

# SOCIALIST

**Socialism  
and Democracy**  
*Direct action and Parliament*



A debate between  
**Michael Foot** and  
**John O'Mahony**

opening remarks and chaired by Alan Simpson MP

**ORGANISER**

*It will be socialism or barbarism!*

Conway Hall • Wednesday 9th March 1994 • 7.30pm

## Portillo blurts out Tory prejudice

# MARCH AGAINST RACISM

*"We are glad that the TUC has recognised the centrality of the Quaddus Ali attack and the work of the Tower Hamlets Nine campaign in calling this demonstration. The demonstration would just have been an abstract march if it had not attempted to relate to ongoing issues such as the Tower Hamlets Nine Campaign and the Quaddus Ali attack.*

*Although the decision of the TUC to call the demonstration is welcome, those of us who are active in the fight against racism and fascism need to use the march as an opportunity for further campaigning over the next few months and to step up campaigning against the BNP election strategy in the East End.*

*The march provides a focus for building the anti-racist movement and should serve as a model for maximum unity at local level in terms of joint action against a common enemy."*

Unmesh Desai:  
Tower Hamlets Nine Campaign



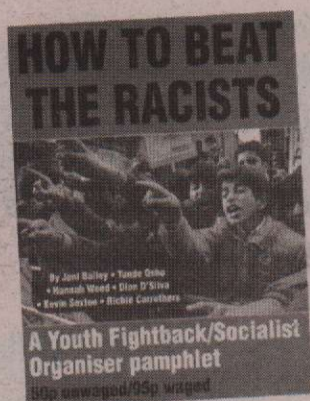
## BUILD NOW FOR TUC DEMO 19 MARCH

# Socialists to stand in South Africa's election

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THE SOUTH African Workers Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) is to stand candidates in this April's election.

A WOSA member explained to *SO*:

"The candidates are to be part of a 'workers' list for an independent mass workers' party' and will be standing on the basis of fighting for free housing, free education and free health for all."

"At this stage we do not expect a socialist organisation to be able to win a majority at the polls. But we are standing so as to raise the need for a mass workers' party and policies in the class interests of the workers.

"We will definitely not participate in a government of National Unity with De Klerk and the ANC, but our comrades will participate in local government in order to raise

the demands of the workers.

"Though some undisciplined elements in the ANC are very hostile to our stand, some on the left are supporting our list."

Serious socialists and trade union activists in Britain should do everything they can to help WOSA.

Please send messages of support and solidarity to: WOSA, PO Box 13337, Mowbray 7705, South Africa.

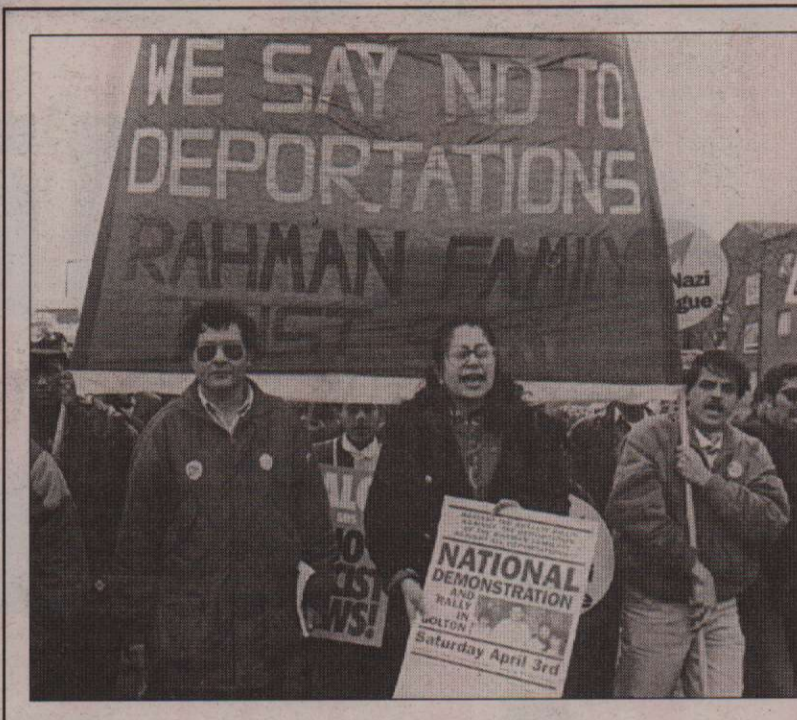


## Witch hunt in Knowsley

THE WITCH-HUNT in the Labour Party continues. Knowsley North CLP was suspended at the end of last year and a number of leading constituency activists could now face disciplinary charges.

The "private and confidential" report prepared for Labour's National Constitutional Committee which details the charges would be amusing if it were not so serious.

Its charges are trumped up and ridiculous. There is a lot of talk about meetings being "wrecked" and people being "abusive" but nothing specific in 14 pages of narrow type. Some "allegations" are five years old! Obviously preparing paranoid reports is a much more pressing priority for Labour full-timers than campaigning against the Tories.



Black people under threat of deportation are fighting back in campaigns such as the one in defence of the Rahman Family from Bolton.

The families and friends of framed-up black prisoners and those that have been attacked and murdered have organised in campaigns too.

The Communities of Resistance Rally has been called and organised by the Rahman Family Defence Campaign to publicise and develop these grassroots campaigns.

It will be held on Saturday 9 April (1.00 — 5.00 pm), at the Pakistani Community Centre, Stockport Road, Longsight, Manchester.

Rahman Family Defence Campaign: 16 Wood Street, Bolton BL1 1DY. Support the campaign to stop the deportation of the Rahman Family. Write and protest to the Home Secretary, Home Office, Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT. (Quote reference R311805).

## Racism in Hackney council

DISCIPLINARY action has been initiated by Labour-controlled Hackney Council in East London against two UNISON members in the housing directorate.

The 'crime' committed by these two UNISON members, both of whom are Ghanaian-born, is speaking to each other in their native language rather than in English. Both the workers have been issued with written warnings.

This disciplinary action is a blatant piece of racism on the part of the manager and the council.

Suppose Urdu or Punjabi speakers were in a majority in an office. Would two workers who spoke only English ever face disciplinary action for this "offence"?

This affair is the latest example of Hackney, and other London Labour boroughs, pursuing racially discriminatory practices.

90% of disciplinary action in Hackney is against black workers, although they are only 48% of the workforce. In Southwark in South London 84% of disciplinaries are against black workers, who are 36% of the workforce.

The disgraceful decision to initiate disciplinary action against workers for speaking in their native language is a measure of the capitulation of Labour-controlled councils to the

Tories' political agenda.

At first such councils "just" imposed Tory cuts in spending. Then they collected the hated poll tax. Now they implement the Tories' policies of nationalist bigotry.

For further information about the campaign in defence of the victimised workers please contact UNISON Hackney Number 1 publicity officer, Tony Whelan, at 071-214 6644.

## "Sackful of cash" for the Tories' friends

Martin Thomas analyses how British Aerospace have cashed in on the deal with the Tory Government which gave them the Rover car factories cheap in 1988

ON THE LOWEST reasonable estimate, British Aerospace bosses have coined £550 million from their five years as caretakers of Rover.

As the Financial Times put it, they are "flying away from Rover with a sackful of cash".

BMW is paying £800 million cash to the British Aerospace bosses, and taking over £900 million of BAE debts, so British Aerospace makes £1.7 billion from the sale.

Their friends in the Tory Government sold Rover to them in 1988 at the knock-down price of £150 million, after writing off £550 million of Rover debts. The Tories even added £57 million in extra handouts

("sweeteners"), but the European Community made BAE pay back that bit of icing on the cake.

If British Aerospace can sell in 1994 for £1.7 billion what they bought in 1988 for £150 million, then they have made £1.55 billion on the deal.

The British Aerospace bosses and the Tories protest that BAE has put over £1 billion of investment into Rover since 1988. Subtracting that £1 billion reduces BAE's gain to £550 million.

The Financial Times, however, notes: "There is room for scepticism here."

"First, the £1 billion plus of capital expenditure was largely financed by Rover itself. Second, BAE extracted a large but unspecified amount of land and property from Rover over the years, and will hold on to it after the BMW deal goes through."

In other words, of the loans raised for the £1 billion investment, some equate with portions of the £900 mil-

lion debt being taken over by BMW, and some will have been paid off by Rover out of its sales income. Not all of it can be reckoned as increasing the value of Rover. Much of it just maintained that value.

Rover does have more modern equipment, but what is being sold now for £1.7 billion is a smaller business now than what was bought for £150 million in 1988. It produces 360,000 cars a year now; it produced 500,000 in 1988, and had capacity for 750,000.

BAE has sold parts of the 1988 Rover, and transferred others, for example valuable land under now-closed factories, to itself. It bought 100 per cent of the company, but is now selling only 80%. The other 20% was sold to Honda in 1989.

Add all the figures up, and the British Aerospace bosses' gain is more like £1.5 billion than £550 million, or maybe over £2 billion.

They also gain from the sharp rise

in BAE share prices which followed the BMW deal.

Their gain has not been won by capitalist enterprise, efficiency, and business sense. It is a slightly-disguised handout by the Tory Government.

In 1986 the Tories wanted to sell the Rover car business to Ford, and trucks and Land Rovers to General Motors. Protests stalled that project, so instead the Tories gave the business cheap to British Aerospace and told them they could do some mild asset-stripping and sell the core car factories off again at a whacking profit after August 1993. And British Aerospace did just what.

It is the same story as many other privatisations, as Maxwell, as BCCI, as Drexel Burnham Lambert: in modern capitalism, the big fortunes are not made by organising efficient production, but by ruthless financial fiddling and cosy deals with governments.

# Michael Portillo: the Tory man of his times

**S**OME PEOPLE cut a figure in history because of their boldness, energy, determination and ability to lead. Others — like the King of France in the revolution of 1789, or the Tsar of Russia overthrown in 1917 — became notorious for the opposite reason, because of their blundering and incapacity.

If not on the grand scale of history, then at least in the shorter-term framework of current politics, Michael Portillo deserves the second sort of fame, alongside his boss John Major.

Last month Portillo was acclaimed as the Tory right wing's next Prime Minister. What had he done to deserve that? He had denounced intellectuals who criticise tried-and-true-blue British institutions, in a speech which might sound a bit philistine and old-fogeyish even in the average golf club bar.

Last week he ventured further, and showed himself up for a braying fool, telling students at Southampton University and Eton College: "Go to any other country and when you have got an A level you have bought it or because you were a friend of the minister".

A Dutch government official, asked for comment by the *Guardian*, just laughed and said: "This is a good one!"

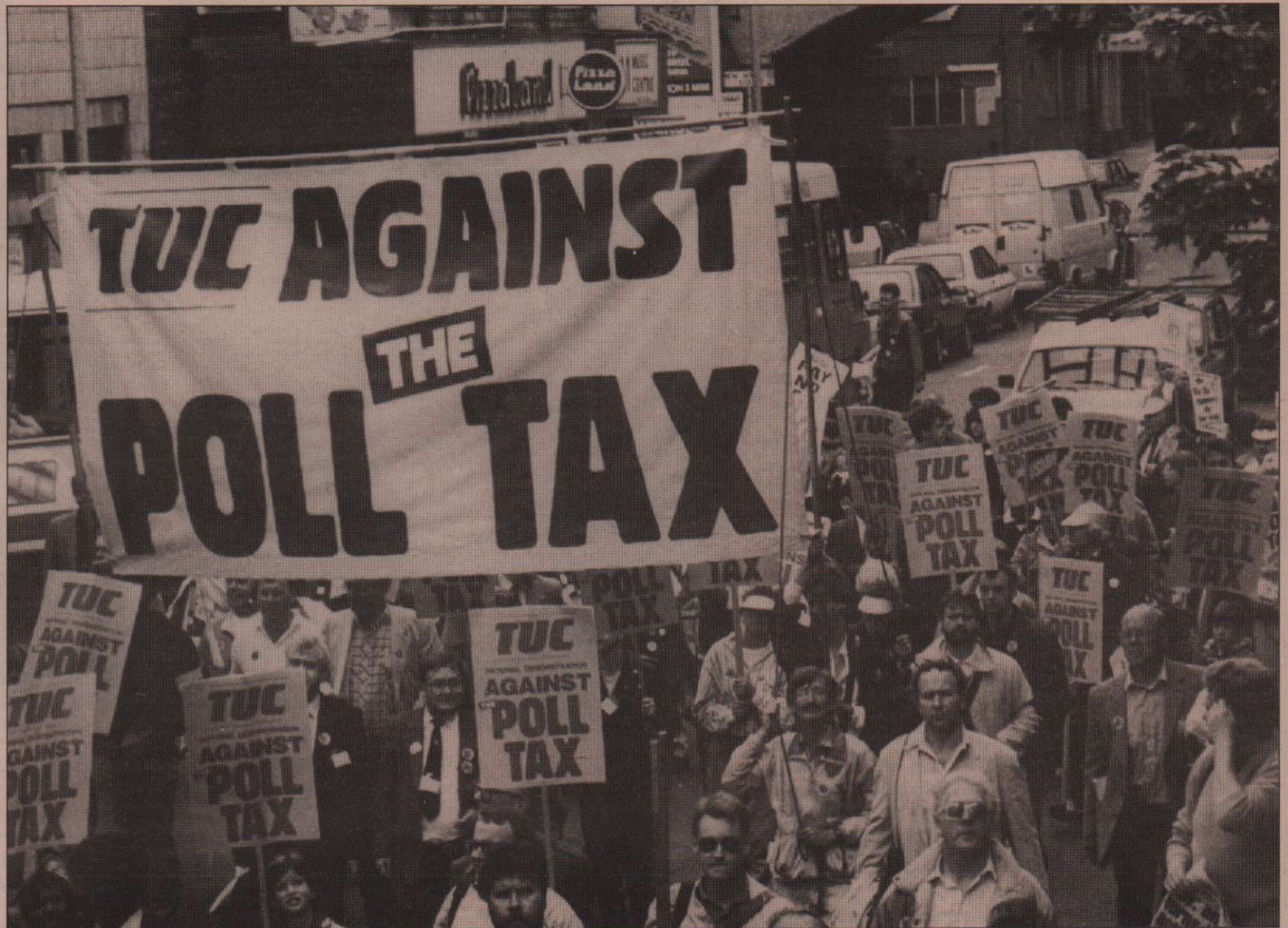
*"The Tories' crisis opens great chances for the labour movement. Labour must fight! And it is up to the socialist left to make Labour fight."*

Yet the Tory right wing have not dumped Portillo. They have excused and defended him.

They can not believe that a man who talks like a *Sun* editorial on a bad day, and without the *Sun's* tongue-in-cheek, is really a good candidate for Prime Minister of a government hoping to negotiate seriously with other governments. Evidently the Tory right wing are desperate. They see no better alternative.

The Tories are deep in confusion, thrashing around with threadbare gimmicks, and unable to do anything positive to surmount their scandals.

The sexual preferences of Stephen Milligan, the Tory MP found dead on Monday 7 February, were nobody's business but his own and his partners'; that he died, apparently, during some sort of sex game, is a tragedy of no political relevance. No socialist should echo the leering, lip-smacking mock horror of the tabloid press.



The poll tax resistance — not aided by the Labour and trade union leadership—was decisive in undermining the confidence of the Tories

What is of political relevance, however, is that the Tories' "Back to Basics" prattle is more discredited than ever, and that the Tories are unable to rise above their scandals.

Major's lack-lustre fumbling with Citizen's Charters and 1950s nostalgia makes Thatcher, Lawson, Howe, and the other Tory leaders of the 1980s look like political giants by comparison. But in current politics as in history, individual qualities are less decisive than the broad patterns of the class struggle, or, more precisely, they are shaped by those patterns.

Thatcher looked like an "Iron Lady" because she led — and was supported and shaped by — a Tory party and a ruling class victoriously on the offensive. Major and Portillo look like prattling, bumbling fools because they lead — and are shaped by — a Tory party and a ruling class in stalemate.

Through the 1980s, the Tories fought to crack strong trade-union organisation. They scored great successes, largely thanks to the disarray of the trade-union leaders. In the process the Tories wrecked much of Britain's basic industry, but their successes against the unions gave them

momentum and rallied the wealthy classes round them.

But the "Lawson boom" of the late 1980s proved short-lived, as did the talk of Thatcherism working an "economic miracle". British capitalism has been wallowing in depression for several years now, with no clear way out.

In September 1992 much of the Tories' economic policy collapsed, with the devaluation of the pound — and they threw away over £10 billion in their last desperate efforts to save the old policy. Destructive divisions over Europe were opened up inside the Tory party.

With North Sea Oil income and privatisation proceeds tapering off, the Tories have run a huge budget deficit. They have had to raise taxes. At the same time a vast range of opinion, much wider than the socialist left or even the labour movement, condemns the Tories' running-down of essential public services.

The Tories are still union-bashing, with new laws against industrial action and attacks on public-sector organisation through "contracting-out". But many even of the wealthy classes know that this union-bashing offers no answers to the crises of

British capitalism and Tory policy. And there are no spectacular successes. There is a spirit of resistance abroad, even if as yet a cautious, uneven, and uncertain one.

It was that resistance, in the shape

*"Resistance in the shape of the successful revolt against the Poll Tax did the decisive work of transforming the Tories from a triumphant faction, into a shamble of nerds."*

of the successful revolt against the Poll Tax, which did the decisive work of transforming the Tories from a triumphant faction, confident in their

work of social counter-revolution, into a shambles of nerds. John Major was put in to replace Thatcher precisely because he was dim, grey, neutral and unenterprising, in other words, "safe". The times, and the needs of class struggle, chose their man or woman.

The Tories' crisis opens great chances for the labour movement. John Smith and the Labour leadership have done nothing to seize those chances. They have stressed caution and respectability, limited their criticisms of the Tories to two-bit complaints about "incompetence" and "dithering", promised as little as possible, and waited for victory to fall into their laps.

The working class and the labour movement can not afford to wait. Whatever their problems, the Tories are still the government. They can still do great damage. They can regroup and revive themselves, as they did briefly before the 1992 election.

Labour must fight! And it is up to the socialist left to make Labour fight, by working for mobilisation, militancy, and anti-capitalist policies everywhere in the trade unions and Labour Party.

*"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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## WE SAY

### Italy shows the fascist threat

ON SUNDAY 6 February Italy's Rupert Murdoch, Silvio Berlusconi, called the first conference of his new political movement, Forza Italia.

"Hints of linking with the neo-fascists", reports the Financial Times, "brought loud applause from the Forza Italia delegates".

In the recent elections for mayors in Italy's big cities, Berlusconi backed the fascist MSI as the only viable alternative to the left and the PDS (ex-Communist Party), given the discrediting and collapse of Italy's long-time ruling party, the Christian Democrats. Now he has launched Forza Italia to try to regroup Italy's right wing.

It would be wrong to draw a straight line from these developments to predict a short-term fascist bid for power in Italy. But the fascists have had a tremendous boost. And the next several years may well bring economic crises, favouring the growth of fascism, rather than the steady capitalist expansion favourable to the consolidation of a stable new right-wing parliamentary-democratic party.

Fascism is now a serious force in Europe, in France, Germany and Belgium as well as in Italy. The left needs bold policies; we need organisation; and we need vigour and energy to take those policies to the disoriented, disappointed, demoralised young people whom the fascists will otherwise get hold of.

### Rover, state ownership, and socialism

IN 1975 BRITISH LEYLAND (as it then was) was nationalised. In 1987-8 it was chopped up and sold off to various private bidders, trucks going to the ill-fated Leyland DAF and cars, under the name Rover, to British Aerospace.

Workers lost out both times. British Leyland was on the brink of collapse in 1975, suffering from decades of underinvestment and from a world slump. To let it just collapse would have been difficult politically for the Government, and also ruinous for a wide range of other businesses, component-makers and so on.

The Government stepped in. But with Michael Edwardes and Graham Day as BL/Rover bosses, public ownership was a framework for the car factories to be smashed and battered into competitive capitalist shape.

Jobs were cut from 200,000 in BL in 1975 to 33,000 in Rover today.

Once all the costs and risks of that operation had been looked after by the government, British Aerospace bosses cashed in.

In 1877-8 Frederick Engels explained about public ownership by a capitalist state that in the best case "the workers remain wage-workers — proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is rather brought to a head... State ownership of the productive forces is not the solution of the conflict..."

Moreover, "if Bismarck [then Chancellor of bureaucratic-monarchist Germany]... took over for the state the chief Prussian [railway] lines, simply to be the better able to have them in hand in case of war, to bring up the railway employees as voting cattle for the government, and especially to create for himself a new source of income independent of parliamentary [tax] votes - this was in no sense a socialistic measure, directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously. Otherwise... the regimental tailor of the army would also be socialistic..."

Then, a bureaucratic state which wanted to balance between industrial capitalists and landlords, and keep some leeway for itself, used public ownership as a means of increasing its independence. Today, capitalist governments use public ownership, and the selling-off of public assets, as ways to bail out or enrich their private-capitalist friends.

Our answer to the Tories' sell-off of public assets should not be just "public ownership" in the abstract. For public ownership to be of value to the working class, it must be under workers' and democratic control.

### Labour and public ownership

THE LABOUR PARTY leadership have started talking about full employment again — but not about any policies to get it.

On the contrary. Last week John Smith told the Daily Mirror: "I do not believe the government should run industry or own industry... I want companies to be prosperous, to make profits, to pay their workers well."

"If we get good steady economic growth we can afford good social services. If we don't get good economic growth we can't".

But companies are becoming "prosperous" and "making profits" by sacking workers, cutting jobs, holding down wages, and increasing speed-up!

The free-market line of encouraging capitalists to make profits, and hoping that prosperity will "trickle down", has had its day. It does not work. Labour needs a clear alternative to that Tory line, not a rose-tinted repetition of it.

The alternative should start with the cutting of the working week to 35 or 32 hours, and the restoration and expansion of public services, as a way to decent jobs for all.

But that cannot be done if the commanding heights of industry and finance are left in the hands of private capitalists. They would quickly wreck a full-employment policy by holding back investments and transferring money out of the country.

Public ownership alone is not socialism. But without public ownership there can be no socialism and no full employment.

## INTERNATIONAL

# Italian socialists debate prospect of a "left alliance" government



How to stop Silvio Berlusconi (above) and the fascists? Popular-front-type 'democratic alliance', or class struggle?

**The "Party of Communist Refoundation" ("Rifondazione", or PCR, for short) is the main party of the working-class left in Italy. It was set up three years ago by ex-members of the Italian Communist Party when that party switched to define itself openly as aiming for nothing more than liberal bourgeois reform, but also embraces a range of other left-wingers, including Trotskyists. It has some 120,000 members. Given the depth of the political crisis in Italy, the PCR has great opportunities and great responsibilities. This report on its recent congress, in Rome on 20-23 January, is translated and abridged from the French socialist weekly "Rouge".**

**A**T THIS congress Rifondazione showed its vitality. The delegates defended their opinions frankly and sometimes insolently. In short, there was a democratic atmosphere which broke radically with the Stalinist tradition.

Armando Cossutta, the president of the PCR, summed this up at the end

of the conference with a declaration of principle and not less. Debate does not bother us, it helps and strengthens us.

"Comrades have not only the right to defend their opinions, but also the right to organise to convince the party. If they are in a minority, they have the right to continue to defend their opinions.

"What we can demand is that the party, to be effective, must apply the majority line with conviction".

The PRC's intervention

*"The Trotskyist current and a section of the trade union left opposed signing a programmatic agreement with the PDS."*

in the parliamentary elections due on 27 March was at the heart of the congress debate.

The situation is not sim-

ple. The recent electoral reform in Italy has suppressed proportional representation in favour of elections like the British, in order to promote a two-party system.

This very undemocratic system may lead to a left-wing majority and a so-called progressive government.

To avoid electoral marginalisation, or even the wiping-out of its parliamentary representation (currently 55 deputies and senators), Rifondazione is more or less forced to participate in an electoral bloc with the PDS [the ex-CP], the Rete [the anti-Mafia Network] and the Greens. And then the question is raised of a programmatic agreement which would go beyond the elections and would be the basis of a common parliamentary group or even participation in government.

Three motions were put down. The first was from Cossutta and [Fausto] Bertinotti [general secretary of the PCR]. It approved the introductory report of Lucio Magri and the summing-up by Armando Cossutta. It called for unity of the left and progressive forces in an electoral campaign aiming to win a majority, and

a programmatic agreement on some "fundamental" questions.

The second motion was presented jointly by a range of opinion: the Trotskyist current, a section of the trade-union left, and a section of the left of the "Cossutta-ites". While supporting the idea of a united electoral list, it opposed the PRC participating in government or signing a programmatic agreement with the PDS.

The PRC was defined as an opposition force, clearly situated on the side of the workers.

The third motion came from a section of the leadership (Salvato, Vinci). While supporting the united list of the left, it opposed any project of class collaboration or governmental participation in the framework of a "democratic alliance".

The first motion got 70% of the votes, the second 20% and the third 10%. These votes only give a partial idea of the radicalism of the congress. In fact, though Magri did suggest, in scarcely veiled fashion, participation in government, Bertinotti and, even more firmly, Cossutta seemed to close, one by one, all the doors which might lead to that.

## TRADE UNIONS



The SMTUC should launch a campaign for a one-day public sector strike. Photo: Mark Salmon

# Time to unite the left across the unions

Gerry Bates reports on the SMTUC Conference

“IT'S TIME to stop talking about uniting the left in the unions and to start fighting for it.”

That's how Mark Serwotka, a Left Unity candidate for the National Executive of the civil service union CPSA, summed up the mood of the vast majority at last weekend's Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee Conference (5-6 February).

Mark was moving a resolution calling on the SMTUC and its officers to “fight politically... to unite all those forces who were fighting and democratic trade unions.”

A meeting is now set up with various Broad Lefts for July. The motion was passed unanimously by the conference, indicating that most of those present want the SMTUC to start thinking big and stop

behaving like a left wing talking shop for trade unionists.

Other motions passed included:

- \* A proposal for the SMTUC to work jointly with the Socialist Campaign Group to organise a left wing campaign across both wings of the movement around the theme “Labour Must Fight”.

- \* A special SMTUC campaign for a one-day public sec-

tor strike.

- \* Campaign for trade union rights:

- \* Collaboration between the SMTUC and the Haldane society of Socialist Lawyers to draw up a draft legislative programme for the first term of a Labour government, with the aim of putting some flesh on Labour's commitment to positive legal rights for workers.

- \* For the SMTUC to inter-

vene properly in major national disputes.

- \* For the SMTUC to campaign more systematically to change the conference policy of various unions.

Though the attendance, at around 200, was down on previous conferences, most people there seemed determined to really go out and build the SMTUC as an open non-sectarian campaigning body.

## SMTUC policy on cross-union left unity

Helping to unite all those forces who want fighting and democratic trade unions should be a major priority for the SMTUC.

The Committee and its officers are instructed to fight politically for existing SMTUC policy.

That policy, which has been passed overwhelmingly at two previous conference, is to try to link up with the existing broad lefts and rank and file groups, as well as left unions, stewards' committees and other lay bodies, plus the Liaison Committee for the Defence

of Trade Unions, and Trade Union News.

All such organisations should be contacted immediately with the aim of setting up an open campaigning committee which could call a conference around the general theme of “Unite the left in the unions: stop the retreat.”

The purpose of the conference would be to set up a national co-ordinating centre across the unions which would support strikes, build for solidarity action and wage united campaigns around political and industrial issues across the whole movement.

Wallasey Socialist Education and Cultural Centre

## Rejuvenating the labour movement

THE Socialist Education and Cultural Centre was established last year to rejuvenate the politics and culture of the labour movement

through socialist education and debate of both our history and current struggles. We aim to organise a broad range of non-sectarian, profession-

ally run and resourced courses, dayschools and debates, employing teaching and learning strategies which encourage participation via reading, reflection and discussion, as opposed to the passivity of the traditional classroom. Our aim is to draw new forces into socialist political activity and to encourage the return of those who have dropped out, via education and cultural activities.

Our spring programme includes four courses: “The Socialism of Karl Marx: an Introduction”, running for six

weeks from Thursday 10 February; “Strike! How to Fight and Win”, from Monday 7 February for four weeks; “Socialism for the 1990s: Issues for Labour” from Thursday 24 March for six weeks; and “Women and the Backlash Against Feminism” from Monday 21 March for four weeks. All courses are free, and open to anyone interested. To register for these courses, or to find out more about the events SECC is organising write to SECC, PO Box 42, Wallasey, Merseyside, L45 7RY.

## Bickerstaffe's veto

SUPERFICIALLY, COHSE, NUPE and NALGO all ceased to exist last July when UNISON emerged as the largest public sector union in Europe. However, that was really only the end of the beginning as far as the creation of a genuinely united union was concerned. The three ‘old’ unions had very different constitution and cultures. What emerged last year was not so much a new union as a snappy new name and an agreement to work out the details in the fullness of time.

It was never going to be easy: the constitutional differences between NUPE and NALGO were considerable and in many areas there was the problem of tensions between NUPE manual grades and NALGO managers. In the metropolitan authorities ‘left-wing’ NALGO branches often regarded NUPE as unreliable allies, altogether too prone to reach deals with Labour councils.

The problem of merging the branches of the three ‘old’ union now seems to be coming to a head. At the last UNISON NEC meeting a heated discussion took place over a proposal to merge branches by 1995. The ex-NALGO members all voted for the proposal,

as did four of the ex-COHSE people. But the entire ex-NUPE contingent, led by an incandescent Rodney Bickerstaffe, were adamant in their opposition. After an hour long row the motion was defeated by 73 votes to 55 (actually, there were only 35 votes against but the NEC's weighted card-vote system gave Bickerstaffe his majority).

The ferocity of Bickerstaffe's opposition rather gives the lie to the ex-NUPE leadership's public position of favouring full branch merger. So what lies behind all this?

It may be fear of losing influence within the Labour Party.

Or Bickerstaffe may be responding to pressure from the ex-NUPE branch secretaries, who stand to lose not just their power but also a great deal of cash (a branch secretary's commission can be as high as £8,000 per year).

There may also be the calculation that having a lot of relatively small branches tends to give more power and control to the regional secretaries, whereas one large branch is more prone to do its own thing.

What is for sure is that a de facto campaign involving ex-NUPE branch secretaries and NEC members, is now mobilising to prevent the merger of branches.

The practical result of the present situation was illustrated last year, within a month of the creation of UNISON: Tameside Council announced 98 job cuts and a demand for two day's unpaid leave. The ex-NALGO members balloted overwhelmingly for strike action, but were thwarted when one small ex-NUPE branch voted against and the officials declared that all branches had to vote in favour, or the action could not go ahead. Something very similar happened in Sheffield this year over travel allowances: again, a vote by a small ex-NUPE branch (most of whose members were not actually affected by the issue) prevented action. In effect, small ex-NUPE branches presently have a veto over virtually any action by UNISON members.

When UNISON was formed, a great deal of time and effort was spent ensuring that the officers of the ‘old’ unions would retain their pay, conditions and job security. Less time was spent on working out a coherent and democratic procedure for calling industrial action — in fact there presently is no formal procedure for doing so, which is why ex-NUPE branches have a de facto veto. Not surprisingly, a lot of UNISON members are getting more than a little frustrated.

Rodney Bickerstaffe and his cronies will face a real fight over the branch merger question at this year's UNISON conference.

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

# Poor old Portillo

**P**oor old misunderstood Michael Portillo. He was leapt on for nationalist bigotry last week when he told Conservative students at Southampton University: "When you go into business you will win contracts because you are good at what you do. Go to a number of other countries and you win contracts because your cousin was a minister or because you have lined the pocket of some public official."

Surely everyone's got him wrong. Read his remarks carefully again, and you will see that Portillo is far from being a bigot. He is merely giving business advice.

Just look at the example the Tories gave with the Peragua dam in Malaysia, a showcase for British expertise, especially in the field of bribing Johnny-foreigner.

The story goes something like this. In the late eighties a number of senior government ministers, including Lady T herself, met with Malaysian officials and, all the evidence suggests, found that they could do a little trade that would be to their mutual advantage.

The Malaysian government would place an order worth £1.3 billion with British Aerospace to buy machinery designed for killing people. The company is run by Tory peer and Thatcher Mafioso, Lord King.

Then Britain would spend about a third of its overseas aid budget on an interest-free loan to the state owned electricity generating company Tenaya National Berhad (TNB) costing the British taxpayer £234 million and quietly ignoring the protests from the British government's own Overseas Aid Agency that the dam would be little use.

The main building contractor for the dam is Cementation International, run by Sir Charles Powell, previous occupation, Thatcher's personal foreign affairs adviser. Much of the detailed work was carried out by a Cementation International consultant, number one son, Mark Thatcher.

What was in it for the Malaysian Government ministers? Their country will now have a large lake but, apart from giving the Malaysian ruling class access to world class watersports, so what?

That is where British expert moral guidance came in really useful. TNB was in the process of being privatised when it received the loan, which not surprisingly made the company more valuable. The shares went on sale at £1.21 in 1992, and before you could say "Britische Architektin" they were trading at £4.29.

So there you have it — world trade British-style for beginners. Next week Portillo will give lessons on how to sell arms components to murderous third world dictators facing UN sanctions, while pretending they are pieces for machines to make milkshakes.

**E**LSEWHERE in his speech Portillo criticised those who "attack the institutions of our country".

Portillo continued "I believe the British people as whole wish to underpin our institutions. Those who set out to destroy are not putting anything in its place (sic), they are simply saying 'let's pull this thing down for the hell of it'".

This should be welcomed as a Portillo U-turn on public services. Take the careers service, previously run by Local Education Authorities to give careers advice inside the education system.

Some unscrupulous individuals have been trying to

## GRAFFITI

VIVELA  
REBOLUCION

By Cyclops

cut spending on the service by privatising it. The Department of Employment brought in whole wine bars full of analysts and marketing experts to produce just the right sales pitch, and the result of the thirteen tenders put out so far has been thirteen bids, all from the Local Authorities who ran the services anyway. Now the bids put in by local authorities are being cut. One authority bid £2 million to run its services, but will be given £1.7 million.

These cuts are being pushed through by a shadowy cabinet figure known as the First Secretary to the Treasury... oh surely not, Michael Portillo.

**M**ICHAEL Portillo must surely merit a place in the Guinness Book of Records for the most sustained slip of the tongue. Another choice quote from that speech: "Outside of this country you find that the standards of public life are way below what goes on in this country".

Funny then that the European Court of Human Rights cases won against Britain number 40, second highest in the Europe behind Italy.

Currently, there is increased pressure to streamline the system and make human rights decisions binding on member states.

One lone voice out of 32 European states is demanding the proposals be watered down and the system remain as slow and bureaucratic as possible. That voice is Michael Howard, member of the morally upstanding British cabinet.

**L**AST week Socialist Organiser pointed to Socialist Worker's lack of criticism of George Galloway's compliments to Saddam Hussein SW's lack of criticism may have altogether more immediate causes than their general politics. Anyone flicking through programmes for the SWP's 'Marxism' summer schools over the last few years will see that Galloway is a regular speaker.



Poor old Portillo, can't a chap be allowed the odd slip of the tongue, the occasional shot in the foot, an own goal from time to time...?

# Indie-cline and still falling

## PRESS GANG

THE INDEPENDENT TODAY  
SUNDAY PRESS  
THE GUARDIAN  
THE WORLD

By Jim Denham

**N**O DOUBT you have been transfixed by the epic battle presently raging over the future of the Independent. Andreas Whittam Smith thinks he has everything sewn up with the Mirror consortium, only to be trumped by Dr Tony O'Reilly's breathtaking dawn raid. According to my people in the City the situation is now "a classic Mexican stand-off: O'Reilly's camp have made their move and the consortium is regrouping and preparing its counter-attack. The game's still too close to call." Exciting isn't it?

Well, perhaps not. Most people are not especially bothered about which particular bunch of capitalists own which newspaper. Most halfway decent people, for instance, despise Rupert Murdoch: but few would deny that papers like the *Sun* and the *Sunday Times* are essential reading.

The Indie's journalists, of course, are extremely concerned about their paper's ownership. In particular, they are anxious that David Montgomery does not gain control and give them the same assurances about job security and union recogni-

tion that he gave the Mirror's staff. Most of the Newspaper Publishing board take an equally dim view of Mr Montgomery and it seems likely that the O'Reilly camp have been receiving intelligence from within.

But newspaper readers are more interested in why the Indie now finds itself strapped for cash and generally in a mess. Back in 1986 it all looked so hopeful: Andreas and his chums Matthew Symons and Stephen Glover promised us a brave new world of journalistic excellence, political pluralism and commercial independence. For a while it worked.

In the first four years of its existence the paper established a deserved reputation for good writing, serious investigative reporting, lively arts coverage and quality design. It quickly built up a circula-

tion of 400,000, overhauling the Times and closing on the Guardian.

So what went wrong? Whittam Smith habitually blames the recession and the Times's price cut for all the Indie's problems. Most informed opinion blames Whittam Smith. The early success of his brain-child went to his head. He started dreaming of a new press empire with himself at the helm. He launched the *Independent on Sunday* with the deliberate intention of killing off the *Sunday Correspondent*: the plan succeeded at a terrible cost financially and in terms of Whittam-Smith's "saintly" reputation (the ill-fated bid for the Observer did further damage to both). By now the Saintly One had fallen out with co-founder Stephen Glover who left to write a book that more or less

accused Whittam-Smith of megalomania.

Meanwhile, these dreams of grandeur were distracting Andreas from what he did best: editing the paper. The Indie became increasingly dull and lost some of its bet writers. Even 'Alex', the often hilarious Reatty and Taylor cartoon strip, defected to the *Telegraph*. A comprehensive re-design and the introduction of colour were generally considered disastrous. Last year's Times price cut accelerated the Indie's circulation loss but didn't cause it: sales are presently well below the 300,000 mark.

Whittam-Smith created a pretty good newspaper and then presided over its decline. However must he tries to blame the recession and the malevolence of Rupert Murdoch, he can't escape the fact that the Independent is presently nowhere near as good a paper as it once was — and that, above all, is why people stopped buying it.

Small wonder, then, that no one on the Indie's staff or on the board of Newspaper Publishing supports Whittam Smith's deal with the Mirror Group and the equally disastrous David Montgomery.

# M&B wait for Mr Right no longer



## WOMEN'S EYE

By Jean Lane

*Mills and Boon, the publisher of romantic fiction for women readers on a factory-line basis, have revealed a change of editorial policy. In future their books will mention sex.*

**T**HE Representative of the Editorial Board of Mills and Boon (or Reb, for short) found herself unsuspectingly in the same room as one of her publisher's regular hunky males, called — imaginatively — Hunk. She looked with appraisal at his well-formed body; his rippling pectorals and firm buttocks and imagined, with rising passion, how well-endowed he must be — down below.

Gradually her body throbbed with unsatisfied longing and it took all the restraint she could muster to stay on her side of the room. She pressed her hands against her sides and traced the seams of her jeans lightly with her fingers. She wanted to touch him that way, trace every inch of his muscular body, make love...

For years she had held back. But Reb didn't believe she could hold out any longer. With sudden resolve, she strode across the room and, with pant-

ing breath, fell into his arms: "Take me, Hunk. I'm yours".

Unable to believe his luck, Hunk managed to ask her, despite the heavy beating of his heart: "Why now? Why go all the way after waiting for so many years?"

"I can't withstand the pressure any longer", Reb replied as she fumbled ineptly for his trouser zip. "what with Killy Juper and that awful Cacky Jollins (Cack for short) doing it all the time. Even Tory MPs are doing it. People seem to think it's normal. There's only Baby Carthorse holding out", she added as she prised open his shirt buttons and exposed his magnificent chest, "and I'm not going to be left on the sidelines with her. She's barking".

Hunk felt Reb's finger nails dig unmercifully into the smooth, brown skin of his shoulders and growled, "I think I preferred it when you played hard to get".

"Well that's tough, Matey", Reb replied. "Women have changed, haven't you noticed?". Her eyes flashed with a mixture of passion and indignation.

"God, you're beautiful when you're angry", Hunk gasped, his sap rising. "But, even if women do do it, surely they shouldn't talk openly about it? I mean, it's a bit forward isn't it? That's what Baby Carthorse says anyway". His hands slid further up her thigh, pushing her skirt higher and exposing a teasing glimpse of flesh above her stockings.

Reb moaned and whispered: "If it's out in the open, it's less repressed, more safe, and women can talk truthfully about what they want". She nibbled his earlobe deliciously. "And anyway, it sells more. Cack's going like hot cakes".

They sank down onto the satin sheets and Reb shuddered with desire when she felt his unmentionable burgeoning against her thigh. "Yes", she cried, "Yes. I want it. Do it now".

"Are you sure?", he asked considerably. He was a sensitive, 90's hunk. "Yes", she practically screamed. "Now". Hunk rose, opened the bedside drawer and fumbled for the little packet he had thought to buy from the chemist earlier.

"Oh good", Reb leaned up on one elbow, "You got some condoms, then".

*"If it's out in the open, it's less repressed...". She nibbled his earlobe deliciously. "And anyway, it sells more. Cack's going like hot cakes."*

Hunk blushed. "Girls aren't supposed to know about such things. And if you do, BC says you're to call them 'French

Letters', it's more becoming".

"I'm not a girl. I'm a woman. And I like to call a thing by its proper name".

"Romance is really dead, then", Hunk replied.

"There's nothing romantic about getting VD, or about getting beaten or unwanted pregnancy, which, let's face it, is the usual fare for M&B", Reb responded pragmatically.

"Oh, don't you want my child then?", Hunk asked, a hand-dog shadow crossed his handsome face.

"Shut up, Hunk, and get on with it, will you", Reb moaned with frustration and pulled him down onto the bed. And so at last, after so many years of holding out, M&B's hunk managed to get his - um - thingy away without having to get married first.

But as the fire in his loins was extinguished, he couldn't help hearing the little voice of BC in the back of his mind: "We must not have this reality creeping in. It's disastrous. Women want romance, chivalry, good manners. What we need is to get back to basics".

"Mmmm. This feels pretty basic to me", Hunk thought. And as Reb and Hunk lay back and shared a friendly, post-coital cigarette, they agreed: "of course, the plot's still as crap as ever, the dialogue is terrible and our characters are still completely vacuous, but at least we can have a bit of good old rumpy-pumpy to liven things up". And why not? There isn't much else to them after all.



Lobby of the Home Office in protest at Joy Gardner's murder. Photo: John Harris

# Black people want justice!

## YOUTH FOR JUSTICE

**J**OY GARDNER was killed by the police and immigration officials who broke into her house and suffocated her in the struggle to gag and tie her up. They planned to deport her from Britain, tied up like a criminal. Instead, they killed her in front of her three year old son.

At the time the Tories promised an investigation, but now that the

story has dropped out of the news they have stopped any serious investigations, and the three police who killed Joy Gardner in her own home have walked free without even being charged.

In the very same week the Home Secretary showed his racist double standards by refusing Winston Silcott the right to an appeal against a murder charge.

It is clear that Silcott's could not have been a fair trial for the case he is inside for. At the time of that trial he had been witch-hunted and vilified by the press for supposedly

killing P.C. Blakelock in the Broadwater Farm riot.

He and two others were later found innocent of the murder of P.C. Blakelock, but Winston is still inside for a case tried in the atmosphere created by the hanging mob of the gutter press.

We think he should have an appeal and that the racist British state should not be able to deny him a fair trial, and that the police who killed Joy Gardner should be put on trial.

You can contact the Winston Silcott Defence Campaign at 79

Tangmere, Broadwater Farm, London, N17.

## Youth for Justice stands for...

- Fighting police harassment.
- An end to prosecution based solely on confessions.
- An independent and elected police complaints body.
- Elected bodies to control the

police with power over operational policy and budgets.

- Abolish the Prevention of Terrorism Act.
- Disband the Special Branch and Special Immigration police.
- An independent body to investigate and recommend appeals.

You can contact us c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Or telephone 071-639 7965.

# "We wanted our hospital under workers' control!"

## Northern Ireland bigots say: "No equality here!"

By Richie, Belfast

**P**ARLIAMENT WILL vote later this month, probably on 16 February or soon after, on changing the legal "age of consent" to sex for homosexuals from 21 to 16 (the same as for heterosexuals) or maybe 18. But Northern Ireland is to be excluded from the proposed changes.

Many Ulster Unionist politicians will be delighted at this "victory", including the leading "Save Ulster from Sodomy" campaigner, the Rev. Ian Paisley. These reactionary, Bible-bashing bigots, believe lesbians, gays and bisexuals have no place in society.

Let's not get the arguments mixed up. What is being called for is equality, between heterosexuals and homosexuals, and surely it's a crazy situation where homosexual activity from the age of 16 may be legal in England, Scotland and Wales, but illegal until the age of 21 in Northern Ireland.

The Republic of Ireland has recently introduced legislation equalising the age of consent between homosexuals and heterosexuals (at 17).

*Youth Fightback* demands equality in the age of consent. Working-class youth in both communities in Northern Ireland should unite against Protestant and Catholic bigots alike in the demand for lesbian and gay equality.

**Rebecca Waterman, a newly qualified nurse, was a third-year student during the UCH strike. She spoke to Debbie of *Youth Fightback*. Rebecca is a member of UNISON.**

**W**HEN IT was announced that UCH would close, our union, UNISON, had a ballot for indefinite strike action. The ballot was successful and nurses and doctors came out on strike. We wanted to force the Tories to keep the hospital open.

We wanted the hospital to be under workers' control and provide emergency cover, but management said it was a lock-out and banned us from entering the hospital. This was a deciding point for us.

Many nurses felt guilty, as patient care was suffering. Had we run the hospital, more nurses would have

come out.

The union should have really supported us on this. If we'd won workers' control over emergency cover the strike would have been a lot stronger.

There were times when morale was low, but generally our spirits were kept up by the solidarity and support we received from other workers and the public.

We did workplace meetings all over London and as far away as Manchester, Sheffield and Newcastle.

Workers in Manchester occupied a ward in solidarity with us.

Activists in the rail unions provided human barricades to prevent beds and patients being moved from wards.

The UCW refused to deliver post at the hospital and the ambulance workers refused to transfer patients from UCH to the Middlesex hospital. This led to management putting patients' lives at risk by moving them, alongside drips and other equipment, to other hospitals in their own cars.

During the strike there was an occupation of a gastro ward, not only by staff but by the local community as well. Denis Skinner came to breakfast on this ward, and Tony Benn and Bernie Grant also came to support us.

Many student nurses, like myself, became politicised during the strike, and increased our awareness of what was happening in the world, and that there are cuts and job losses everywhere. There was a feeling of being part of a community that kept us alive.

The strike ended when the UNISON bureaucrats sold us out, after using UCH for their own sake.

They withdrew their support and did a secret deal with management whereby they dropped the disciplinaries — six strikers had been charged with gross professional misconduct for entering the building — and we went back to work. We all felt so angry — we did not go on strike to drop farcical disciplinaries. We went on strike to save UCH.

Youth Fightback is...

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967 for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to *Youth Fightback* c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



# Behind the Bosnian

## Western intervention has made things worse

Stan Crooke reveals the sordid truth behind the big powers' pious words of condemnation of the massacres in Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia.

**B**LUNDERING, CYNICAL and unscrupulous policies pursued by Western "statesmen" helped pave the way for the food-queue massacre in Sarajevo last Saturday, 5 February.

War broke out in Bosnia in April 1992. As early as May, UN personnel began receiving reports about the existence of concentration camps in Bosnia. The reports were passed on to the UN Security Council, which did... nothing.

As the human rights organisation "Helsinki Watch" concluded in a report issued in August 1992: "High ranking UN officials withheld this information from the press and the public and apparently did little, if anything, to stop abuses in these camps."

Only after Western journalists exposed the existence of the death camps did the UN vote to set up a Commission of Experts to inquire into reports of death camps, deportations and mass rape.

The UN Commission of Experts did nothing. Its chairperson, Frits Kalshoven, argued that a fully-fledged war crimes tribunal could not be held within the next decade "given the present atmosphere of anti-Serb propaganda which is rampant all over the world."

The Commission of Experts was replaced by a Yugoslav War Crimes Tribunal in May 1993. It was as ineffective as its predecessor.

In September 1991 the UN had imposed an arms embargo on Yugoslavia — at the initiative of Belgrade.

The arms embargo guaranteed Serbia, which had control over the bulk of the weaponry of the old Yugoslav People's Army, a virtual monopoly of weapons and ammunition.

Then the arms embargo which had been imposed on one state (Yugoslavia) was then extended to another state (Bosnia) which was itself the victim of external aggression.

As an "alternative" to lifting the arms embargo, the UN declared six "safe havens" in Bosnia. These were, and remain, nothing more than isolated enclaves under siege from Serb and Croat forces. They are not safe! Sarajevo, the scene of last Saturday's massacre, is itself one of these "safe havens."

In May 1992, the UN also imposed economic sanctions on Serbia, supposedly as a way of pressuring Serbia to end the war in Bosnia.



Major; Serbian President Milosevic



Nearly two years later, the sanctions have clearly not stopped Serbian aggression in Bosnia. They have, however, contributed to the economic crisis in Serbia itself and sent working-class living standards plummeting.

The victims of the sanctions have not been Milosevic and his government but ordinary working-class people in Serbia.

*"American and European capitalism has already demonstrated where its interests lie: the imposition of a peace settlement at the expense of Bosnians committed to a multi-ethnic state."*

Running on parallel with the one-side arms embargo and the ineffective economic sanctions, there have been the so-called "peace" negotiations of the UN and the EC.

The purpose of these "peace" negotiation is not to re-establish an independent and multi-ethnic Bosnia, but to force the Bosnian Presidency to accept the carve-up of Bosnia engineered by Serbian and Croat "ethnic cleansing."

The "peace" proposed by David Owen is

that Serbia should have 50% of Bosnia, Croatia 20% and the Bosnian Presidency the remaining 30%. Give or take a few percentage points this more or less corresponds to the demands and achievements of Serb and Croat aggression.

The UN is not a humanitarian organisation standing above the national and class interests of its member states, especially the permanent members of the Security Council.

Wider UN military intervention in Bosnia, probably spreading over to Serbia and parts of Croatia, would not involve forces acting on behalf of some international "community". It would involve the military forces of capitalist states, acting in the interests of those states behind the fig leaf of the UN.

In fact, large-scale intervention is very unlikely, because no big power has a strong enough interest at stake to make the costs and risks worthwhile for it, and because sufficient agreement between the different big powers is unlikely.

The view promoted by some on the left, that the conflict in ex-Yugoslavia is all about an attempt by imperialism in general, or Germany in particular, to do down Serbia, is far from the truth. If the big powers should slap Milosevic's hand by some token military action, this will not make Serbia the aggrieved victim rather than the aggressor. But to look to the West to save Bosnia is foolish.

American and European capitalism has already demonstrated by its actions, and lack of them, where its real interests lie: the imposition of a peace settlement on Bosnia at the expense of the Bosnian Muslims and other Bosnians committed to a multi-ethnic state.



The aftermath of last Saturday's massacre

## What the West

**A**CCORDING TO former US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, the war in Bosnia is "a problem from hell". Equating the victims of "ethnic cleansing" with its perpetrators, he went on to claim: "It's been easy to analogise this to the Holocaust, but I never heard of any genocide by the Jews against the German people. It's a humanitarian crisis a long way from home, in the middle of another continent."

Kuwait too was in the middle of another continent, and even further from "home" than Bosnia. But the same considerations did not apply in the Gulf War of 1991.

Dimitri Simes, another American writer on world affairs, has been honest enough to

## What is the way out?

**T**HE OLD Yugoslav state broke down because aggressive Serb chauvinism provoked and alarmed the smaller peoples, Croats and others, of the Yugoslav Federation. At the heart of the chaos is the predatory expansion of the Serbian state. It utilises the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia as pawns in a drive for the largest possible "Greater Serbia".

Bosnia-Herzegovina has been ripped apart by the Serb/Croat conflict. All the prejudices and the ancient hatreds of the villages have been mobilised against scapegoat minorities — mostly the Muslims — and against the cities.

While we must support the defence of the cities such as Sarajevo, there is no solution in the framework of Bosnia alone. The fate of Bosnia makes the demand for a new, thoroughly democratic federation the only answer in ex-Yugoslavia.

The socialist answer is for the working class in the various conflicting peoples to come together, settle accounts with their own chauvinists and tinpot imperialists, and restore a federation, this time with consistent and thorough democracy and under the control of the workers.

## Open the door to refugees

**E**VERY FIFTH person in Serbia, every fourth person in Croatia, and every third person in Bosnia is now a refugee. In total, there are over four million refugees in ex-Yugoslavia.

As far as European governments are concerned, they can stay there. Since the summer of 1992 (shortly after the outbreak of war in Bosnia) one government after another has barred admission to ex-Yugoslav refugees.

In early July 1992 Sweden began turning back Bosnian refugees at its borders. A fortnight later it ended a nine-month-old moratorium on deporting refugees already in the country.

The same month Austria refused to accept refugees who had spent more than a fortnight in another country, while Hungary restricted admission to those deemed to be "really refugees and in a desperate situation".

Italy has continued to claim hypocritically that it has a policy of "open borders" for ex-Yugoslav refugees — knowing full well that such refugees cannot even get anywhere near Italy, due to Croatia and Slovenia having shut their borders to them.

Denmark has likewise clamped down on ex-Yugoslav refugees. Draft-dodgers and deserters from Serbia have been expelled from Denmark on the grounds that they are supposedly not entitled to claim political asylum.

The British Tories have pulled out all the stops to ensure that the number of ex-Yugoslav refugees in this country is kept to a minimum.

After war broke out in Bosnia, much more rigorous immigration controls were imposed on anyone arriving from ex-Yugoslavia. How many have been turned back at their port of entry is unknown.

Ex-Yugoslav refugees arriving in this country have also been promptly deported under the "Dublin Convention", according to which refugees are meant to apply for asylum in the first "safe country" they reach.

In the first six months of 1992, 28 arrivals from ex-Yugoslavia were deported on this spurious basis. In July the figure shot up to 36. Other refugees, including a deserter from the Serb army, were thrown in to prison on their arrival.

At first the Tories sought to deflect criticism by boasting (inaccurately) that "Britain is the only EC country not to have a visa regime against any of the Yugoslav republics."

No more of this line of defence was heard after November 1992, when the Tories imposed visa requirements on any Bosnian wishing to gain admission to Britain.

As a result of such restrictions and chicanery the number of ex-Yugoslav refugees applying for asylum in Britain numbers a modest 7,000.

Even by its own standards the Home Office has been particularly slow in making any decision on their claims for asylum.

Ex-Yugoslav refugees therefore have no right to family re-union and no right to travel abroad. Their chances of finding employment are also effectively nil, as they can give no guarantees about how long they will be able to remain in this country.

The few instances where the Home Office has made a decision on applications for asylum by ex-Yugoslav refugees are an additional cause for concern.

Most applications have been rejected, including applications by army deserters and families who have fled the scene of "ethnic cleansing".

Even people of mixed nationality who define themselves as Yugoslav, and are now effectively stateless persons, have been unsuccessful in their claims for asylum.

All the signs are that the Tories are holding back on making decisions on asylum-applications by ex-Yugoslavs until the war is over. Then the Tories will claim that there is no reason to fear returning to (non-existent) ex-Yugoslavia.

Having already suffered "ethnic cleansing" in ex-Yugoslavia, refugees in this country will then face the threat of the Tories' own small scale version of "ethnic cleansing".



# bloodbath



## wants in ex-Yugoslavia

explain the difference in approach: "Unlike Kuwait, Bosnia has never been an American ally. And there is no oil there either."

Until the summer of 1991 the aim of American foreign policy in the Balkans was to stave off the break-up of Yugoslavia.

As one White House aide put it: "What we are really worried about is the break-up of the Soviet Union. The fear is that if we support the break up of Yugoslavia we will encourage the break-up of the Soviet Union."

The then US Secretary of State James Baker flew to Yugoslavia in June 1991 and personally warned the governments of Slovenia and Croatia against declaring independence, threatening them with international isolation if they did so.

But by the summer of the same year the American strategy had collapsed. Slovenia and Croatia went ahead and declared independence. And the Soviet Union collapsed after the botched coup attempt of August.

If the complete break-up of Yugoslavia could not longer be avoided, then the best alternative for the West was to rely on a strong regional power. The only candidate for the position was Serbia.

The European states generally reached the same position as the American government, albeit by a different route.

For them, Bosnia is not "a long way from home, in the middle of another continent." It is part of their own European continent itself.

The European ruling classes had and have no desire to see wars in ex-Yugoslavia spill over into other countries, with Albania intervening in Kosova, Greece opening hostilities against Macedonia, or Turkey being drawn in.

They would much prefer the Serbs to be more flexible, more peaceful, and less aggressive. But their prime concern is to get the area quiet and stable again and in a suitable conditions for profitable trade and investment. And, to their mind, to persuade smaller and weaker peoples — the Kosova Albanians, the Bosnian Muslims, the Croats — to knuckle under and accept Serb domination is much easier and more practical than trying for justice and democracy.

The American and European ruling classes have run up against two major problems. Resistance by the armed forces of the Bosnian Presidency has proved far stronger than expected. And Western public opinion has demanded action against Serbia.

By and large, however, America and Europe have stuck to allowing Milosevic's Serbia to consolidate itself as the local regional power, by first cracking down on Kosova and Vojvodina, and then provoking wars in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia.

This "solution" has meant abandoning hundreds of thousands to their death, and millions more to the horrors of "ethnic cleansing" and exile. It has also meant

abandoning Bosnia to a future as a collection of rump statelets, hemmed in on all sides by Serb and Croat-controlled territory.

For the ruling classes of America and Europe that is a price worth paying (by others) for political stability.

### What if NATO bombs the Serbs?

AS WE GO to press NATO commanders are considering air strikes against Serb gun emplacements around Sarajevo.

Only a pacifist would regret the air strikes if they destroyed the gun emplacements used for last Saturday's massacre and deterred further such massacres.

But the air strikes, if they go ahead, will do nothing to solve the political and military crisis in Bosnia and ex-Yugoslavia as a whole.

One-off air strikes could not have any real positive impact on the overall conflict. More likely they would play into the hands of Serb warlords, who would portray the air strikes as the West ganging up on Serbia and respond with new massacres.

It is very unlikely that the air strikes could mark the beginning of a full-scale Western intervention in ex-Yugoslavia. If they did, then Western military forces would end up fighting all three sides in the conflict, making the conflict even worse — and for no clear purpose, since the Western forces would certainly not be fighting for a clear democratic programme.

Those guilty of last Saturday's massacre are war criminals, along with the military commanders in the field and the political leaders of ex-Yugoslavia.

But the only way to end the war and make the war criminals pay the ultimate penalty for their crimes is to break down national hostilities between the workers of ex-Yugoslavia.

United working-class struggles, not UN air strikes, are the only way forward to peace and national reconciliation in ex-Yugoslavia.

### Demonstrate against Britain's appeasement of genocide in Bosnia

1-3pm, Sat 12 Feb, Trafalgar Sq.

Stop the slaughter, raise the siege of Sarajevo

Lift the UN arms embargo which penalises the victims

Ethnic division is the problem not the solution

Open Tuzla airport, make "safe areas" safe

CONTACT ALLIANCE FOR BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA  
071-734 0261

# Who was Jesus Christ?

Second in a series by Rob Dawber



LAST WEEK IT WAS shown that from the non-Jewish, non-Christian sources there is very little to go on in trying to answer the question *Who was Jesus Christ?* So little, in fact, that it could be reasonably concluded that no such person existed; or at

least no-one so heaven and earth-shattering as we are told to believe this person to be.

Are the Jewish sources any more illuminating?

The most celebrated quote is the following from Josephus Flavius, a Jewish General during the war against Rome AD66-70 who changed sides. He was rewarded with an estate and pension in Rome, where he wrote his memoirs — *The Jewish War and Antiquities*. In the third chapter of the 18th Book of *Antiquities* we find the following:

"About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he achieved miracles and was a teacher of men, who gladly accepted his truth, and found many adherents among Jews and Hellenes. This man was the Christ. Although Pilate had him crucified on the accusation of the most excellent men of our people, those who had first loved him remained faithful to him nevertheless. For on the third day he appeared to them again, arisen to a new life, as God's prophets had prophesied this and thousands of other miraculous things of him. From him the Christians take their name; their sect has since then not ceased."

There is another mention in the 20th Book, 9th Chapter, saying that the High Priest Ananus had succeeded in having "James, the brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ, hauled to court together with a number of others, indicted as transgressors of the law, and stoned."

A Christian hoping for evidence of the existence of the founder of the Christian religion could ask for little more than the first quote! Here is the testimony of a Jew with no interest in promoting a competing religion clearly noting the essentials of the Christ.

OR IS it? Precisely this clear statement, too good to be true, arouses suspicion. And what would a Jew be doing acknowledging someone as the Messiah (Christ) and yet remaining a Jew by religion? Such acknowledgement would by itself make him a Christian.

It is now accepted as a forgery.

The clinching evidence for this is the writings of later Christians. Origen, who lived from 185 to 254 AD, sought to prove the rightness of the Christian religion. In his polemics with Pagans he wrote a work "Against Celsus" in which he tackles point by point the arguments of Celsus. The actual writings of Celsus no longer exist, having been destroyed with most other anti-Christian works by the Roman Catholic Church. In his polemic Origen reviews the evidence, other than Christian, for the existence of Jesus and in quoting Josephus, who wrote in the final decades of the first century, says that Josephus "was not believing in Jesus as the Christ", though he does quote three times the second passage on James "brother of Jesus, the so-called Christ".

However Eusebius writing in the fourth century does quote the passage acknowledging Jesus as the Christ. Thus sometime between Origen and Eusebius, between the 2nd and 4th centuries, some Christian copyist, outraged that Josephus does not mention his Saviour, decided to put the record straight.

The fact that it was "necessary" to put right this omission has itself become almost evidence against the existence of Jesus.

What else is there? Only the Talmud, a collection of rabbinical teaching compiled between the 2nd and 5th centuries. It is not history but commentary on Jewish law. Incidental relevant quotes are nonetheless to be found.

THERE IS an anonymous account of a Jesus the Nazarene executed under Alexander Jannaeus (103-76BC) for witchcraft and rebellion. We know from Josephus that Jannaeus was fond of crucifying his victims.

"On the eve of the Passover Jesus the Nazarene was hung. During forty days a herald went before him crying aloud: 'He ought to be stoned because he practised magic, has led Israel astray and caused them to rise in rebellion. Let him who has something to say in his defence come forward and declare it'. But no-one came forward, and he was hung on the eve of the Passover."

There is also an account by Rabbi Eliezer ben-Hycarnus, known to have been around 90-130 AD, of his meeting a disciple of Jesus the Nazarene:

"I once went up on the upper street of Sepphoris; there I met one of the disciples of Jesus the Nazarene, named Jacob of Kepharsachaniah, who said to me: 'In your law it is written: "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore into the house of thy God." Is it permissible to use such hire to make a privy for the high priest?' I did not know what to answer him. Then he said to me: 'This is what Jesus the Nazarene taught me: "Of the hire of a harlot hath she gathered it, and unto the hire of a harlot shall they return it; it has come from dirt, and to the place of dirt it shall go".'"

To sum up, the evidence for the existence or otherwise of 'Jesus Christ', and what we can learn about him from other than Christian sources, is very little. There is the reference of Tacitus — who may be basing himself on official records, but gives no name other than the Greek rendering of 'Messiah'; there is the reference to "the so-called Christ" by Josephus; and an anecdote from the Talmud. Even less precise still are the references to Jesus as a 'bandit' or 'ringleader of insurrection' and the other reference from the Talmud to a Jesus the Nazarene crucified between 103 and 76BC for witchcraft and rebellion.

But then again, these may be our best clues. Are we looking for a Christ, "the Word" or "the Way", who was ever with us and seeks to guide us to an everlasting life? Or are we looking for a 'bandit' who was executed for fighting back against the Romans in the long tradition of Jewish resistance to foreign domination of their promised land?

Next week: the Christian "evidence" for Christ considered.

# Lenin's last struggle

In the final article of a series marking the anniversary of Lenin's death, Cathy Nugent takes a look at the period of Civil War, War Communism, the New Economic Policy and Lenin's "last struggle".

THE FIRST World War left Russia in chaos: the people were weary, industrial and agricultural production had fallen off dramatically. The first act of the new Soviet Government — which had a Bolshevik majority — was to attempt to implement the programme of "Bread, Peace and Land".

Lenin's speech to the Petrograd Soviet on the night of the revolution in 1917 was clear and confident: "We shall now proceed to build on the space cleared of historical rubbish, the airy, towering edifice of socialist society... From now on all the marvels of science and the gains of culture belong to the nation as a whole, and never again will man's brain and human genius be used for oppression and exploitation."

But the first workers' state would

encounter great obstacles.

The first steps towards workers' control of the economy did not involve total, full-scale nationalisation. Large parts of the left — taking the Stalinist Soviet Union as their model — would later come to see nationalisation as synonymous with socialism. For the Bolsheviks, including Lenin, there was nothing intrinsically socialist about nationalisation, and it was only an important part of their socialist programme. The key goal was to bring social production under the control of a democratically organised workers' state.

In Russian conditions — of an economically underdeveloped country — it was necessary to continue a role for capitalist production, and to institute capitalist-type reform in the countryside. This would be under the control of the workers' state.

And, after the destruction of the World War and, later, the civil war, it would be a hard job to get the economy functioning at all.

On the morning after the revolution, the Soviet Government abolished the private ownership of land. They also endorsed the peasants' right to occupy and work their new hold-

ings. The Government was trying to strike a deal, giving the peasants their small plots of land. Trying to keep some degree of peasant support was one of the central Bolshevik policies in the next few years.

On 27 October, Lenin broadcast on radio an appeal for immediate armistice. But the German ruling class demanded harsh terms. Eventually a treaty was signed with Germany at Brest-Litovsk, in March 1918. The debate surrounding the terms and conditions of peace had opened up a crisis in the Bolshevik party which at one point threatened to engulf it.

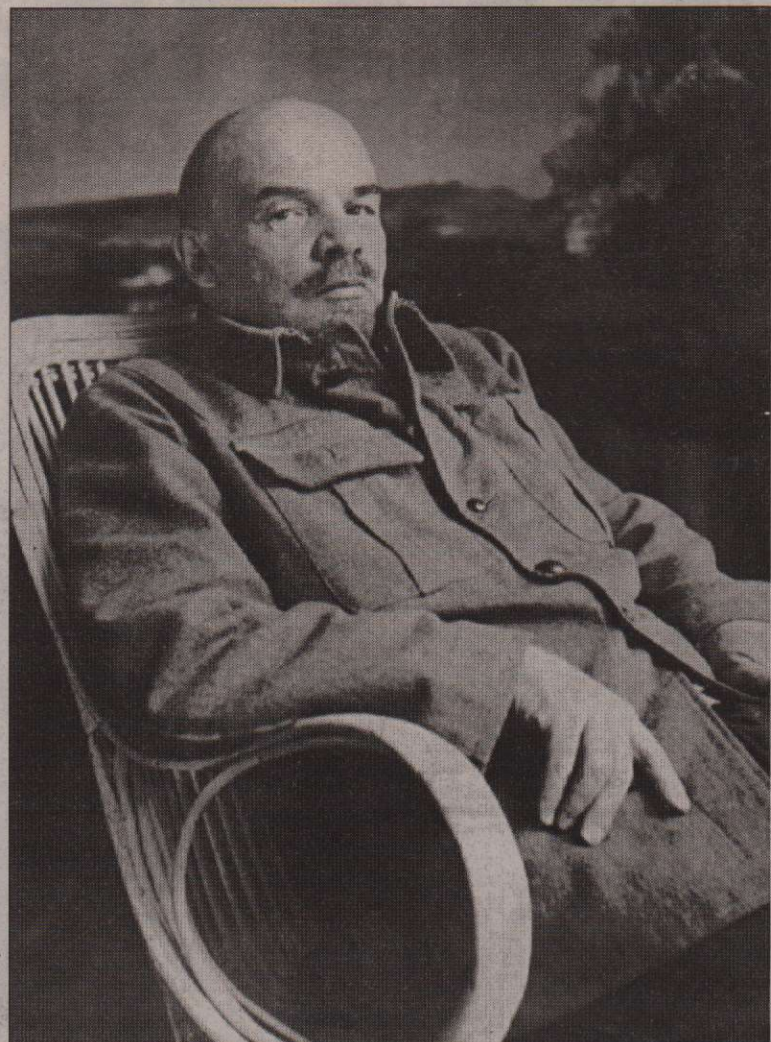
There were three positions in the party. Lenin, supported by Sverdlov and Stalin among others, had a minority position for some time, eventually winning the majority.

If the war continued against Germany the new Government would lose the support of both the working class and the poor peasantry. Lenin wanted to sign a peace agreement with Germany, and by January 1918 he was advocating the agreement be signed immediately.

The second faction was led by Trotsky. Trotsky — who became the chief negotiator in the latter stages of negotiations with Germany — also wanted to stop the war immediately and withdraw the troops from the front, but not to sign any peace treaty with Germany. Trotsky posed the question in terms of what was helpful to the German proletariat. If Russia signed a peace deal with the German ruling class it might give the German working class the wrong signal: that the Russian revolutionary Government had given up on them. It seems Lenin was both more sceptical about the ripeness of Germany for revolution and fearful about the possibility of the German armies continuing to advance into Russia. (Trotsky rated this as an outside chance).

The largest faction, initially, was led by Nikolai Bukharin. Bukharin argued for an immediate revolutionary war against Germany. This would galvanise the German and European working class.

Both Lenin and Trotsky were right against Bukharin. Whilst they were in



Lenin's illness greatly limited his intervention into the party after 1921

favour of a revolutionary war in the abstract, and in favour of preparing for such a war, the workers' government could not deliberately pursue such a war at that time. It would have been suicidal.

The terms of the Treaty were terrible. Poland lost her independence; Livonia, Courland, Lithuania and Estonia were all annexed.

In the event Germany did not keep peace with Russia. They continued their occupation of the Ukraine and began to help create 'White' counter-revolutionary armies. These armies were joined soon by the invading Allied troops, including British troops. The Civil War had begun and would last three years.

*"Lenin was true to himself to the last — fighting for working-class socialism, for workers' democracy. After his death it was left to Trotsky and the Left Opposition to defend the essential elements of what Lenin stood for."*

The anti-Tsarist but anti-Bolshevik parties — Kadets, Mensheviks and SRs — all joined the White forces during the civil war. The main base of the counter-revolution was among military personnel, (middle and high ranking) technicians and professional people and better off peasants.

The situation was very grave. At one point the White forces advanced nearly all the way to Petrograd. By 1919 the Allies had completely blockaded Russia, had control of the major ports and had in their possession 60% of the railways.

In order to defend the revolution Lenin's party had to take a series of extraordinary measures which were known as 'War Communism'.

IN DECEMBER 1917 the Petrograd Soviet's Military Revolutionary Committee was reorganised as the "All Russian Extraordinary Commission" or the Cheka for short. Led by Dzerzhinsky it organised a 'Red Terror' against the White Terror. The Cheka became the GPU, then KGB, after Stalin's counter-revolution.

A Red Army was organised, recruiting from the proletariat and poor peasantry. From the start Trotsky was in charge. His role was crucial, not only from a military point of view but also in organising, educating and bolstering morale among the recruits.

A number of decrees aimed to make sure grain got to the towns. First, forced requisition used committees of poor peasants against the better-off peasants. This was not successful. It was met with concealment of grain and a refusal to sow.

Special taxation and self-administered quota systems were also proposed. All were desperate expedients which further widened the gap between countryside and town and encouraged petty ownership.

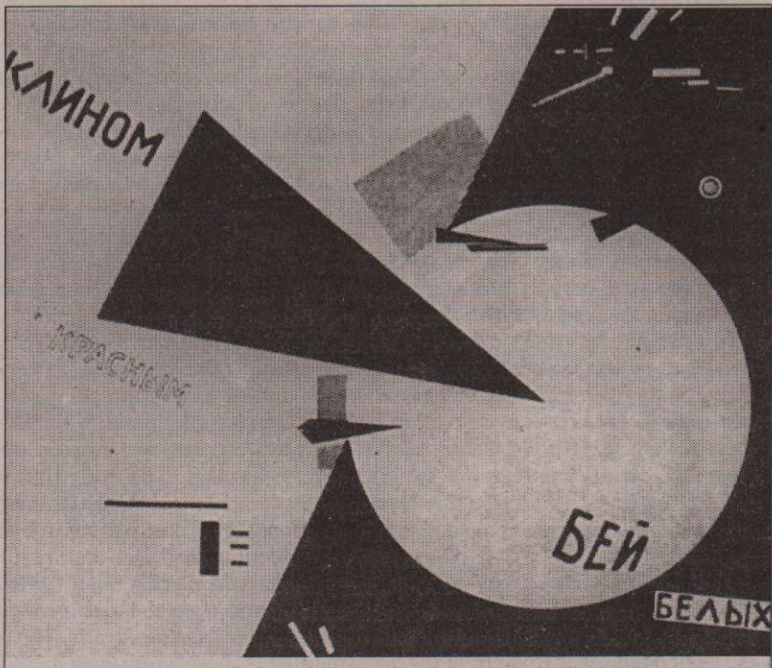
The party's policy goal of creating large-scale agricultural enterprises organised on a collective or communal basis made little progress in this period.

Industry, however, was completely transformed. It needed to be if it were to be an effective supply organisation for the Red Army. Progressive nationalisation was introduced. A war economy required centralised planning and control, and an administrative machine was developed using many of the technicians and professionals of the Tsarist regime. This apparatus was to become more and more autonomous over these years, not subject to the controls and regulations of a workers' democracy.

By 1921 Lenin realised that this was one of the gravest threats to the survival of the regime.

Workers' revolutions failed in the rest of Europe. The Soviet Republic in Hungary lasted only from March to August 1919. In Bavaria, in Italy, in Bulgaria, workers faced defeat. The most crushing defeat for the workers' movement, with the most wretched consequences, was the defeat of the German workers when the German Communist Party bungled a revolutionary opportunity in 1923.

Lenin and the Bolsheviks had to try to hold on to what had been won by



"Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge". Revolutionary art by El Lissitzky, 1920



Locusts and droughts combined with the dislocations of war to create famine in 1921

their revolution, isolated and without any immediate prospect of revolution in Europe.

They won the Civil War, but then faced a rebellion by sailors at the Kronstadt naval base, near Petrograd, in March 1921. The Kronstadt were not the revolutionary sailors of 1917, but men of peasant origin. They demanded an end to War Communism and the grain requisitions. That revolt posed a serious threat to the survival of the Government. It was put down, and many were killed. Kronstadt was a horrible symbol of a country torn apart by a civil war, intensified class contradictions, the gulf between the rural and urban people.

But Kronstadt was instructive. It revealed all the material conditions that were to give rise to the New Economic Policy, later in March 1921.

It is impossible to understand the debates surrounding that policy and the actions of the Communist Party, including the ban on factions and other political organisations proposed by Lenin at the 10th Party Congress in March 1921, without some knowledge of the state of the economy and society at the end of the Civil War.

Isaac Deutscher describes this with moving accuracy:

"Presently calamity struck the nation. One of the worst famines in history visited the populous farming land on the Volga. Already in the spring of 1921, just after the Kronstadt rising, Moscow had been alarmed by reports about droughts, sand blizzards, and an invasion of locusts in the southern and south-eastern provinces. The government swallowed its pride and appealed for help to bourgeois charitable organisations abroad.

"In July it was feared that 10 million peasants would be hit by the famine. By the end of the year the number of sufferers had risen to 36 million. Uncounted multitudes fled before the sand blizzards and the locusts and wandered in aimless despair over the

vast plains.

"Cannibalism reappeared, a ghastly mockery of the high socialist ideas and aspirations emanating from the capital cities." (*The Prophet Unarmed*)

The New Economic Policy (NEP) formulated by Lenin was designed to renew the deal with the peasantry. The heart of the policy was free trade in grain. "Only agreement with the peasantry can save the socialist revolution in Russia" said Lenin.

The NEP also encouraged small-scale enterprises. A state monopoly on foreign trade was maintained.

Lenin called it 'a forced retreat'. There was little choice but to try and get the basic economy — food production — functioning. The soviets were now shells. The worker militants of the revolution were dead, dispersed,

or absorbed into the new machinery of government. What remained of the revolution was the party, its programme, its deep historic roots in the working class, and its grip on power.

Perhaps the workers, state could have held out until the triumph of another revolution. Perhaps. Lenin was the most able Bolshevik but other party members were experienced and able too. Events tested the party, and the party failed.

IN MAY 1922 Lenin suffered a stroke. He had to learn to speak and write again. Although he returned to work in October he never fully regained his health. This was the period of Lenin's "last struggle". Lenin was forced to fight the growing bureaucratisation of the party.

Controversy arose around the question of national self-determination, for the Caucasus, specifically for Georgia. Prior to 1922 each republic had its own special agreement or treaty with Russia. Stalin, in his post of Commissar for the Nationalities, wanted to form a Trans-Caucasian Federation which would essentially be subordinate to a Russian government. Lenin rightly saw this as Great-Russian chauvinism, a throw-back to the past. He formed an alliance with Trotsky to try to defeat it.

Lenin came into conflict with Stalin on other issues too. First, on the monopoly of foreign trade which Stalin wanted to abolish, thus giving foreign investors licence to plunder the Russian economy. And secondly, over the Rabkrin, the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, for which Stalin was responsible. Lenin criticised this for being overstaffed. In January 1923 he proposed that it be reduced from 10,000 officials to three or four hundred.

By this time Stalin, as General Secretary of the Party, had created quite a power-base around himself, and a cabal, including Zinoviev and Kamenev, which increasingly defined itself as 'anti-Trotskyist'. They wanted to keep Trotsky out of the leadership when Lenin died.

By December 1922 Lenin became ill again and was forced to retire indefinitely. In March 1923 Lenin suffered another attack and finally lost the power of speech. He never returned to work and died on 22 January 1924.

Although kept in seclusion and often denied information, partly because of a deliberate policy by Stalin, and partly because of his health, Lenin managed to wage a final battle against the growing bureaucratisation of the party and keep alive the ideas of socialism in the party. He also tried to form a bloc with Trotsky.

On 24 December 1923 Lenin dictated a note which became known as his "Testament". In an addendum he advised his comrades to get rid of Stalin as General-Secretary. Stalin was "rude" and "capricious". During the last few months, in the struggle over Georgia he had come to conclusions about Stalin. On 6 March Lenin's wife Krupskaya told Kamenev that Lenin had resolved to "crush" Stalin politically. The next day Lenin suffered his final stroke.

Lenin was true to himself to the last — fighting for working-class socialism, for workers' democracy. It was left to Trotsky and the Left Opposition to defend "Leninism", the essential elements of what Lenin stood for, in a party that was rapidly becoming corrupted, and led down a road of expediency, short-sightedness and opportunism by Stalin.



Revolutionary sailors go on the offensive during the Civil War

# Andy Wilson — RIP

EYE ON THE LEFT

By Mark Osborn

POOR OLD Andy Wilson — expelled from the SWP. What will he do now?

I first met Andy when he was an organiser for York SWP, back in the days when you could get a political argument in an SWP meeting — come to think of it, back in the days when you could get in to an SWP meeting.

Andy was a long-time anarchist before he joined the SWP. I suppose he was attracted by their semi-anarchist attitude to Parliament but he can not have liked the internal democracy.

I met him at Euston station a few years ago, and we had an argument about the SWP's lack of faction rights. He said they — i.e. dissidents — managed with "informal networks". I suppose he got caught doing something "informal" or "dissident".

As far as I understand he had got the boot as SWP Merseyside organiser for not being an adequately brutal transmitter for the SWP's central machine.

Poor old Andy.

His replacement in Liverpool was ex-public schoolboy and ex-student headbanger, Mark Frankel. Frankel's preferred method is to storm into pubs and shout across the bar, in the general direction of his "comrades", "what are you fucking bastards doing here?"

*"It is difficult to feel sorry for Andy Wilson. After all, dissident or not, he helped to build the regime which spat him out. He's probably done the same to others."*

After that particular performance two working-class women in the SWP openly described Frankel as "a complete wanker". And how true that is.

It is difficult to feel sorry for Andy Wilson. After all, dissident or not, he helped to build the regime which spat him out. He's probably done the same to others.

Perhaps you feel that this obituary is a little premature. After all Andy is not yet dead.

What is left now? Crawling back on his belly, destroyed as an independent entity? Getting old as a fellow traveller?

No, I've got an idea! There is an answer! There is always *rethinking*... Oh, sorry, I forgot, that's completely out of the question.

## Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY meetings

*"Ireland in crisis  
— what should  
socialists say?"*

### OXFORD

Wednesday 9 February  
7.30pm, East Oxford Community  
Centre

### SHEFFIELD

Friday 11 February  
12.00pm, Norton College

Thursday 17 February  
12.00pm, Standbrooke College

### BOLTON

Thursday 17 February  
1.00, Chadwick Site, Bolton  
Institute

### BIRMINGHAM

Monday 21 February  
8.00, Queen's Tavern, Essex Road

## Workers' Liberty '94

Will take place  
from Friday 8  
to Sunday 10  
July  
at Caxton  
House,  
North London

**Communities of  
Resistance Against  
Racism and Fascism  
National Rally!**  
Saturday 9 April  
(1.00pm — 5pm)  
Pakistani Community  
Centre  
Stockport Road,  
Longsight  
Manchester  
No deportations! No  
police frame-ups of black  
people!  
Organised by the Rahman  
Family Defence  
Campaign, 16 Wood  
Street, Bolton BL1 1DY

**Leicester United  
Against Racism  
Meeting**  
Friday 25 February  
7.30pm  
The Secular Hall,  
Humberstone Gate.  
Mobilise for the  
TUC march against  
racism

# How revolutionaries organise in hard times



Mark Osborn reviews  
*The early years of  
American Communism*  
— speeches and  
writings, 1920-1928  
by James P Cannon

**T**HIS BOOK is really a companion volume to *The First Ten Years of American Communism*, a series of letters and essays mostly written in the 1950s. With thirty years' hindsight Cannon sees clearly that at each stage of the development of the new American Communist movement, Russian influence was decisive — first as a helpful, stabilising influence, then, after the mid-20s, as poison.

This new book shows that even after 1925, when bitter permanent factionalism was the result of the Comintern's intervention, raging arguments still took place in the Communists' public press. That is a measure of how degenerate *Socialist Worker* and *Militant* are: they cannot even allow that measure of open debate which the Stalinists permitted in the mid-1920s.

Initially two Communist Parties were formed in the USA. The pieces had to be brought together and the leaders persuaded to use every opening for legal work in a very hostile environment.

Cannon believed that the movement must be "Americanised". Cannon was dead right, but the phrase does need some explanation.

In the early 1920s the Communist organisations were largely made up of immigrant workers from Europe, especially Russian workers. Only a minority of the total membership spoke any English, and only a small minority spoke English as a first language. The various immigrant groups were organised into foreign language federations, operating inside the Communist movement with their own apparatuses.

People like Hourwich, leader of the Russians, were sectarians in their attitude to the very backward American working class. For example: Cannon blames Hourwich for a premature split with the Socialist party to form a new Communist organisation, a split which "cut the left wing off from thousands of radical socialists" who were not yet ready for a split... Nearly all of these workers "were lost to the movement."

Cannon accused the foreign-lan-

guage federation leaders of "not living in this country". He wanted to break down the divisions and build a Party whose leaders fully understood American conditions.

The two central issues the book deals with are the trade union question and the Labour Party issue. What emerges is Cannon's concern for revolutionaries to be where the workers are.

The trade union question was complex. America had very weak unions. Perhaps 10% of the workers were members. The American Federation of Labour (AFL) — the "centre of gravity" — was based on a core of unions who organised the more skilled workers along craft lines. Many of the unions were racist ("lily white").

After 1905 another tradition was consolidated with the founding of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or "Wobblies"). The IWW stood for militant, industrial unionism. It was halfway between a trade-union organisation and a political party, made up of revolutionaries who saw trade union action as the way to overthrow capitalism.

*"The trade union  
question and the  
Labour Party issue  
are central. Cannon  
insists that  
revolutionaries must  
be where the workers  
are."*

Communist workers came from two different backgrounds. Cannon had been with the Wobblies. Others, like William Z Foster, had "bored from within" the AFL — with some success, especially after World War One. Both traditions were important.

Industrial unionism (organising all the workers in each industry into an "industrial union", rather than having each grade or trade or craft group in its own union) had been trailblazed by the IWW. But in the event the unionisation of the mass production industries, after 1935, would come from a split within the AFL.

Cannon concluded, arguing against the sectarian policy of the IWW, that the Communists first ask "Where are the masses of the workers?" And "the answer to that question determines [our] programme for the industry". Sometimes that meant working in an IWW organisation. Sometimes they "worked in conservative unions... in order to revolutionise them from within." And "in an industry having two or more rival unions [we] work for the unification of all of them into a single union for the entire industry."

Cannon also argued about the idea of pushing the American trade unions to form a Labour Party. Following Lenin's advice to the British Communists to affiliate and vote for Labour against the Liberals and Tories, the American Communists attempted to work out an approach



Cannon with other revolutionaries in Moscow, 1925.

for their conditions.

There had been moves towards the formation of a "Farmer-Labour" party during the post-war increase in workers' militancy but the mood had waned by the time the Communists came to press the idea. Probably all that was possible was propaganda, and the Communists ended up with rump "mass" parties. Mistakes were compounded by their unskillful manoeuvring which alienated potential allies.

The time for this idea would come during the mass labour revolts of the 1930s. By that time the Communist Party was an agent of Stalin's foreign policy, and the CP helped to direct the industrial union movement back to the New Deal Democrats and Franklin Roosevelt, rather than towards the creation of an independent workers' party - which was the Trotskyists' policy.

James P Cannon is a central figure in our tradition. He was one of the key characters in post-Trotsky Trotskyism. In the late 1920s he was one of the few leading Communists outside the Soviet Union to make a stand for Trotsky's Left Opposition. In Moscow in 1928 he read a translation of Trotsky's *Criticism of the Draft Programme of the Comintern* and was convinced. He smuggled the text back home to the USA and began to build a pro-Trotsky faction in the American Workers' (Communist) Party.

At the end of October 1928 James Cannon, Max Shachtman and Martin Abern were expelled from the

Party. The drama of their "trial" in a Communist Party court is described in Cannon's *History of American Trotskyism*. Three men — utterly isolated — draw a line. They are already hated by the ruling class as Communists. Now they bring down the hysterical wrath of the Stalinist Workers' Party down on their heads.

They had a new bi-weekly paper, *The Militant*, out within a couple of weeks. They took the paper down to the Workers' Party's HQ, selling it on the steps, and organised widely to defend their rights against Stalinist thugs who drove them away.

Compare that with Ted Grant, who waited months after a split with today's British *Militant* (no relation) to bring out a monthly magazine which makes no reference to the reasons for its existence and is not on sale outside meetings.

When our forerunners, *Workers' Fight* faction, were railroaded out of the SWP (then called International Socialists) in December 1971, we had a bi-weekly paper, *Workers' Fight*, out by the beginning of January 1972. We told people why we existed, as loudly as we could; we took the paper to every SWPer who would listen. For me that is part of the Cannon-Trotsky tradition: doing what's necessary, not what's "possible".

Cannon and Trotsky had broadly the right policies, but their organisations were not big enough to be decisive. We need to look back to the tradition of Cannon to recreate a new mass movement based on the uncorrupted tradition of socialism.



Communist leaflet for 1924  
presidential election



Finding a way into the conservative trade union movement was a key task for the early American CP. Above: pickets in a CP-led New York garment workers' strike, 1926.

# Life, the snooker game



Tim Roth plays a chain-smoking Bohemian



Matt Cooper  
reviews *Bodies,*  
*Rest and*  
*Motion*

Directed by  
Michael Steinberg

IF YOU are tired of overblown American blockbusters then *Bodies, Rest and Motion* might just be kind of modest and understated film that will do you

some good.

The film starts from the premise that Newton's First Law of Mechanics — that a body will remain at rest or in a state of uniform motion until a force acts upon it — applies to people as well as snooker balls. This seems both more than a little pretentious and, on reflection, pretty inaccurate when applied to people.

The moving body of the film is Nick (Tim Roth) a chain-smoking bohemian TV salesman, who arrived in Enfield, Arizona five years previous to the beginning of the film. One day,

dissatisfied, he decides that it is time to move on again, and present this as a *fait accompli* to his girlfriend Beth (Bridget Fonda). Nick seems to be running away from his ex-partner Carol (Phoebe Cates) more than from the town itself.

Nick then steals a TV, leaves it with Beth and disappears into the night in search of his parents.

Meanwhile the painter and decorator Sid (Eric Stoltz) turns up, putting on a performance of laid-back that verges on the comatose. Sid is the body at rest. He has spent his whole

life in Enfield and intends to continue that way.

There is not too much more to say about the plot. Having set up his snooker balls on the green beige, director Steinberg happily lets them collide with each other and set each other into motion.

The film is good enough to look at, engagingly acted, especially by Roth and Fonda, and amusing and diverting if a little slow-paced.

It runs into problems only when it tries to hint at something more deep and meaningful. In this department

the script never quite outgrows the limits of bar-room philosophising, and no-one seems to take these moments in the film very seriously, least of all the audience.

It is a little like *Raising Arizona* without the humour, *Slackers* without the quirky philosophy or *Trust* without the emotional content. But it is refreshing in that it avoids most of the Hollywood clichés.

**A** FEW follow up words on *Farewell My Concubine*, reviewed on these pages three weeks ago. For those of you who don't live in London the film has now managed to escape the capital (although 9 of the 19 screens showing the film are still in London). The film can now be seen in Bath, Nottingham, Newcastle, Oxford, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Cambridge, Birmingham, Liverpool and Birmingham.

It's a shame that a film as good as this cannot displace at least one of 15 films playing at your local multiscreen Ciniplex: exactly why all these places are still showing *In the Line of Fire* six months after it came out baffles me.

An even worse fate seems about to befall another Chinese film, *The Blue Kite* (Dir. Tian Zhuangzhuang) which is banned in China (not even the director has seen the final cut). What Stalinists have done in China, capitalists have done in the West.

*The Blue Kite* is showing in just one London cinema, which is a huge injustice.

I will not attempt to whet your appetites too much for a film you probably can't see, but the film follows the story of an ordinary Beijing family through the inhumanity of the Cultural Revolution. It shows people who believed in Mao's fake communist rhetoric, only to betray themselves.

The film cuts an image of brutality and inhumanity on your mind that is as sharp as any in cinema. If you do get a chance to see this film, don't miss it.

## Kinnock: no ideas man



Dan Katz  
reviews  
*Tomorrow's*  
*Socialism*

BBC2  
Saturday 5 Feb, 7.35pm

SO WHAT WAS wrong with Russia? Please, run it past me again... "There was political repression... it was economically and environmentally a disaster."

And?  
"This socialism was run by ideology!"

Ah, so the rulers had ideas! Yes, I can see why that would bother you, Neil.

"They rejected choice and enterprise..."

"Socialism is opportunity and community added together — meaning liberty."

Yes, yes. In the name of "enterprise" and against communities the Tories smashed the miners. Neil, dear, it took you eleven months to get to a miners' picket line. You

spent the whole strike attacking Scargill and "picket-line violence". In practice you sided with enterprise against communities.

Well, I felt devastated by your polemic! You had a pop at Stalinism — you are on safe ground here — though what Stalinism and your pal Gorbachev have got to do with socialism is quite beyond me.

Polemics against Sidney Webb and Clause 4 part (iv) are, up to a point, missing the target too. Real socialists are certainly concerned with workers' control; when we consider state control our first consideration is: who controls the state?

Nevertheless, it would be positive if the creeping privatisation of the health service was ended and reversed. The NHS is not socialist, but clearly it is better than the system in America, where millions are without any effective care.

Jack Straw revealed himself entirely within Webb's framework when he described Clause 4 as an appeal to the middle classes. Unwittingly he

also paraded his contempt for working-class people who are apparently not interested in the "airy-fairy gobbledygook" of high politics.

Kinnock, your third and final attack on the left was over council house sales. Your problem again was "ideological opposition" inside the Labour Party — those people with ideas again!

Well, I oppose these sales. Look at the young people sleeping in doorways in Central London, and you can see the practical effects of Tory housing policy — policies you caved in before, because you hadn't the backbone to stand up for the people who elected you.

Nevertheless, what you are actually trying to do is use the issue of council house sales as an example of state ownership versus private ownership. And you reveal your utter ignorance. Socialists do not oppose private ownership of a home or a video recorder. The private ownership we care about is the private ownership which allows exploitation

of workers — private ownership of the means of production.

So we are not Fabians or Stalinists and we want social control of the means of production through workers' liberty. And, by the way — to defeat you you have to reply to the following:

(a) has the class struggle disappeared?

If it has: what has been going on in the pits, hospitals, railways and docks? If it has not: which side are you on in the class struggle?

(b) can capitalism provide stable living standards for the bulk of the working class?

If so: what happened to the print workers, the dockers and the miners? Or: has it provided a stable living standard for you, Neil Kinnock?

(c) are you for liberty?

If so: why not abolish the monarchy and House of Lords, unban *Socialist Organiser*, and fight for workers' control? If not: stop prattling on about it, you just help to discredit the rest of us.

### Land of Rope and Tory

Land of Rope and Tory,  
Ogre of the sea.  
Single mums for starters,  
Breakfast, dinner, tea.

Flaming pitbull Johnnies  
In their Britpack togs  
On the soapbox nightly  
Foaming at the Frogs.

On the soapbox nightly  
Foaming at the Frogs.

Sixties, softies, scroungers  
See our eyeballs glow.  
Consuming, hanging, flogging  
Make the juices flow.

Land of Rope and Tory,  
Ogre of the sea,  
Blaming everybody,  
Everyone but thee.

Blaming everybody,  
Everyone but thee.

David Bishop

From a new pamphlet *Land of Rope and Tory*, Emerald Press, 26 Falcon Grove, Sherwood Rise, Nottingham.

# John MacLean was not crazy

## PLATFORM

By Dave Donnachie

I WAS surprised to find that comrade Dale Street endorses the old myth that John MacLean was "mentally and politically disoriented" (SO 586), particularly since that myth was propagated by Stalinists.

It is worth examining where the myth of MacLean's sick mental condition originated. While he was imprisoned in Peterhead Prison, the prison doctors formed the position that MacLean was insane. Their evidence was that he believed that his food was poisoned (not an unlikely belief, considering the treatment of anti-war political prisoners) and that he was the most important Scottish workers' leader, and his allegiance to class struggle Marxism.

These allegations were taken up by leading figures in the CPGB when it became politically expedient, that is after MacLean didn't join the Communist Party.

Willie Gallagher, in *Revolt on the Clyde*, wrote that MacLean was "getting into a very sick condition. He was seeing spies everywhere, suspecting everybody and everything", "suffering from hallucinations." To date, not one shred of evidence has been found to prove that MacLean indeed suffered from "hallucinations".

Another Clydeside activist recalled that "There is clear evidence that the impression sent abroad by people, many of whom were indebted to him, that John MacLean was latterly mentally ill, was completely untrue." (James Clunie, *The Voice of Labour*). The same writer added that MacLean, while in Barlinnie Prison, continued correspondence with a whole layer of international socialists, and continued to study science and economics.

MacLean was completely sane. To

suggest otherwise, as comrade Street has done, is to perpetuate a malicious and unfounded smear.

What of the other allegation, that John MacLean became "politically disoriented?"

*"That John MacLean was mentally and politically disoriented is a myth perpetuated by the Stalinists."*

This claim rests upon two main planks. Firstly, that he had abandoned internationalism in favour of Scottish nationalism. And secondly, his opposition to the CPGB.

It is wrong to suggest that MacLean abandoned internationalism. His advocacy of the "Scottish Workers Republic" followed from his strategic view of the international situation after the First World War.

As he himself put it in his monthly paper: "We on the Clyde have a mighty mission to fulfil. We can make Glasgow a Petrograd, a revolutionary storm centre second to none. A Scottish break-away at this juncture would bring the Empire crashing to the ground and free the waiting workers of the world... English labour is bound to respond to our call if we in Scotland strike out boldly for political conquest." (*Vanguard* November 1920)

MacLean's advocacy of a separate Scotland has to be seen as a method of achieving workers' revolution, not as bourgeois nationalism.

He had three other main reasons

for not entering the CPGB.

Firstly, he felt that the CPGB was built artificially, that Bolshevik agents and Bolshevik money had attracted too many opportunist and careerist elements into the fledgling organisation. In particular, he opposed the way that Rothstein (the Bolsheviks' main envoy in Britain) was acting against critics inside the British Socialist Party.

"They had offered to pay him a salary to concentrate entirely on the 'Hands Off Russia' campaign. They were asking him to drop all the educational and agitational work that he had done for years. John refused to do that; he and the Executive of the BSP fell out." (Harry McShane, *No Mean Fighter*).

Secondly, MacLean was opposed

to the way that British Communists exaggerated the real balance of class forces, thus deluding Moscow as to the real chances of a British revolution. By 1921, it was clear to MacLean that the revolutionary wave that had swept Britain in 1919 was receding. Others, such as Gallagher, continued to say otherwise. As MacLean wrote in *Vanguard*, "I for one will not follow a policy dictated by Lenin until he knows the situation more clearly."

MacLean was also concerned that the leaders of the new CPGB weren't Marxists, that the leadership were characterised more by subservience to Moscow rather than any capacity for leadership.

"Scottish Marxians are surely not going to accept as an authority on

Marxism such a man as Gallagher who never was a Marxian, but an openly avowed anarchist. Lenin, Trotsky and the Bolshevik were and are very rigid Marxians. Because of their faithful adherence to principle they have won through and are holding out with amazing success. A real revolutionary party can only be established on Marx, not on Bakunin, by fully avowed Marxians of long years standing." (*Vanguard*, December 1922).

The tragedy is that MacLean didn't join the CPGB and carry his arguments into that organisation. By remaining outside, he allowed the ultra-left and opportunist elements to capture control of what, at that time, constituted the real vanguard of the working class.

## Violence at Marxism '93

# "A labour inquiry is the best way"

To the Socialist Workers' Party

WE ARE writing with reference to the allegations that members of the Socialist Workers' Party made a series of violent attacks against members of *Socialist Organiser*/Alliance for Workers' Liberty at your Marxism '93 event.

We understand that privately you have denied these allegations. But there has been no public response from you. In our view, all of us in the movement have a responsibility to respond publicly to such allegations.

We note that there is a call for "a labour movement inquiry" into what actually happened. We feel strongly that this is the best way to handle

disputes within the movement, and we join in calling for such an inquiry. We're aware that there are problems in choosing who will inquire — but there are more problems in choosing to involve the police or to ignore the charges as if they were not important, both of which we find unacceptable. If the charges are made up or exaggerated out of all proportion, this should be exposed. And if two or three individuals from the organisation against whom the charges are made behaved in an uncomradely and violent way, this also should be exposed. It does the SWP and every organisation on the left much harm if charges such as these are not resolved.

We hope you will consider seriously the implications if such charges by one Left organisation against another remain unresolved before the public.

As women, some of us Black and immigrant, some of us with children, some of us with disabilities, some of us pensioners, some of us lesbian, etc., we are particularly concerned that we need not fear physical violence from the left, in addition to the violence we face daily from the state and from individual men.

Power to the sisters and therefore to the working class internationally,

Anne Neale

Wages for Housework Campaign  
London WC1

# Bernie Grant may be wrong, but not rotten

By Colin Waugh

SO 586 CAME close to giving the impression that Labour MP Bernie Grant called for compulsory 'repatriations' of black people from the UK to the Caribbean. He did not. Nor did he suggest that migration to the Caribbean was a valid strategy for the mass of black people here. As I understand it, he said that if there

were black people here who wanted to get there, the state should be pressed to assist them financially.

This argument may be wrong but it cannot be dismissed by the joke quoted from Lenny Henry (he'd like to be offered £2,000 to "go home", because it's only £10 on the bus to Wolverhampton). The writer should put this joke to, say black pensioners living on the Stonebridge Park estate in Brent. Many of them were recruited

directly by the UK state in Jamaica, Trinidad etc. in the 1950s to work in the NHS or London Transport. They have been ripped off and trampled on here ever since. They retain links with those countries (for example small plots of land there). Do they think that Grant's suggestion was 'plain crazy'?

Grant's suggestion would also not necessarily seem 'crazy' to the grandchildren of those pensioners, i.e. to

people born here and determined to fight for a decent life here. They might very well say that in a war situation one of the first essentials is to remove vulnerable non-combatants to the safest possible place. For the left to say to those vulnerable people, "We think you should stay and fight, but if you choose to go we will fight for your right to do so" is not necessarily to scab on the struggle for 'full equality' here, as the writer assumes.

which that state belongs, and which continues to grow fat on the exploitation of Caribbean countries to this day, should be pressed to support them financially so that they can exercise that right in reality?

SO links Grant with George Galloway, but the only connection is that both Galloway and Grant are MPs with some claims to being on the left. *Socialist Organiser*, because of the stance it alone took over local government struggles in the early '80s, has a right (and a duty) to expose those aspects of Grant's record which are undeniably 'pseudo-left', in particular his record over cuts in Haringey.

But to equate him with Galloway is the kind of thing you would expect a sectarian organisation to do. It just looks as if SO hoped (and it would be a vain hope) to attract a few young blacks by 'exposing' Grant as some sort of faker.

Grant may well have displayed a 'communist' approach, and he may well have been wrong, tactically and/or in principle. But to pick this action of his out from all the other crimes which left Labour MPs could be charged with, and to claim that Grant's politics are as rotten as Galloway's, is indeed to 'lose your bearings.'

## No interest in retribution

Last week's SO (No. 587) commented on the *Today* headline 'Baby beater sent on anger course' which referred to the sentence given a man who beat a child so badly that the baby suffered 23 broken bones. SO disappointingly echoed the tabloid horror at the sentence, which included sending the offender on an anger management course.

While the crime is horrific, SO like *Today* is not in a position to judge objectively whether the sentence is appropriate or not. By simply demanding a stiff custodial sentence SO was jumping on the media's bandwagon of getting tough and getting even with

criminals.

I don't know whether the sentence was appropriate or not, but I do know that there must be hundreds of cases where sending even the most barbaric offenders on courses and giving offenders therapy to deal with their lives is far more appropriate than doling out retributive sentences.

I am not interested in retribution for its own sake, which is what SO seemed to be demanding in this case. If the offender is less likely to commit violent offences in future because of this course, then the sentence is good. It seems to me a simple penal sentence is unlikely to help this offender to deal

with his anger in future and would be pointless from any rational point of view.

Maybe in this case the sentence was inappropriate. Maybe he will re-offend. From the information available it is impossible to judge. But what can be judged is that no matter how horrific the crime, socialists have no interest in retribution for its own sake. The penal system is worthless unless it helps to make crime less likely in future. That means either lock them up and throw away the key, or do something to help the offender as well as the victim.

Richard Love,  
Brixton

*"To say, 'if you choose to go, we will fight for your right to do so', is not to scab on the fight for equality."*

Is the writer saying that such people do not have the right to return to those countries if they choose? If so, how far must we carry this? For example, what would he or she have said, then, to especially vulnerable Jews in Germany around 1930?

On the other hand, if we concede this right, why is 'plain crazy' to suggest that the state which brought most of those older black people here, not to mention the capitalist class to

## INDUSTRIAL

# Unite for public sector pay and jobs!

## PAY

By Tony Dale, Manchester UNISON, and Trudy Saunders, CPSA DHSS

LAST WEEK'S announcement by the Tories that teachers, senior civil servants, nurses, judges, the armed forces, doctors and dentists will all get pay rises

at around 3% this year does not mean that they have been able to prevent a major confrontation with the public sector unions.

The pay award could well mean 40,000 job cuts in the areas in which it applies, or pay cuts and more job losses in the areas in which it doesn't apply—like low paid civil servants, council workers and white collar as well as NHS ancillary staff. More pri-

vatation and contracting out to lessen the government's overall pay bill is also on the cards.

In fact we could see a combination of all three options.

Whatever happens, though, the need for a united fightback by public sector workers to defend jobs, pay, conditions and trade union rights is as great as ever. The Tories are not invincible. They can be made to retreat,

Market Testing in the civil service is already not going as they hoped. With this in mind, the TUC's decision not to call a day of action in support of public sector jobs and services and against the pay limit is a disgrace.

It is vital to link up these issues. The TUC should name the day now so that activists can go out and build for it.

## FE teachers vote for national strike action

By a NATFHE member.

FURTHER EDUCATION teachers in NATFHE have voted two to one in favour of embarking on a series of strikes, escalating from one day to longer, against the attempted imposition of new contracts by the College Employers' Federation. A one day strike is now expected for 1 March.

The proposed new contracts represent a massive worsening of conditions.

- The imposition of a 37 hour week "on site" for teachers.
- The removal of 22 hours as maximum contact time for teachers: the contract implies anything up to 37 hours a week teaching.
- Reduction of "holidays" to six weeks a year ("holidays" are when many teachers catch up on marking and preparation).
- Loss of intellectual property rights on resources designed by teachers.
- Loss of sickness and reduction in pay rates for so-called "part-time" teachers who make up a completely flexible and increasingly used section of the workforce.

The contracts not only imply redundancies in colleges but a move towards new management techniques in colleges that will bring in large volume, low quality education.

Although the strike ballot result is good, it is not as good as many hoped. The turnout is a little low, 57.8%, and 62% voted yes to full strike action (82% voted yes to action short of strike action).

Part of the explanation for this is the poor record of the NATFHE leadership. A similar attack in the old Polytechnic sector went down in defeat two years ago, and the token one day strike called last year made many NATFHE members feel the leadership did not have any kind of strategy.

Unfortunately, the leadership do have a strategy: use one day strikes to gain some slight concessions from the employers. This is doubly wrong. The employers know that they can sit out token strikes, and clearly they want to move away from a national contract to locally negotiated deals.

The left in the union is currently fragmented and strategyless. As the fight against the National Curriculum has shown, teachers can win where the left is well organised.

NATFHE members should be looking to build such a fighting left around the existing but regionally limited Socialist Lecturers' Alliance, to build for action to defend conditions of service and education.

## NCU members take action

### Girobank

NCU members in Girobank are on an overtime ban over pay. Action will be escalated into a 24 hour strike on 16 February. Workers in Bootle, the main Girobank office, and other region-

al centres will be taking action.

### Contractors in London

FURTHER negotiations continue over the confrontational situa-

tion of contract staff working for BT in London. Unless BT stop any contractors working where there is surplus staff, the decision of all London branches to have a London-wide strike ballot will continue.

Prepare for action!

## Tube: fight for 35 hours!

### UNDERGROUND

By a Central Line guard

THE saga of the tubeworkers and the 5 day week continues. However, that there's no end in sight, as with many long-running soap operas, doesn't mean nothing is happening.

Last week's episode saw the threat of a strike ballot from ASLEF unless London Underground Limited imposed the 5 day week deal. Now, following talks, Kevin Rose (ASLEF district secretary) has secured absolute assurances that the 5 day week (initially promised December 1992) will definitely come in within 6 weeks of... July or August... or possibly later.... depending on whether and when it can be safety validated.

So the strike ballot is off. Rose claims that London Underground Limited has "ring-

fenced" £3m (the cost of the deal as it stands) and made a commitment to pay for any changes to the deal that arise from the safety validation process. This appears generous to a fault and indeed strangely so, considering the £28m deficit on passenger services this year.

What's it all about then? A more suspicious mind would think the whole thing was a set up to boost Rose. London Underground Limited withdraws deal—Rose threatens action—London Underground Limited cravenly collapses. While there's certainly an element of that, it's unlikely to be the whole picture.

In any case the situation is now opened up a little more.

An ASLEF ballot to force the imposition of a bad and unpopular deal was a blind alley offering nothing for tubeworkers. Now that the safety validation is put to the forefront, the question is more obviously, not the 5 day

deal or nothing (as Rose falsely posed it) but what kind of 5 day week? Is it safe? Is it what we want?

For most of last year many ASLEF activists were in favour of a 5 day week with no strings (i.e. under current rostering parameters) before collapsing in the face of Rose's "this deal or nothing" line. 5 days and no strings is actually quite a minimal position. Trident (London Underground Limited's safety consultants) have said that the current 4 hours and 15 minutes continuous driving time on a train is too long! What is a much better, safer, healthier, and — if argued for positively and vigorously — more popular claim is for "5 days, 35 hours".

The safety validation process provides the space and the time for activists to take up and win the argument for a 35 hour week. The ASLEF ballot was a blind alley. This at least is an opening.

## Frances Kelly victimisation dropped

### UNISON

CHRISTIE HOSPITAL has dropped disciplinary action against Frances Kelly, a UNISON senior shop steward and prominent health worker activist.

The disciplinary charges were based on hospital bosses' claims that Frances had taken too much time off work for union activities.

In August Frances was suspended but UNISON quickly won her reinstatement. Now the attempt to discipline her has collapsed.

The disciplinary hearing was lobbied by 150 health workers and supporters. Throughout the dispute opposition to the victimisation had come from the UNISON across the region and from other health unions.

The clearing of Frances Kelly is an important victory for health workers in the battle to defend union organisation in hospitals.

Paul Folly, UNISON's Regional Officer, stated "The protest was so overwhelming that they just had to back off... This is a great victory which will boost the morale of all the shop stewards at Christie".

### Tameside UNISON activist sacked

JOHN PEARSON, former Tameside NALGO branch secretary, has been sacked by Tameside Council.

In November 1993 John finished his term as branch secretary. This was a full time secondment but Tameside Council refused to give him his old job back.

He was given an offer of another, unacceptable post.

Tameside's refusal to offer him his old job back is an attempt to attack the rights of union representation in Tameside.

### In Brief

IT LOOKS like the Tories' attempt to use the law to undermine the check-off system of collecting union dues is not working.

Bill Morris of the TGWU reports that as a result of a campaign to convince people to keep up payment, membership is actually increasing by 2-3%.

It would be great to see the Tories' policies backfire in the same way as their attack on the political levy did in the mid-'80s. The end result of this was increased support for political funds. Let's fight to make sure we get increased union membership too!

AN ATTEMPT by bosses of the Lincolnshire Ambulance Trust to use trust status as a way to pay union members less than non-union members doing the same job has been defeated. An industrial tribunal found for the union.

# Better red than dead



WHAT SHALL we do if we ruin the environment of our present home? Move to a replacement planet, of course! Unfortunately, the most Earth-like in size is Venus, which has an atmosphere of carbon dioxide at some 70 times the pressure of our atmosphere. Clouds of sulphuric acid obscure its surface which is at the temperature of boiling lead. The Moon is rather small and lacking any type of atmosphere at all, though its rocks are rich in oxygen.

The best bet would be Mars, the red planet. Its gravitational pull would give us a reasonable weight — a 10 stone earthling would weigh some 4 stone on Mars. Because further from the Sun, Mars receives only about half the solar power per square metre that the Earth does. This is still quite a lot but there is a more serious drawback — Mars has very little atmosphere (surface pressure is less than 1% of Earth's) and what there is is largely carbon dioxide. Most of the daytime warmth escapes each night without the insulating blanket of air and temperatures drop as low as -100°C, cold enough to cause polar coverings of frozen CO<sub>2</sub>. The absence of oxygen and therefore ozone means that dangerous amounts of ultra-violet reach the surface. The thin air is whipped up by winds at up to 200km/h.

It's not all bad, though. Mars did possess a more dense atmosphere in the past and must have once had liquid water. There are extensive valley systems typical of those produced by running water. It was unable to hold on to its atmosphere, though, and liquid water can no longer exist at present air pressures. There may be ice below the surface. The crust is made of rocks rich in oxygen, which could be extracted by future settlers. And the atmosphere contains enough CO<sub>2</sub> to allow green plants to grow. So what changes would need to be made for Mars to become inhabitable?

The answers are to be provided by the nascent science of "terraforming" or making a planet Earth-like. A meeting of scientists interested in Mars exploration recently called for terraforming and NASA plans a conference later this year devoted to it.

A first step, according to Chris McKay of NASA's Ames Research Center, is to raise Mars's average surface temperature from -60° to 0°C. After 100 to 200 years of increased warmth, Mars would have acquired a thicker atmosphere at perhaps one eighth of Earth's pressure. This would consist largely of CO<sub>2</sub> and water vapour, assuming that both exist trapped underground at present. The increased temperature would be a result of a deliberate policy of global warming using chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) produced from raw materials found on Mars in factories built by terraformers. Producing 900 tonnes per hour would require some 4500 megawatts of electricity, from solar or nuclear sources.

Terraform specialist Robert Zubrin who works at a US aerospace company says this would be big but not "science fiction big".

Extra warming could be achieved by reflecting sunlight on to the polar ice/frozen CO<sub>2</sub> caps from huge orbiting mirrors. An essential ingredient would be substantial amounts of Martian CO<sub>2</sub> to act as greenhouse gas, accelerating the process as it was released from the ground.

By the end of this process, plants might be able to grow and humans could travel around without pressurised suits, though they would still need their own oxygen supplies. Domed cities could also be built. With pure oxygen atmospheres, they would not need to be pressurised, though inhabitants would have to become acclimatised to the equivalent of an altitude of about 13,000 feet. Outside, plants would be using up the CO<sub>2</sub> and producing oxygen, but only if there were enough nitrogen for the synthesis of plant proteins. At the moment, it is not known how much nitrogen is present in the Martian soil — there is precious little in the thin air. Lighter molecules like nitrogen, oxygen, helium and hydrogen could not be held by Mars's weak gravity and have been gradually leaking away. Even Earth's stronger gravity could not hold its hydrogen and helium.

*"If there exist the descendants of life forms that might have developed when Mars's climate was more favourable in the past, it would be unforgivable to destroy them before they could be studied."*

If there is not enough nitrogen, McKay and Zubrin favour hijacking a nitrogen-rich asteroid and steering it towards Mars. The impact would shower ammonia, itself a greenhouse gas, into the atmosphere. With enough nitrogen, plants could transform Mars's atmosphere into one breathable by humans in perhaps 100,000 years! This is quite a short time compared with the typical lifetime of a species.

There are, of course, alternative approaches. McKay suggests developing micro-organisms that produce greenhouse gases. Since there already exist plankton that produce methyl chloride, a greenhouse gas, this should not be too difficult. There are also opponents of terraforming on environmental grounds. If there exist the descendants of life forms that might have developed when Mars's climate was more favourable in the past, it would be unforgivable to destroy them before they could be studied. Perhaps, if terraforming gets off the ground, someone will set up "Redpeace".

The terraformers say that a few \$million worth of research would be better value than some of the activities of NASA. The result might not be another inhabitable planet but at least we might know a lot more about how a planet's climate can be altered.

Personally, I feel that terraforming's rewards are so remote that it could only be agreed and funded by a socialist society!

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

**NUS leaders try to deflect action**

# Students mobilise against the Tories

By Elaine Jones, NUS National Executive

**O**N TUESDAY 8 February the National Executive of the National Union of Students (NUS) voted not to back the national student demonstration on 23 February, but instead to try to organise an NUS demonstration some time during the week of 21 March, probably not in London.

This alternative is a joke. Last term the Labour Student leadership of NUS cancelled a National Executive meeting that could have called a national demonstration in good time.

Only after pressure for the 23 February demo really built up did the National Executive move to organise national action.

Many colleges break up for Easter in the week before 21 March. Most break up during the week of 21 March. It is also the week following the TUC anti-racism march.

The NUS scheme is nothing but an insult to student activists and student unions who looked to NUS for a lead.

Meanwhile in the colleges and student unions, student activists are mobilising for 23 February. The demonstration is organised by a national alliance of student unions and Area organisations of NUS, brought together by Left Unity and Left Unity members on the National Executive of NUS.

The Tories are weak and crisis-ridden. Their 30% cut in grants is the sharpest

attack on students for years and comes on top of widespread student poverty. The explosion of anger at cuts in colleges across the country shows there is a real potential to defeat the grant cuts.

The student movement, alongside workers, can force the Tories to back down, but only if a mass campaign is built.

The basis for such a campaign exists. Its beginnings were shown in the many local demonstrations against the grant cuts.

We can defeat the Tories, but only if left student activists commit themselves to building a mass campaign and making 23 February a huge national march.

Some people on the left are saying that on 23 February we should "march on Parliament" and that the demo "can bring down the Government".

Do they really think ten or even twenty thousand students can bring down the Government on our own? And in one dash up a London street to try to get through the police lines and to Parliament?

Students alone will not defeat the Tories. The focus on 23 February should be on building a mass movement of millions against the Tory attacks.

French students and workers have shown us how to defeat a right-wing government's attacks on education: they marched in hundreds of thousands through the streets of Paris and defeated the French government!

We need to build the same scale of action here.

**Hands off our grants!**  
*£70 a week minimum grant and full benefit rights*

**Stop tuition fees!**

**Stop Graduate Tax!**

**NATIONAL STUDENT MARCH**  
 1pm, Wed 23 Feb • ULU Malet Street, London WC1  
 More details from: 071-639 7967



Students and education workers link up at Birmingham rally

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**SOCIALIST** Inside this week  
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 Behind the hype  
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**Buses, rail, pits, public sector**

**STRIKE TOGETHER!**

**Unite to beat sackings, sell-offs, cuts**