by the general discredit of "the left".

On the whole, those revolutionary groups are weaker, or no stronger, than they were in 1981. In 1981, a revolutionary candidate won 670,000 votes in the presidential election. In 1993, the revolutionary candidates have gained a total of 448,000 votes in the parliamentary elections.

THE IMMEDIATE prospects for the French working class and the French left are bleak. Unemployment is near three million. Social inequality, which was greater in France in 1981 than in any other country in Western Europe, has increased under Mitterrand: the share of wages in value-added has gone down from 69% to 61%. Welfare benefits have been cut.

The Communist Party is a demoralised rump. The Socialist Party is in little better shape — battered by financial scandals, and facing proposals by one of its leaders, Michel Rocard, to dissolve it into a new, broad, centre-left party. There must be good opportunities for the revolutionary left groups to start emerging from the decline imposed on them by the discredit of official "communism" and "socialism", but they start with the odds against them: as things stand, the fascist NF is likely to be the most dynamic opposition to the new right-wing government.

The experience is terrible but conclusive proof that those who think that socialist revolution is too remote, and so we had best aim for a left-reformist government as the most practical way to do something about the evils of capitalism, are fools. They are chasing down a wrong turning which is more likely to lead to fascism than to social reform.

Geoff Ward reviews 'Hollywood versus America' by Michael Medved

Does film violence lead to violence?

JOHAN MAJOR RECENTLY berated TV for sending a "relentless diet" of violence into our living rooms, blaming it for the crime wave.

This attack was part of a right wing backlash. So is this book, *Hollywood versus America* by Michael Medved. It has caused quite a stir in the media.

Many of Medved's arguments are simply a right-wing defence of the state, the military, religion and the family.

He charges Hollywood with attacking and undermining those institutions and with glorifying violence to such an extent that it encourages destructive social behaviour.

Amongst examples, he cites the Oscar-winning *Silence of the Lambs* and Scorsese's *Cape Fear*. Anthony Hopkins has said he doesn't want to play Hannibal Lecter in any sequel — out of concern for the effect this character may be having on people.

Such concern is admirable. However, though Medved quotes sociological studies carried out over the last 30 years, it is still not known how modern thriller and horror movies affect people. 40 or 50 years ago — in Medved's cinematic 'golden age' — thriller and horror pictures were being criticised by the contemporary Medveds.

He argues that cinema does not simply reflect society but that it shapes things

too. Obviously, this is true. Nazi propagandist, Joseph Goebbels, greatly admired the way British cinema was used in this respect during the war.

Medved says that the ever-increasing sophistication of screen violence is proof that it is having an effect. Like drug addicts, we need higher doses as we become desensitised.

The problem with this, it seems to me, is that it blurs the distinction most people make between 'cartoon-style' violence on screen and real life.

"Medved writes with America in mind, ignoring differences with other countries where the same films are on show."

It was the court decision over the Rodney King beating that sparked a riot — a film portraying similar events would have probably just left people feeling outraged.

The Vietnam war movement was fuelled by the relentless violence shown on American television.

Learning from this, the allied governments during the Gulf war managed the media.

What we saw was a highly sanitised version of the events. The violence might have been a computer arcade game, so unreal was it. Obviously they took the view that we haven't had our brains sufficiently addled by the likes of Freddie Kruger.

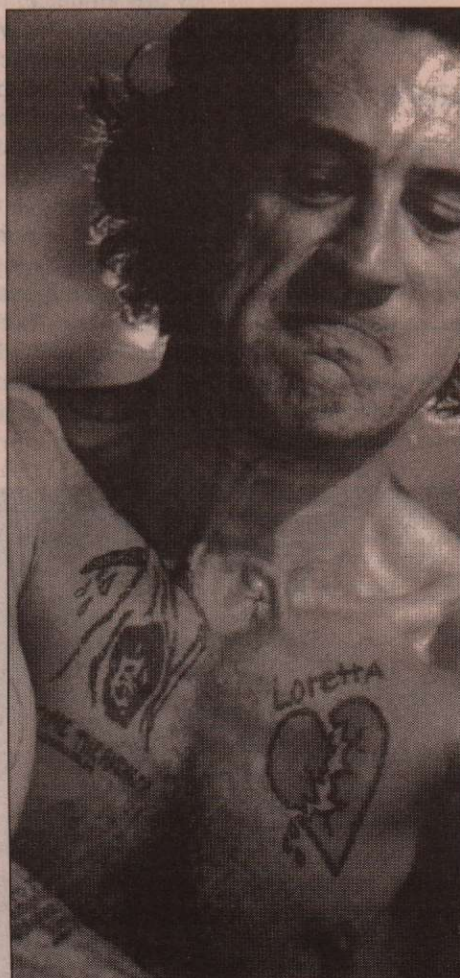
Medved writes with America in mind, ignoring differences with other countries where the same films are on show.

He simply does not address the more powerful factors that have led to crime increases, like the 35.7 million in the US living below the official 'poverty line'; the lack of welfare; mass unemployment; inner city decay, and the breakdown of the family, without an alternative to the family having emerged. A diet of what Medved would consider 'wholesome' films won't make these things disappear!

Medved has no answers, apart from self-censorship by film producers combined with some sort of production code.

To his credit Medved is against state censorship. I agree with his call for Hollywood to produce a greater variety of films of better quality.

The reaction against his views may be fuelled in part by the obvious implication that if many modern film producers are 'sick' and 'perverse' then the audiences must be too.



Films like *Cape Fear* with diets of unrelenting violence are used by Medved and the rightwing to explain the high crime rates

Socialism is the only roa

Fourteen years ago the Iranian monarchy was overthrown by mass risings in which the working class played a central role. But it was the mullahs, led by the Ayatollah Khomeini, who won power setting up a medieval-minded terrorist dictatorship which they described as an 'Islamic Republic'.

Here M Razi of the Iranian publication *Workers' Socialist Notebook* draws the balance sheet of fourteen years ago.



Fourteen years of clerical capitalist rule in Iran has only brought war (Iran-Iraq) and poverty for the Iranian working class. Photo: IFL

FOURTEEN YEARS after the February 1979 insurrection, all evidence shows that, despite the regime's claims, the ruling clique has not even been able to take the first steps towards economic reconstruction and political stability — even in the framework of a capitalist regime.

The appalling economic situation, the internal political crisis of the ruling clique and the fall in the toilers' living standard, unemployment and the high expense of basic necessities still continue.

Fourteen years of capitalist-clerical rule in Iran has once again in recent history shown that this capitalist regime — or any other capitalist government — is incapable of solving the problems of Iranian society.

To take even the most basic steps towards economic reconstruction, such regimes (and all their internal factions) must be

completely overthrown by the workers and toilers.

"The factions within the ruling clique are based on the future direction of economic policy they embrace."

From the beginning, this regime has on the whole been taking steps towards the restora-

tion of a modern capitalist regime closely linked with imperialism. This continuing process, however, has been slow and caught in a spiral of turmoil.

At present, the factions within the ruling clique are based on the future direction of economic policy they embrace.

Following the war with Iraq, the Rafsanjani faction has tried to implement the policy of 'freeing the economy' on the basis of the three slogans of 'reconstruction', 'adjustment' and 'development'. Known as the faction in favour of 'economic adjustment', they espouse having an open and official pro-imperialist policy.

The other faction, which grouped around Khameneii after the fourth Majles (parliament) elections, advocates an 'Islamic economy'.

THE RAFSANJANI faction wants the normalisation of open relations with western states, privatising state-owned factories, encouraging the return of the exile monarchist bourgeoisie for investment in industry and the implementation of the plan for a unified exchange rate for the Rial and so on. In other words, this faction wants a return to a regime similar to the Shah's, with the difference that the person in charge will have a turban instead of a crown.

"Both factions will have to adjust towards closer links with imperialism and the re-establishment of a modern capitalist system."

Such a system is acceptable to the imperialist states and Iranian capitalists — so long as amendments are made to article 81 of the Constitution, which prohibits foreign capitalists from investing in Iran, and article 44, which is against the 'freeing' of foreign trade, together with guarantees by a unitary state for the free circulation of capital.

However, the faction around

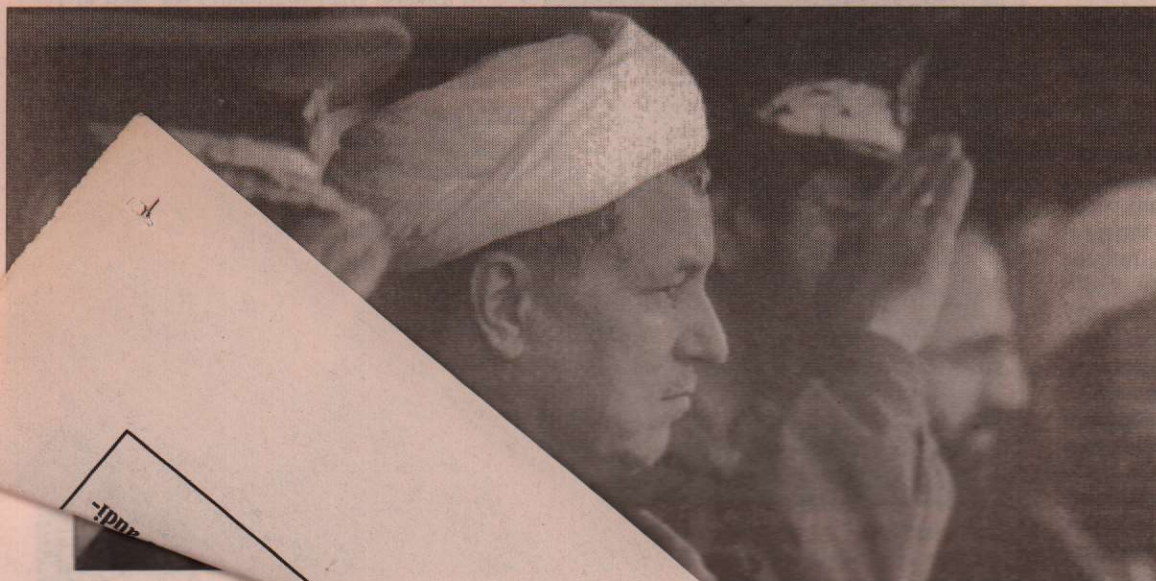
Khameneii — who until the election was Rafsanjani's mouthpiece — supports the continuation of the present 'Islamic' set up. The main reason is that this faction knows that Rafsanjani's "economic adjustment" will reduce their political influence.

It is obvious that the regime's in-fighting will not be solved peacefully and will be protracted. At the same time, however, both factions will gradually have to generally 'adjust' towards positions like closer links with imperialism and the re-establishment of a modern capitalist system.

The latest "hardline" faction (Khameneii and his gang) differs from the previous "hardliners" (e.g. Mohtashemi and Karroubi) in that it is itself evolving and is prepared to make a deal with imperialism like Rafsanjani — of course, this will be at a slower pace and will keep the regime's "Islamic" trappings.

THE MAIN ISSUE is that of having a bigger share of political power in future and the differences around the economic and trade policies of the internal factions of the ruling clique can be explained by such a context. Therefore, the main course of the ruling clique is one of the stabilisation of relations with the West, with the 'hardline' mullahs wanting a larger share of the power.

The in-fighting and differences will intensify in the months leading up to the Presidential elections. Rafsanjani — who in the



Mitterrand: radical austerity by 1982

... other words, a return to a regime

... for Iran

past few months has been forced to grant concessions to the Khameneii faction — has already announced his candidacy. He hopes that a second term as President will strengthen his position and ease the process of “economic adjustment” and that he will recoup the ceded concessions.

The process of “economic adjustment”, however, will not proceed smoothly — even if it is not opposed by the Khameneii faction and others. The Iranian economy is an afflicted economy that mullahs have inherited from the Shah. The economic crisis of countries like Iran is a structural crisis and will not be solved until a complete break with the capitalist system.

“Only letters of credit guaranteed by the state and the Central Bank will be accepted — all other Iranian banks have lost their creditworthiness.”

The “economic adjustment” policy of the capitalist regime in Iran, has in the past period been summed up in the import of expensive, low-quality goods from western countries, paid for through the export of oil and extensive borrowing from international banks and western states.

ONE OF THE MAIN problems at present is debt repayment — both letters of credit and loans. According to the *Le Monde* “1992 Economic and Social Balance Sheet”, the regime’s foreign debt reached \$12 billion last year and there is a shortage of currency reserves.

In 1991 the main European exporters to Iran* pressured the regime to abide by its financial obligations. In addition, recently the credit organisation of the Bern Union have said that from now on only letters of credit of over \$100 million that are guaranteed by the state and the Central Bank will be accepted — all other Iranian banks have lost their international creditworthiness.

The regime’s reaction, and its only possible course, has been to increase oil production.

At first the regime’s spokesmen completely denied the truth about the loans. Mohammad

Adeli, the governor of the Central Bank, said in a Tehran press conference that “Iran has no foreign debt” (*Salaam*, 22 August 1992) but in a recent interview with the *Financial Times* he admitted that there is a debt problem and that delays in payments had been caused by “bad management due to the lack of expertise on the part of the commercial banks rather than a shortage of foreign exchange” (*FT*, 8 February 1993).

To overcome its shortage of foreign exchange reserves, however, the regime has to increase oil production — its only source of income. According to the *Le Monde Annual*, the regime predicts that with a \$5 billion investment in the oil sector, oil production can be increased from 3.3 million barrels a day [b/d] to 4.5 million b/d in 1993. Also Gholamreza Aghazadeh, the Oil Minister, in a recent interview with *Middle East Economic Survey* said that Iran has proposed to OPEC that the price of oil be increased through a 10% reduction in overall production.

It is obvious that merely an increase in oil production or the reduction of imports — as passed by the Majles in the 1992-3 budget — will not solve the regime’s problems. The capitalist regime is in a permanent and deepening economic and political crisis and not only has the policy of “economic adjustment” been unable to solve any issue, it has even deepened the problems of Iranian workers and toilers.

Fourteen years of the capitalist-clerical government in Iran shows that the present ruling clique and all its internal factions are incapable of solving the social and economic problems of society. The political and economic crisis of Iran will not be solved by such a regime (or any other capitalist regime) and will even become intensified.

Organisations based within the working class and the toilers are the only revolutionary social force that can solve these problems after the overthrow of this regime and the establishment of a workers’ government.

* Germany, Italy, Britain and France exported \$4050 million, \$1814 million, \$920 million and \$915 million worth of goods to Iran respectively.

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Where has Socialist Outlook gone? Prisoners of the minority

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Rick Blain

REGULAR READERS OF THIS paper will be aware of our criticisms of the role played by certain *Socialist Outlook* supporters in last year’s London Underground debacle. We have documented how the supposed ‘class struggle leadership’ of the RMT’s London Transport District Council helped reduce the prospects of a successful struggle against the tube bosses’ Company Plan by refusing to do everything in their power to win united action alongside the drivers’ union ASLEF. We have been critical, too, of the evasive and dishonest way *Outlook*, as a paper, has covered this defeat [see *SO* 553].

If you publicly criticise another group on the left you can usually expect a certain amount of hostility in return, but many of us in *SO* were surprised, to say the least, by the level of crazy apolitical allegations thrown back at us by the *Outlook* leadership.

We were accused of all kinds of ridiculous things from supporting Boris Yeltsin to ‘fingering’ prominent trade unionists to management. When we caught *Outlook* red-handed inventing quotations and lying about us they responded by closing down the “debate” in the pages of their paper and refusing us the right to reply.

It is now possible to see why our attempt to discuss *Outlook*’s role in the London Underground dispute provoked such a hostile response: we have uncovered a bitter and poisonous internal factional squabble within *Outlook* itself.

Internal *Outlook* discussion papers that have been passed to *SO* reveal that the *Outlook* supporters who directed their role in the Underground dispute are part of a faction which runs the Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee and forms a hostile minority amongst *Outlook* supporters, posing as an “alternative leadership” to those who currently run the newspaper.

All this became very public at January’s National Miners’ Support Network conference, where *Outlook* supporters openly bickered amongst themselves after SMTUC secretary Carolyn Sikorski — a member of the “alternative leadership” — had publicly opposed a proposal, backed by *Outlook*, for proper time to be given over to practical discussions about how to organise solidarity for the miners.

The unfortunate byproduct of this internal *Outlook* dispute is a blind irrational hostility to *Socialist Organiser*. The *Outlook* minority accuse their leadership of “colluding” with *Socialist Organiser* in an attack on their trade union work; the majority respond by writing some feeble polemics against *Socialist Organiser* in their paper to placate them and shy away from sharing public forums or doing joint work with us.

There is a real point of substance here: the possibility of building serious left unity. In many areas of work — in the Labour Party, in the unions, in miners’ solidarity work — *Socialist Organiser* and *Outlook* supporters find themselves working side by side with a common orientation.

A serious socialist response to this situation would demand proper debate between our two

papers, with joint work going alongside organised discussion of the principled differences that currently divide us.

Instead, the documents reveal new levels of paranoia in *Socialist Outlook*.

In response to rank-and-file *Outlook* supporters trying to call their minority to account in the SMTUC, the minority have launched a frenzied attack on their leadership. They accuse them of launching a witch-hunt against them at the behest of *SO*; they claim that *Outlook* is in a “crisis of decline”; they brand the publication in their paper of a letter critical of *Outlook*’s coverage of the Underground dispute a “disgraceful factional manoeuvre”.

One of the central leaders of the minority goes so far as to state that:

“The core leaders of [*Socialist Outlook*] have given up the fight to build a current around the position of the USEC majority [i.e. the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, *Outlook*’s international co-thinkers] and are frog-marching [*Outlook*] towards fusion with *Socialist Organiser*”.

In a curiously apolitical reply, comrade “Clarke” (Phil Hearse) accuses them of mudslinging, and ritually repeats the majority’s “total opposition” to fusion with *Socialist Organiser*. As for the accusation of not fighting for the ideas of their international co-thinkers, there is silence — as well there might be. *Outlook*’s majority supporters have recently opposed the USFI’s recent turn towards fishing in the murky waters of the decomposing Stalinist movement.

So can we expect more feeble polemic against *SO* in the pages of *Outlook*, as the majority “prove” their opposition to any discussion with us?

Yes we can, but we will have to wait. *Socialist Outlook* has chosen the next five weeks to take a long break. Obviously they do not consider the remarkable step forward for the movement represented by the miners, railworkers and busworkers’ joint strikes to be a good enough reason to postpone the “revamping” of their paper. Perhaps this shows us something of *Outlook*’s priorities and makes it easier to understand why their leadership appear to care so little about the fate of the tube-workers.

The reason is that the *Outlook* leadership don’t really care about anything these days.

They really don’t seem very bothered by the fact that they have no coherent understanding of the collapse of Stalinism, nor any clear perspective for their supporters in the labour movement.

But, instead of trying to think through and debate these issues with others on the left, like ourselves, *Outlook*’s leaders shut their eyes and build an organisation that is a parody of the old International Marxist Group, held together by organisational loyalties irrespective of politics, but lacking the vim and vigour of their youth.

Such a policy cannot possibly succeed. The dogma upon which the USFI was built that the Stalinist regimes were “post-capitalist” has been decisively refuted by events since 1989.

Either *Outlook* leaders come to terms with this reality and discuss its implications with others on the left or *Outlook* will perish along with Stalinism itself.

“The unfortunate byproduct of this internal dispute is a blind, irrational hostility to Socialist Organiser.”

Crisis and profits

This week's "Elements of Marxism" is the last of our extracts from Rosa Luxemburg's summary of volumes 2 and 3 of Marx's *Capital*.

Luxemburg selects two issues for discussion: crises, and profits.

Reformist trade-union leaders in Luxemburg's day used an argument similar to the one that would be developed at greater length by the academic economist John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s: crises could be avoided by pumping up consumption, for example by raising wages.

But whatever the level of consumption — so Luxemburg argues, following Marx — the accumulation of capital will plunge ahead of the total market (made up of consumption and capitalist investment), and each boom will end in a slump.

Profits, for Marx, are only one expression of surplus-value, the extra value produced by the workers when they work longer hours than those necessary to produce the value-equivalent of their wages. And in profit surplus-value is expressed as a return on capital, not as a product of labour.

In volume 1 of *Capital* Marx warned that "the deviation of price from magnitude of value is inherent in the price-form itself" and that even "average prices do not coincide directly with the value of commodities". In volume 3 he explains: capitalist competition sets prices so as to share out the total surplus-value between capitalists in proportion to their capitals, not in proportion to the amounts of labour they employ.

Exploitation is therefore not essentially a relation between an individual capitalist and his workers but one between the whole capitalist class and the whole working class.

WHEN DEALING WITH the process by which the regular maintenance of society results from the chaotic movement of individual capitals, in the second volume, Marx naturally touches on the problem of the crises. One must not expect any systematic and didactic dissertation on this phenomenon. There are in fact only a few incidental observations, but the utilisation of these observations would be of the greatest value for all enlightened and thinking workers.

For instance, it is one of the main planks in the agitation of the social democrats, and above all of the trade-union leaders, that economic crises take place chiefly as the result of the short-sightedness of the capitalists, who simply will not grasp the fact that the masses of the workers are their best customers and that all they need do is to pay these workers higher wages in order to ensure the existence of unfailing purchasing power for their goods and thus avoid all danger of crises.

This argument is a very popular one, but it is wholly fallacious, and Marx refutes it in the following words:

"It is sheer tautology to say that crises are produced by the lack of paying consumption or paying consumers. The capitalist system recognises only paying consumers, with the exception of those in receipt of poor law support or the 'rogues'. That commodities are unsalable means no more than that there are no purchasers, or consumers, for them.

"And if people are inclined to give this tautology an appearance of some deeper meaning by saying that the working class does not receive enough of its own product and that the evil would be dispelled immediately it received a greater share, i.e. if its wages were increased, all one can say is that crises are invariably preceded by periods in which wages in general rise and the working class receives a relatively greater share of



Luxemburg argues the accumulation of capital will plunge ahead of the total market and so each boom will end in slumps, such as that of the 1930's

the annual product intended for consumption. From the standpoint of these valiant upholders of 'plain common sense', such periods should prevent the coming of crises.

"It would appear therefore that capitalist production includes conditions which are independent of good will or bad will and which permit such periods of relative prosperity for the working class only temporarily and always as the harbingers of the coming crises."

THE INVESTIGATIONS which Marx pursues in the second and third volumes of *Capital* offer a thorough insight into the nature of crises, which are seen to be the inevitable result of the movement of capital, which in its impetuous and insatiable urge to accumulation and growth quickly plunges beyond the limits of consumption, no matter how wide these limits may be set as the result of increased purchasing power of one section of society or by the opening up of new markets. Thus the idea of a harmony of interests between capital and labour which lurks behind the popular agitation of the trade unions, harmony which is prevented only by the short-sightedness of the capitalists, is refuted, and all hope of palliative measures to patch up the economic anarchy of capitalism must be abandoned.

The struggle to improve the material conditions of life of the proletariat has a thousand brilliant arguments in its favour in the intellectual armoury of the modern working-class, and it certainly does not need the help of a theoretically untenable and practically ambiguous argument such as the one dealt with above.

A second example: in the third volume of *Capital* Marx provides for the first time a scientific explanation of a phenomenon which has puzzled bourgeois economic science since its inception, namely that,

although invested under varying conditions, capital in all branches of production yields as a general rule only the so-called "customary rate of profit".

At first glance this phenomenon would seem to contradict a statement which Marx himself makes, i.e. that capitalist wealth arises exclusively from the unpaid labour of the wage-workers. How can the capitalist who is compelled to invest comparatively large proportions of his capital in lifeless means of production secure the same profit as his colleague who need invest far less of his capital in such things and can therefore use proportionately larger quantities of living labour-power?

MARX SOLVES THIS riddle with extraordinary simplicity by showing that with the sale of one sort of commodity above its value and other sorts of commodities below their value the differences in profit are levelled out and an "average rate of profit" developed for all branches of production. Quite unconsciously, and without any agreement amongst themselves,

the capitalists exchange their commodities in such a fashion that each capitalist contributes the surplus-value which he has extracted from his workers to a general pool, and the total result of their combined exploitation is then divided fraternally amongst the capitalists, each of whom receives a share in accordance with the size of his capital.

The individual capitalist therefore does not enjoy the profit which he directly extracts from his workers, but only his share of that total profit which he and his capitalist colleagues together have extracted from the workers.

"As far as profit is concerned, the various capitalists play the role of mere shareholders in a joint-stock company distributing its profits in equal percentages so that the

shares of the various capitalists differ only according to the amount of capital invested by each in the joint undertaking, according to the proportionate participation of each in the undertaking as a whole."

What penetrating insight into the real and material basis of capitalist class-solidarity are we offered by this apparently dry-as-dust law of the "average rate of profit"! We observe that although the capitalists are hostile brothers in their daily activities, nevertheless, as far as the working class is concerned they represent a sort of Freemasonry interested intensely and personally in the total result of all the exploitation conducted by all its members.

Although the capitalists have naturally not the least idea of these objective economic laws, their unfailing instinct as members of a ruling class shows itself in an appreciation of their own class interests and of their antagonism to the proletariat, and unfortunately it has persisted far more firmly through the storms of history than has the class-consciousness of the workers, whose scientific basis is revealed in the works of Marx and Engels.

These two short and arbitrarily chosen examples must suffice to give the reader some idea of what treasures still remain unmined in the second and third volumes of *Capital* and awaiting a popularisation, and what a wealth of intellectual stimulation and intellectual profundity they offer the enlightened workers.

Incomplete as the two volumes are, they offer more than any final truth could: and urge to thought, to criticism and self-criticism, and this is the essence of the lessons which Marx gave the working class.

Glossary

Didactic: textbook-like.

Tautology: something which is true by definition, like "all cats are feline", and which therefore tells us nothing about the facts of the matter.

Poor law support: 19th century version of the dole.

Harbingers: heralds, forerunners.

Palliative: piecemeal-reformist.

*"Crises are
invariably preceded
by periods in which
wages in general rise."*

Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews
Indochine

INDOCHINE IS FULL of nostalgia for France's lost empire, but it expresses it very oddly — as an elegy for a certain style, for a vanished way of living. The French rubber planters in Vietnam lived well, and the film envies them that, envies their wicker furniture, their linen clothes, their armies of docile servants, their big wooden houses with their slatted blinds and breezy verandahs, their vast landholdings. It even envies them their mangoes.

It's colonialism seen through the eyes of *Vogue*. What counts is not the position of France, but what France's position lets the planters have — luxury, chic, ease.

It's so obviously a fantasy world, and so shamelessly done, that the film doesn't offend as much as it might. It's as lightweight as a fashion spread in a glossy magazine.

Apart from the spectacular scenery, its only interest lies in the character of Eliane (Catherine Deneuve), an unmarried, childless plantation owner. It's the 1930s and Camille, the orphaned Vietnamese princess Eliane has adopted and raised as her own, has grown up. Eliane wants to see her married to Tanh, a wealthy childhood friend, who has been away to France to study.

But things go awry when Camille falls in love with Jean-Baptiste, the

Is there for honest poverty?

Is there for honest poverty
The hings his head an' a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by —
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Our toils obscure, an' a' that,
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hodden grey, an' a' that.
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their
wine —

A man's a man for a' that.
For a' that, and' a' that,
Their tinsel show, an' a' that,
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that?
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a cuif for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
His ribban, star, an' a' that,
The man o' independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that!
But an honest man's aboon his
micht —
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Their dignities, an' a' that,
The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray, that come it may
As come it will, for a' that —
That sense and worth o'er a' the earth
Shall bear the gree an' a' that;
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's comin' yet for a' that,
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brothers be for a' that.

Rabbie Burns



Catherine Deneuve as Eliane Davies with Linh Dan Pham as her adopted daughter Camille

Indo-chic

young naval officer with whom Eliane has been having an affair.

From then on, the film tries to engage with history, tries to show the stirrings of revolt and the spread of communism, and how the changing times affect the lives of the main characters.

It fails. There's too much scenery, for a start, and too much is left vague. People aren't filled in for us; whole stretches of the film are uninvolved.

Camille doesn't register until her last scene. There's real feeling in her last meeting with Eliane before she throws in her lot with the communists, but it comes much too late.

The opposite happens with Jean-Baptiste. At first, he's vivid, and the film seems anxious to see what he's made of. But it soon lets him drop. His relationship with Eliane simply evaporates; their break-up isn't explained, and his wish that she raise his son is a bolt from the blue.

Tanh, the good student who comes back from France on fire with revolutionary ideas, is cardboard, parroting Hollywood-style communist views; he's all head, no heart.

The film is simply uninterested in anyone but Eliane. With Deneuve at her best here, Eliane comes across as real, vulnerable but tough, practical but romantic. She's treated so sympathetically that it's hard to resist her, in spite of what she is. The film idealises her as it idealises France's colonial history.

Even when Eliane whips a plantation worker, the film doesn't disapprove. Even the worker doesn't: "You're my mother and my father," he says. So that's all right then.

Most French misdeeds are white-washed. When Jean-Baptiste burns a Vietnamese boat for suspected smuggling, the two peasants on board not only don't drown, but really were opium traffickers. He's exonerated.

In the few scenes where the peas-

ants riot or revolt, the French are never the target; it's always Indochinese mandarins in the firing line. When Eliane's rubber warehouse is burnt, it follows hard on the heels of her visit with a mandarin. The implication is clear; her link with the mandarin, not her race, was the cause.

"Even when Eliane whips a plantation worker, the film doesn't disapprove."

The film misses the irony that Tanh (and many like him) had to go to France to find out about liberty and equality, that there was precious little of either on offer under French rule in Indochina.

It's probably true that many of the

French colonials loved Indochina, that they were sad to leave, and longed nostalgically for their former home. But their feelings, painful as they were, are not the whole story. And painful feelings don't exonerate them from blame.

Eliane's is not the only point of view; what about the point of view of the Vietnamese? Their voices are ignored in this film. And no-one is brimming over with sympathy for them.

On the contrary. The film seems to think the Vietnamese were *lucky* to be colonised by France.

At the end, Eliane and her half-Vietnamese adopted son (the son of Camille and Jean-Baptiste) pass the Geneva hotel where the 1954 agreement to end French rule in Indochina is being made. Camille is inside, but her son doesn't want to see her. "You're my mother," he (Vietnam) says to Eliane (France). They don't come more shameless than that.

Disney Exist is conquering the Gorbals

Books

Anne Street reviews *Swing Hammer Swing!* by Jeff Torrington

JEFF TORRINGTON'S *Swing Hammer Swing!* is the Whitbread Book of the Year. Set in Glasgow's Gorbals in the late 1960s, it's about a week in the life of Tam Clay.

Tam's as ready to scrum for a rum, and bruise for some booze as the next man. But he's no wee tartan bendy gnome, with his eyeballs glued to his ass-hole in defence of the kailyard calm.

Tam's a Gorbals guru, a closet Buddha, a philosophical tramp mooching from one day to the next. In short, he's a feculent, fuck-up of a man.

This guy is into reading in a big way. And he's choosy with it. He doesn't rate Nietzsche's natterings much, any more than he's taken with

that bloke Plato (a right flannel merchant) or an Athenian windbag called Socrates.

Tam's mate Paddy Cullen shares his philosophical leanings: "D'you believe in this heaven 'n hell stuff, then?" "Aye, definitely. If it wisnae true there widnae be sausages."

It's that wee French frog Pascal and his Pongsees that grab Tam's attention. Pascal's concept of human snuffability means a lot for Tam: the slumrasers' demolition hammer is destroying Tam's universe of the Gorbals, clearing the way for Big Stone Wigwags in the sky.

Like a family of hypocrites dumping Granny in Crackpot Castle, the City Blethers are dispatching the Gorbalsionians to the publess plains and vertical Barlinnies of Castlemilk, that vast cemetery with traffic lights on the outskirts of Glasgow.

The local barber is moving on ("People go — they take their hair with them") whilst the closure of the local cinema means curtains for mint imperial junky Matt Lucas and for Paddy Cullen, the man whose drink-

mailed liver will be offered as damning evidence by the prosecution on Judgement Day.

Even Shug's Bum Boutique (the Gorbals public loo, used by Tam as a mailing address; postcode, WC1) is being shut down, with Shug shunted off to an uptown crapper: "Just a load of poofs and ponces up there, no a decent shit amongst them".

And talky Sloan is deid. The sturdy denouncer of the boorjwazee in the Commie Corner of the Salty Dog Saloon copped an arseful of a 37 corpy bus in Croon Street.

Soon there'll be fuckaw left. Nae Salty Dog. Nae Planet Cinema, the shops away as well. Bugger all left. Christ, even the Jerries couldnae manage that. The scunnosome world of Disney Exist is conquering the Gorbals.

The future for Tam is spelt Castlemilk and holds no attraction. The offer of a council house there does not fire him with enthusiasm: "it had all the allure of a cable which read: Pack Case Stop Come At Once Stop Have Wangled Us a Berth on

the Titanic".

His wife's attempts to get him to work in Uncle Billy's banana warehouse ("Billy's been in the same warehouse for ten years", "Well, he should be about ripe by now") leave Tam equally unmoved. "I don't relate to bananas. Can't stand the frigging things".

Swing Hammer Swing! is an intensely philosophical work, especially in Tam's treatment of the Socratic distinction between the ideal and the authentic as applied to farts.

At its core is the question of existence: "A helluva thing. You learn to eat; where to shit; what your given name is, you're made to take a job. Then, one day, usually when you don't expect it — they drop a coalmine on your head. Finito".

The book may not receive an equal welcome everywhere. The feminist fraternity, as Tam might put it, may not find it their cup of herbal tea.

But if you read it today, you won't wake up tomorrow saying yesterday was just another crate of empties — pongsees or no fuckin' pongsees.

ORGANISING

Why you should be a socialist

WE LIVE IN A capitalist world. Production is social; ownership of the social means of production is private. Ownership by a state which serves those who own most of the means of production is also essentially "private".

Those who own the means of production buy the labour power of those who own nothing but their labour-power and set them to work. At work they produce more than the equivalent of their wages. The difference (today in Britain it may be more than £20,000 a year per worker) is taken by the capitalist. This is exploitation of wage-labour by capital, and it is the basic cell of capitalist society, its very heart-beat.

Everything else flows from that. The relentless drive for profit and accumulation decrees the judgment of all things in existence by their relationship to productivity and profitability.

From that come such things as the savage exploitation of Brazilian goldminers, whose life expectancy is now less than 40 years, and the working to death — it is officially admitted by the government! — of its employees by advanced Japanese capitalism. From this comes the economic neglect and virtual abandonment to ruin and starvation of "unprofitable" places like Bangladesh and parts of Africa.

FROM THAT COMES the cultural blight and barbarism of our society force-fed on profitable pap. From it come products with "built-in obsolescence" in a society orientated to the grossly wasteful production and reproduction of shoddy goods, not to the development of leisure and culture.

From it come mass unemployment, the development of a vast and growing underclass, living in ghettos, and the recreation in some American cities of the worst Third World conditions.

From it comes the unfolding ecological disaster of a world crying out for planning and the rational use of resources, but which is, tragically, organised by the ruling classes around the principle of profitable anarchy and the barbarous worship of blind and humanly irrational market forces.

From it come wars and genocides: twice this century capitalist gangs possessing worldwide power have fallen on each other in quarrels over the division of the spoils, and wrecked the world economy, killing many tens of millions. From it come racism, imperialism and fascism.

The capitalist cult of icy egotism and the "cash nexus" as the decisive social tie produce societies like Britain's now, where vast numbers of young people are condemned to live in the streets, and societies like that of Brazil, where homeless children are hunted and killed on the streets like rodents.

From the exploitation of wage-labour comes this society of ours where the rich, who — through their servants and agents — hold state power, fight a relentless class struggle to maintain the people in a mental condition to accept their own exploitation and abuse, and prevent real democratic self-control developing within the forms of what they call democracy. They use tabloid propaganda or — as in the 1984-85 miners' strike — savage and illegal police violence — whatever they need to use. They have used fascist gangs when they needed to, and they will use them again, if necessary.

A GAINST THIS SYSTEM we seek to convince the working class — the wage slaves of the capitalist system — to fight for socialism. Socialism means the abolition of wage slavery, the taking of the social economy out of private ownership into common cooperative ownership. It means the full realisation of the old demands for liberty, equality and fraternity.

Under socialism the economy will be run and planned deliberately and democratically: market mechanisms will cease to be our master, and will be cut down and re-shaped to serve broadly sketched-out and planned, rational social goals.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control.

The working class can and should win reforms within capitalism, but we can only win socialism by overthrowing capitalism and by breaking the state power — that is, the monopoly of violence and reserve violence — now held by the capitalist class. We want a democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles worldwide; we back the struggles of workers and oppressed nationalities in the ex-Stalinist states of Eastern Europe and in still-Stalinist China.

What are the alternatives now? We may face new wars as European and Japanese capitalism confronts the US. Fascism is rising. Poverty, inequality and misery are growing. We are deep in the worse capitalist slump for 60 years.

Face the bitter truth: either we build a new, decent, sane, democratic world or, finally, the capitalists will ruin us all — we will be dragged down by the fascist barbarians or new massive wars. Civilisation will be eclipsed by a new dark age. The choice is socialism or barbarism.

Socialists work in the trade unions and the Labour Party to win the existing labour movement to socialism. We work with presently unorganised workers and youth.

To do that work the Marxists organise themselves in a democratic association, the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

To join the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, write to: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Should we save the Morning Star?

Stench of Stalinism

LETTERS

I DO NOT find Dave Osler's reply to my piece on the *Morning Star* convincing. It is not a strong argument to say that because all the examples I gave of the most outrageous lies in the paper were some time ago we must assume that it has been telling the truth since. Even weaker is the argument taken from the support accorded by *Workers' Fight* to the I.R.A. or the I.M.G.'s incitement to break up the Labour Party meetings — in the first place I never supported individual terrorism as a method of struggle, and in the second place I got thrown out of the I.M.G. for opposing its puerile policy towards the Labour Party. The formula that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God might be an alibi for Christians, but it ill befits a socialist newspaper.

If we want guidelines for our press, they must be of an altogether different type from those of "professional journalists" — perhaps something of the sort of Lenin's remark that the duty of the revolutionary press is always to tell the truth to the working class, no matter how unpalatable, or Trotsky's

contention that "the truth is always revolutionary".

All over the world Stalinism is collapsing with a resounding crash, accompanied by the most unpleasant stench. The fact that the fragments of what was once the I.M.G. are trying to lose themselves in this milieu I find little short of amazing. Polite society tells us that one ought not to say any-

thing unpleasant about the dead, but I rather admire the attitude of Charles James Fox, who once had to listen to pious speeches in parliament about one of his recently deceased antagonists. When he rose to his feet he reminded everybody of what they had said about the man in the past, and marvelled that they should admit now they had been liars

then. As for himself, he thought the man a scoundrel during his life, and had no evidence since that he had improved in any way.

I did not write my original article to place any impediments in the way of Mr. Osler's journalistic aspirations, and I wish him well in his chosen career.

Al Richardson,
South London

Politics, not journalism

DAVE OSLER'S article on the left press, [SO 554], is an article of several parts, like the curate's egg, some good and some bad.

In respect of the left press the position should be "let a thousand papers bloom". Essentially I agree. It would be an idealism to believe that particular currents and ideas will disappear merely because they don't have an organ in which to express themselves. So, better out than in. There is also a very general point about democracy and socialism here.

On the specific issue of the *Morning Star*, my feeling is that its heritage will outweigh any attempt to transform it into something different. For better or worse its circulation is now

so low that its continuation or otherwise will not make a big difference to the left, except of course for a certain layer of left journalists, politicians and union officials.

Osler's second key point argues that, wouldn't it be wonderful if the left could forget its differences and prejudices and produce a non-sectarian paper. My view is, no it wouldn't, aside from the fact that in the majority of cases the different views of the left represent genuinely held different positions which cannot simply be picked and mixed.

It is not without possibility that such a paper could develop, but if it did it would have to come, not from the wish list of the leftist intellectuals, but from a period of sharp workers struggle,

as the *Daily Herald* did.

Why Osler thinks the revival of *Socialist Challenge* would fit the bill is beyond me. I thought this paper was merely a staging post in the dissolution of Mandelbrot politics in this country.

The whole point about a socialist paper and the reason, I presume, *Socialist Organiser*, as other left papers, continues to appear is because it is the scaffolding for the building of a workers' and socialist party. This means that the paper must be sold directly to its readers and its readers should write for it. It should be in and of the workers' movement. This task is essentially a political not journalistic one!

Keith Flett, North London

Alliance for Workers' Liberty public meetings

Thurs 1 April

"Labour Must Fight"

Nottingham AWL meeting
7.30, The Peacock pub,
Mansfield Road.

Weds 7 April

"Labour Must Fight"

Manchester AWL meeting
8.00, Manchester Town
Hall.

AWL weekend school

Saturday 17 and
Sunday 18 April
"An introduction
to Marxism"
Hosted by:
Newcastle AWL
Details: 091-284 6347

"Should we Clintonise the Labour Party?"

Labour Must Fight debates
John McTernan. 7.30,
Walworth Old Town Hall,
Walworth Road.

Thurs 8 April

"Youth, crime and the Tories"

Sheffield AWL meeting
8.00, SCCAU, West Street.

CPSA

Weds 7 April

CPSA Presidential
campaign meeting
Manchester Town Hall
6.00. Speaker: Mark
Serwotka.

Anti-deportation

Sat 3 April

Defend the Rahman Family demonstration.

Assemble: 12.30,
Sunninghall School,
Bolton. Details: 16 Wood
Street, Bolton BL1 1DY.

Labour Party

Sat 17 April

Socialist Campaign Group Conference

11.00-5.00, Sheffield Hallam
University.
Details: Jeremy Corbyn
MP, 129 Seven Sisters
Road, London N7.

Health workers

Sat 3 April

Demonstration to save London's hospitals

Assemble: 11.30, Bishops
Park, London SW6. Details:
NUPE 081 846 1522.

Labour History

Monday 5 April

Alan Weaver speaks on "Chartism in London"

7.30, Fitzroy Tavern,
Charlotte Street, London.
Organised by London
History Workshop.

500 join Timex mass picket

“WELCOME TO the new Third World”, “This whole episode stinks of Thatcherism”, “MSF — My Self First” and “Peter Hall, Small and Fat, For a Sidekick, He’s Got a Prat” read some of the placards on last Monday’s mass picket at the Timex factory in Dundee (29 March).

Around 500 people turned up in a show of support for the 340 workers sacked nine weeks ago in a ruthless union-busting operation by factory manager, Peter Hall.

But this Monday’s picket was uneventful compared with last week’s, when sixteen pickets were arrested and subsequently ordered to stay out of Dundee as a condition of bail pending their trial.

Police were out in force to maintain ‘law and order’. All police leave in Tayside had been cancelled. The coach bringing supporters from Glasgow was twice stopped and searched by police to delay its arrival. And the scabs’ bus arrived early, before the picket reached its maximum size.

In the days leading up to the picket, the Scottish TUC had weighed in with attacks on “outside troublemakers” and

demands that anyone who turned up to the picket should obey the law, keep off the road, and heed union guidelines.

What the STUC failed to point out was that the Timex workers themselves are calling for the mass pickets on Mondays. Nor has the STUC done anything to encourage trade unionists to turn up for the mass pickets (though it has organised demonstrations and speaking tours in support of the Timex workers).

Speaking at a rally after the picket, Timex AEEU deputy convenor Willie Leslie welcomed the disciplined nature of the picket and stressed the broader implications of the dispute:

“On behalf of the Timex workers I thank everyone who has turned up today. We thank the demonstration for being peaceful and disciplined — it shows that we can organise working-class discipline.

“We should remember that the single biggest act of violence in this dispute was the sacking of 340 workers. Everything that has happened since then must be seen in that context.

“This dispute is being seen less and less as a dispute between a union and a single employer. It

is part of the attack on the pay and conditions of working people throughout Britain, whether in the public or private sector, and the people here today understand that.

“To the unemployed who have been misguided enough to take jobs at Timex we say: you are being used and abused by a ruthless and vicious employer. You will be the first to be cast aside when you have served your purpose — destroying trade union organisation at Timex.

“But if the unemployed and employed stick together, then we can win”.

Campaigning in support of the sacked Timex workers must continue and be stepped up through...

- mass pickets at the factory every Monday morning;
- Easter Monday demonstration in Dundee in support of the Timex workers, called by the STUC;
- May Day demonstration in Dundee in support of the dispute;

• “Democracy at Work” declared by the STUC as the theme of all May Day demonstrations in Scotland;

- speaking tours and fund-raising for the strikers;
- campaigning for solidarity action by the MSF members at Timex who continue to work during the dispute;
- campaigning for the STUC to mobilise actively for the weekly mass pickets;
- campaigning for protest strike action in the event of any of the strike leaders being jailed.

AEEU: yes to the TUC, no to Gallagher and Jordan!

By a AEEU member

AEEU MEMBERS have been voting on whether the union will apply to join the TUC. Information sent out with ballot papers makes interesting reading. It explains why the “AEEU Executive Council unanimously urge you to ‘vote yes’...”

“The TUC rightly won widespread public approval and support for the way it led the campaign to save the mining industry. This is an example of

how the TUC is best placed to lead the national debate to turn back the tide of unemployment and recession in this country.”

And... “The Government is intent on destroying trade unions through legislation. The TUC can unite and lead trade unions in a campaign to resist this attack and win public support for their efforts to promote good industrial relations that will encourage cooperation and not confrontation.”

The good news is that affiliation to the TUC should finally knock on

the head Eric Hammond’s plans to form an alternative breakaway right-wing TUC.

The bad news should be pretty obvious!

Meanwhile AEEU members continue to fight in defence of their jobs and services. The likes of Jordan, Laird and ex-lefties such as Airlie have not shown their solidarity at the Timex picket line.

AEEU members are prepared to fight, but we need a rank-and-file organisation to coordinate our efforts.

Sacked Asian workers get organised

THIRTY PEOPLE, black and white, picketed an Asian food firm in Middlesbrough last week. Muskaan Ltd. supply samosas to supermarket chains. According to sacked workers the management use under-age workers, insist on long hours of work (60 a week or more), and have sacked over 200 workers in the last year. In the words of one worker, “We work under a climate of hire or fire... we know that our jobs are continually under threat.”

Some of the sacked workers have now started to organise. With the support of local trade unionists they leafleted Muskaan’s mainly Asian workforce on 22 March. Further activity is being planned. Messages of support etc. to: 129 Eddison Way, Middlesbrough TS8.

AWL Trade Union School “Marxism and the trade union struggle”

10.30am onwards
Sunday 25 April, Sheffield
Details: phone Tom 071-639 7965

Busworkers: rank and file need to link up

LONDON’S busworkers have made the excellent, if surprising, decision to hold their next day of strike action on 2 April with the miners and railworkers.

Pressure from below has proved too much for the union officials to withstand. In the past, they have consciously avoided fighting alongside anyone else, especially the tube and railworkers with whom they have had the opportu-

nity to bring London’s overburdened roads to a grinding halt, hitting commerce where it hurts.

Their decisions on these occasions have partly been due to a fear of the law being used against the union, but not completely.

On at least one occasion London busworkers could have fought quite legally on the same days that tubeworkers were fighting. The union leadership, however, were too timid to take up the

challenge, and the membership not confident enough to either force them to do it or act without them.

Now, though, the atmosphere is changing. The membership are angry at the extent of the attacks on their conditions and many have decided that if they are being threatened with losing their jobs anyway, then they might as well put up a fight rather than go quietly.

Before, they thought that if they behaved they would keep their jobs. Now they know that ‘behaving’ has nothing to do with it. The only way to keep their jobs and retain a public service is to fight. The gloves are coming off. Finger by finger, perhaps, but they are coming off.

The union leadership for once seem to have recognised this change in mood, and made the right decision.

The membership, however, must be wary and not put all their trust in the people who have let them down so badly in the past. Force the leadership to lead, but prepare to fight if they won’t. That means organising rank-and-file strike committees across the garages and making links with rail and tubeworkers initially, and spreading links to any other section of workers who start to fight back over the coming period.

Star Wars — the grand illusion

SCIENCE COLUMN

By Les Hearn

IT IS TEN years since President Raygun promised his subjects a “shield” in space that would protect the US from any attacking missile. It was obvious from the outset to anyone with an ounce of common sense that the project could not possibly succeed. The category may have excluded Raygun himself but what of his advisers? How could the scheme ever have been recommended by the “experts” let alone last for ten years with a total funding of \$32 billion?

One answer could be that self-serving defence scientists took advantage of the “Evil Empire” views of an otherwise “hands off” President to snaffle taxpayers’ money for their own favourite projects. But was the money a total waste or have there been, as promised, considerable spinoffs for civilian science, health or the economy?

A major class of weapons underpinning the Strategic Defence Initiative was that of the laser. Originally referring only to devices emitting intense beams of light, SDI researchers were interested in ones that gave out heat (infra-red) rays, ultra-violet light or X-rays. The armed forces had been researching heat lasers for some time. A 40 kilowatt laser had been put in a tank, a 400kW one in a Boeing 707 and a 2

million watt (MW) laser had been built on the ground to see if it could protect ships against tactical missiles. The research was not very successful — in 1981, an airborne laser failed to shoot down a surface-to-air missile in a well-publicised test.

What was the problem? Everyone knows that lasers can cut through steel but this is because they can be brought very close to their targets. But SDI lasers would have to destroy fast-moving missiles perhaps a thousand kilometres away. The lasers would have to be thousands of times as strong as the present ones. Most military thinkers realised this but not the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

Responding to the arguments of a Republican senator, Malcolm Wallop, that 18 laser battle station satellites could destroy virtually all of a Soviet missile attack, DARPA embarked on a feasibility study in 1982. The basis would be the chemical laser, relying on a chemical reaction between hydrogen and fluorine. Little electricity would be needed, a clear plus for a space-based laser. Wallop was eventually calling for 10 MW lasers with 10 metre mirrors to focus the heat rays on their targets, thousands of kilometres away.

DARPA’s study looked into how the lasers could track the enemy missiles to within a metre, focus their beams onto a small area for long enough to destroy the missile, verify that the missile was indeed destroyed and then move on to the next target. All this had to be pack-

aged into a satellite small enough to be easily launched. These projects were subsumed into the SDI after 1983.

Progress was unsure: the laser targeting programme was cancelled after technical problems; the focussing technology was successfully developed by 1987; but by 1991, the chemical laser was still only producing 1MW, a fifth to a tenth of what was originally proposed. A ground-based test will not take place before next year and a space test is scheduled for 1997, if funds hold out.

AFUNDAMENTAL problem with an infra-red laser is the spreading out of the beam, necessitating a large precisely shaped mirror, orbiting in space. The problem would be less with light of shorter wavelengths but lasers producing these are less powerful at present or else are too large and power-hungry to be based in space. DARPA thought of putting these on mountain tops and beaming the light to orbiting relay mirrors. One problem would be the distortion and absorption of the light by the atmosphere. The mirrors themselves would either have to be large in number though small in size because in low orbit or colossal in size but placed in the much higher “geostationary” orbit where they stay above the same spot on the Earth’s surface.

Leaving aside these problems, DARPA looked into the best candidate for such a laser, the free-electron laser. Based on particle accelerator technology, the FEL has the advantage of being “tunable”, producing light of different

wavelengths to cope with atmospheric conditions. The Los Alamos Laboratory (of atom bomb fame) and Boeing designed a 1MW demonstration FEL. As the budget shrank, so did the size of the laser, down to 100kW and then to a 10kW laser for testing in 1995. This would be strong enough to destroy a missile that approached to a distance of a few centimetres! The FEL is the best candidate for a civilian spin-off, being developed for medical uses. It is capable of cutting cleanly through various types of tissue because of its tunability. However, since it was invented some dozen years before the SDI was started, it can hardly be said to be a benefit of SDI!

The history of a third type of laser perhaps epitomises the Star Wars fiasco. The X-ray laser, enthusiastically championed by H-bomb pioneer Edward Teller, would consist of thin rods of X-ray emitting material arranged like porcupine spines around a power source strong enough to cause X-ray emissions — a nuclear bomb! The spines would be capable of focussing the X-rays on the targets towards which they would somehow be aimed. Teller claimed that something the size of a desk would be capable of shooting down all incoming missiles. Raygun was particularly taken with this idea. However, in addition to the fact that X-rays could not pass through the atmosphere, the calculations on the focussing of the X-rays turned out to be wrong and the whole thing was dropped.

The laser programme has been severely cut back to a plan to put 1MW lasers

on aeroplanes to shoot down short-range missiles. There are still problems with making these work on shaky aircraft and with getting the beams through turbulent air. Also, they’ve only got up to 1kW with their demonstration lasers. Apart from that, there is little to show for \$6 billion.

The SDI was drastically cut back by Bush, who had promised to continue it. After its first budget cut in 1989 it was scaled down to GPALS (Global Protection Against Limited Strikes or perhaps rather Limited Protection Against Global Strikes). The Gulf War momentarily raised the prestige of the enterprise, with the claim that 41 out of 42 Scud missiles had been intercepted by US Patriot missiles. Later the Army admitted that only 24 out of 85 attempts had been successful while other government investigators said that only one Scud may have been hit.

GPALS now largely relies on the “Brilliant Pebble”, a higher tech version of the “Smart Rock”. These will destroy missiles by hitting them at high speeds, if they can be aimed or can track them accurately.

Does this mean that the SDI was a harmless, though expensive, diversion? Soviet defence scientist were sure that SDI was a nonsense and yet they felt it was dangerous. Their analogy was that of someone who draws an imitation revolver on an armed guards. It certainly made superpower negotiations more difficult and some believe that GPALS may also make future negotiations on nuclear non-proliferation more difficult.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

National Union of Students' leaders show bankruptcy

By Mark Sandell

LEFT STUDENT activists are fighting the right-wing leadership at this week's National Union of Students [NUS] annual conference.

Left Unity is resisting plans by the Labour-led National Executive to bow down before the Tories and voluntary closure of the NUS's campaigning structures.

Instead of launching a campaign to fight the Tory threats to close the NUS, and against the Tory plan for 'voluntary membership', linking both to a fight against student poverty, the NUS leaders have rolled over and played dead.

Left Unity supporters are campaigning for a strategy which links up students with the workers who have started fighting the Tory vandal government.

Janine Booth, the Left Unity candidate for President, came second to Lorna Fitzsimmons. Janine, who stood last year, increased her vote.

The right-wing clique that is controlling the conference is determined to keep politics out of the union.

Instead of discussing how NUS can support the miners and railworkers, or rebuild itself, the bureaucrats are boring delegates with endless constitutional wrangles.

Over 100 people attended a packed Left Unity fringe meeting to hear Janine Booth, Richy Carrothers and Nik Brereton outline the case for a fighting NUS.

Stop Press

Arthur Scargill has been elected an Honorary Vice-President of NUS despite opposition from the right-wing leadership.

Their objection to the miners' leader? Scargill is "a loser" and association with him creates a negative image for NUS.

Workers' Liberty '93

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM: A WEEKEND OF SOCIALIST DEBATE, 2-4 JULY, IN LONDON

Questions of race...



The issues to discuss

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- What are the roots of anti-semitism?
- Where are the black communities going?
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- **Everyday life**
Is there such a thing as human nature? Education: do young people need the 3R's?

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The Tories are in crisis and could fall if the labour movement put up a fight. We debate the Labour right and take on their ideas.

Why won't they fight? Are they the champions of individual rights?

Is Labour a working-class party? Is Marxism out of date?

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ALL ABOUT WORKERS' LIBERTY '93

DATES AND TIMES

Friday 2, Saturday 3, Sunday 4 July
Friday 3.30 - 8.00; Saturday 11.00 - 7.30;
Sunday 10.30 - 4.30

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Archway tube (Northern Line)
Details of transport from your area 'phone Mark on 071-639 7965.

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For more details about Workers' Liberty '93 'phone Mark on 071-639 7965.

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Subtract £1 (unwaged) and £2 (other) for Saturday-Sunday only.
We will be producing a full and detailed

programme for Workers' Liberty '93. A copy of the programme entitles you to attend the event. Programme prices:

	unwaged	low-waged/ students	waged
Before end April	£6	£10	£14
Before end June	£7	£11	£16
On the door	£8	£12	£19

To book for Workers' Liberty '93 send your name, address and a cheque/postal order payable to "WL Publications" to: SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.