

Socialist Organiser

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No. 240. August 14 1985 25p 10p Claimants and strikers

BRING DOWN APARTHEID!

The declaration of a state of emergency in South Africa, on July 20, has merely created a new round of crises for the racist apartheid state.

Continued resistance in the urban townships, combined with international pressure has forced the Botha government onto the defensive. New reforms have been announced; Foreign Minister Pik Botha has said that it is now only "a question of how" ANC leader Nelson Mandela is to be released.

This proves neither that the racists have had a change of heart, nor that gradual foreign 'encouragement' can reform apartheid away.

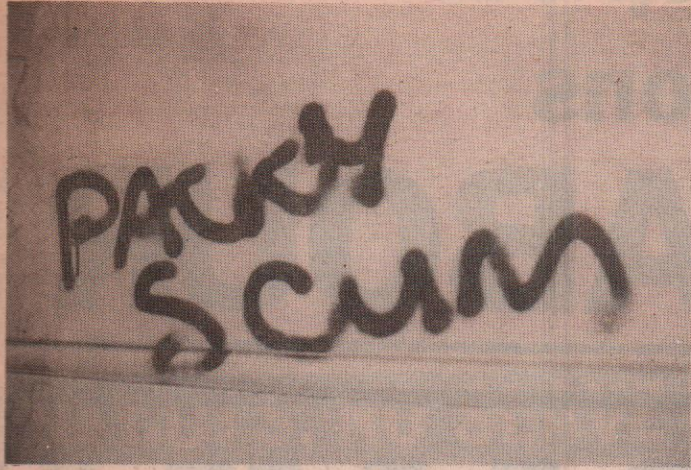
There is no solution for apartheid. The racist system is doomed.

Working class action in South Africa and working class solidarity internationally, are the tools to destroy apartheid, and to put working class power in its place.



**Unions
must
boycott
South
African
trade**

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Racist attacks in East London

A second floor flat in Electric House, Bow Road, was the target of a racist arson attack on August 8. Our pictures show (right) a blood-stained window where one of the occupants smashed windows with his bare hands in an attempt to escape, badly lacerating himself. (Above) Racist graffiti left in the entrance to the flats. Photos: Andrew Moore

Islington strike against racism

By Mary Corbishley, Islington NALGO

ON Monday August 5, 435 Islington NALGO members walked out on strike in protest against the Labour council appointing a worker found guilty of racism to the job of assistant neighbourhood officer in the Quadrant Neighbourhood Office.

Vi Howell was a sub-section head in the Rents Account section of the Housing Department. Over the past three years that section has been a virtual no go area for black workers.

Two other staff in that section have been found guilty of racial harassment under the Council's grievance procedure.

Renee Pledger is currently suspended on full pay and prior to the strike Steve Henney was due to be slotted into a job in another Neighbourhood Office, not yet opened.

Every black worker in the section was intimidated and ostracised. There was open racist abuse, expressing support for the NF as a means of getting rid of black people. Ashtray contents and rubbish bins were emptied over the desks of black workers. They were excluded from all social

functions.

For years black workers responded by trying to get transferred elsewhere. Finally in early 1984, one made an official complaint. The two main offenders were merely warned, and the black worker was redeployed. It took further complaints by another black person for the matter to be taken up more seriously.

In April 1985 a disciplinary sub-committee of councillors held hearings against five workers. Three were found guilty.

Vi Howell was cautioned and strongly advised to go on a racism awareness course.

And chair of personnel, Sally Gilbert threatened disciplinary action against Neighbourhood Office workers refusing to work with Vi Howell.

Since the grievance hearings witnesses have been subjected to harassment and intimidation at home, including threatening telephone calls and having someone sitting outside their house for six hours sharpening knives.

When the results of the hearings were taken to a NALGO branch meeting on June 25, there was an overwhelming decision that none of the members of staff found guilty of racial harassment should be allowed to

work with the public.

The NALGO members at the office where Vi Howell was due to work decided that they would be prepared to work with her if she verbally agreed that 1) she recognised that her actions were discriminatory against a black member of staff; and 2) gave a statement of her adherence to the equal opportunities policy in future.

She refused. The NALGO workers at that office voted unanimously not to open with Vi Howell in post.

A meeting of all NALGO members working in Neighbourhood Offices decided by a majority of 107 to 5 to strike. Other sections - Housing, Advisory and Social Services area teams - took similar action.

Almost two weeks into the strike the Personnel Committee have agreed to meet the union only once. At that meeting they agreed to the union's request that Steve Henney and Renee Pledger would not work with the public and withdrew the letter threatening disciplinary action against the strikers. But they have refused to consider removing Vi Howell from her post at Quadrant.

The deputy leader of the Council, Alan Clinton, has argued that Vi Howell's actions were not racist but merely those of a bad manager. In a letter to fellow councillors, Sally Gilbert states that she has "no intention of seeking an assurance from Vi Howell on changing her behaviour and attitudes as the union has..." She goes further and extends her sympathy to Vi Howell! No mention of the black workers who have been forced out of their jobs.

No mention, either, of the council's 1982 manifesto policy which states that "Labour would treat very seriously any grievance against a council employee connected with racial discrimination. Racism will be considered "gross misconduct" which could lead to dismissal. In implementing these proposals the trade unions would be fully consulted as to the exact procedures to be

followed."

Now the council are just sitting it out, with the Chair of Personnel gleefully commenting that they are saving money on wages. No attempt has been made to call a Labour Group meeting.

The council leadership have not reckoned with the strength of feeling. The strikers are rock solid. The aim must be to bring out the rest of the branch on strike - to bring the maximum pressure to bear on the council and on the NEC of NALGO who have reluctantly made the strike official, but are looking for opportunities to withdraw their support.

This strike is important, maybe unique - an attempt by workers to turn the tide against racism in the labour movement. Only recently manual workers in Hackney came out in support of a worker disciplined for racist abuse.

The Labour Party NEC has refused to allow black sections within the Labour Party. The NEC of NALGO has persistently refused to listen to the voice of its black members.

Despite all the rhetoric of anti-racism in the labour movement, the odds are still stacked against black people. A victory for Islington NALGO will be a victory for black people everywhere in their fight to get their voices heard.

South Islington Labour Party has already written protesting against the council's flagrant abuse of Labour Party policy. Support for the strike has come from a number of NALGO branches including Haringey, Hackney and Camden, and from Finsbury Park NUR and Islington NUPE.

A one-day strike of all employees is planned for Wednesday August 14 with a rally outside the Town Hall supported by the two Islington Labour MPs, black councillors from Lambeth, and speakers from black organisations.

Messages of support and donations to Islington NALGO, 135 Upper Street, London N1



Organise the sacked miners!

Jimmy Lees and George Brooks, two sacked Notts miners, spoke to John Bloxam.

Jimmy: There's not been a lot of change in the position of the sacked miners in Notts.

George: They haven't got a lot of time for meetings with the lads, but I still say they should have a meeting, with all the sacked men at one mass meeting.

In Nottingham, six out of 23 sacked miners have so far been to an industrial tribunal.

Jimmy: And only two of them won.

George: I lost mine. I didn't have anyone from the union side there with me. I felt let down about that.

The Coal Board had six or seven people - industrial relations officer, general manager, personnel manager, and there was only me and Jimmy from our side. I'd expected a union man of some standing to be there with us.

There's only been one reinstatement. It's the Coal Board trying to prove they're not biased.

Jimmy: In my opinion the tribunals are working to the same guidelines as the courts were during the strike. I've got no faith in that system.

George: Even the TUC bloke voted against me, along with the CBI and a magistrate. It was 3-0.

Jimmy: I don't think they'll get the vote for a breakaway.

There's too many good men in the county that want to stay with the union.

George: If they have a ballot I don't think they get a two-thirds majority. But they might go for the 50% plus one option.

If they do break away and we've still got officers and rank and file members in the national union, we could maybe get a job working for the national union in the area in the same way that in the days of Spencerism the national union employed men to work for the union in the area.

It would be better than loafing around.

Jimmy: It won't help those sacked in other areas, though. There's 700 altogether.

George: In Scotland the sacked miners are still allowed to attend their branch meetings, but here in Notts we are barred from attending ours.

Jimmy: I think the situation would have been better if we had expelled the scabs a year ago. They are much more organised now.

George: I think most of the scabs think we should get our jobs back. They have a collection for us every Friday at the pit and most of the lads put something in.

Jimmy: The priority now has to be the campaign against the breakaway. After that the union can take up our cases properly.



Photo: John Harris

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Notts delegation remain seated as NUM conference gives standing ovation to WAPC. Photo: John Harris.

THERE have been a number of meetings over the weekend to rally people against the breakaway. I went to one myself in Sutton-in-Ashfield.

The message from Arthur Scargill and Ray Chadburn is clear: whatever the differences during the strike, they must be forgotten, and it is a matter of belonging to a national union in order to fight the Coal Board.

If the bosses are in favour of the breakaway - if the Coal Board is in favour of it, if the government is in favour of it, if big business is in favour of it - then that's a good reason why miners shouldn't be in favour of it.

The meeting was packed, standing room only, and the message was well-received.

Lynk's letter to branch secretaries [see this page] shows the kind of new democracy he's talking about. Never mind how members at

THE SCABS' DEMOCRACY

Paul Whetton, Bevercotes NUM

branches vote, he'll decide what's good for the membership.

It's an excellent letter for our case. I wish that every trade unionist and Labour Party member would read that letter - look at it and think of the man behind it.

That's what the breakaway is all about.

That letter shows Lynk up for exactly what he is. He's preaching democracy while he's practising dictatorship.

There are several things to say about the collapse of the trial in Sheffield of the men arrested at Orgrave.

In one sense it doesn't really matter to the police that the men got off. The fact is that they were arrested on picket line and taken out of the strike with bail conditions and all the rest of it. In that respect the police succeeded. They achieved their objective.

But it shows that men were arrested haphazardly, and the book was thrown at them to try to teach them a lesson. Now that the police have taken it to court, they have been exposed.

That illustrates a very grave danger to everybody. The police can do blanket arrests whether or not there is any substance to the charges. It's getting like South Africa, where people can be arrested just to take them out of circulation.

People are expressing a great deal of sympathy with

the black miners in South Africa. In fact I understand that a fund has been set up for the black striking miners, and that Peter Heathfield has agreed to act as one of the trustees for it.

For the NUM conference this year there were two resolutions on South Africa. At our branch we were successful in getting support for both, but when the issue got to Area level Lynk and Prendergast used the argument against the resolutions that the organisations in South Africa which were being asked to support were terrorist organisations.

So the Nottinghamshire delegation, to their eternal shame, voted against the resolutions on South Africa.

The Women Against Pit Closures conference is coming up next weekend. I hope that it's very successful. If there is a message that could be passed on to them, it is: never mind what happened at annual conference. Your role in the strike has not been forgotten.

Although we failed this time to get associate membership for you, that's not the end of the fight on your behalf. It will be raised again, and I'm sure that eventually we'll be successful.

Women against pit closures

The Women Against Pit Closures national conference is this Saturday, August 17, in Sheffield.

Three main issues should be on the agenda: the first being future campaigning activity.

Notts Women Against Pit Closures are playing an active role in the fight against Roy Lynk's breakaway. In Durham, Easington Women's Action Group have led the fight against the closure of Horden colliery. Several women's groups are active for the sacked and jailed miners.

But, as Heather Wood of Easington Women's Action Group put it in Socialist Organiser last month:

"The strike's made people aware of a lot of other issues. Women are asking more questions about education, services, health care.

"I see that there's a proposal to get a private hospital in Washington. Private health care is something we've discussed and we know we are all against it. Now they're proposing a private hospital, we should get out campaigning."

If the pit women's groups broaden their scope, they can become the nucleus of a mass working-class-based women's movement, campaigning both in the communities and in the labour movement.

This connects with the

issue of affiliated status for Women Against Pit Closures. The NUM conference this year voted down the proposal to give the women's groups affiliated status with the NUM; but a struggle is continuing, and the issue will come up again next year.

Affiliated status for WAPC with the Labour Party has also been proposed. This can go together with, rather than being counterposed to, a turn to the Labour Party women's sections.

The women of the pit villages need to take their experience and their ideas into the wider labour movement, and the women's sections are one of the best channels for this. This year's Labour women's conference was stale, dominated by a polarisation between Militant's economism and middle-class careerist-oriented feminism. An organised, bold working class feminist voice is needed.

WAPC structure will also be discussed at the conference. WAPC delegates are elected at area rather than local level, so many women's groups feel that they have little information or control. Hopefully this conference will decide on a more open and democratic structure.

The conference is open to observers and visitors as well as delegates: phone 0742 700388 x 222.



WAPC demonstration, Barnsley, December 1984. Photo: John Smith, IFL.

LYNK'S LETTER

Roy Lynk is getting worried. This self-proclaimed ultrademocrat has just sent a circular to all miners' branch secretaries in Notts instructing them that they should not be governed by the decisions of branch meetings.

The letter reads:

Dear Sir,
Visits to this area by Mr Arthur Scargill.
Many branches are being pressured at their general meetings to cooperate in arranging meetings for Mr Arthur Scargill and others to campaign openly against decisions that were taken by the Notts Area on behalf of its members.

I am very much aware of the difficult position that

many branch officials find themselves in when they are outnumbered and outvoted at their branch meetings.

To clarify the position, no branch general meeting has the right to force decisions on branch officials and committee members that are not in line with the Notts area policy.

Any branch that finds themselves in this position must immediately inform me at these offices but they must not cooperate in any way to arrange these meetings or support any action that is not in line with Notts area policy.

Yours faithfully,
Roy Lynk,
General Secretary

Coal Board lies in Durham

Socialist Organiser spoke to Ray Graveson, Horden NUM

What are the feelings of the men after the strike, particularly after the announcement that Horden could close later this year?

Most of the men feel angry. There's a fair proportion of the men that have just given in. But there's still a strong feeling in the union, especially when they know there's still thirty years work left.

Before the strike the workforce was cut by about 500 men. Was there any campaign against that?

It was accepted with reluctance because management said

"If you shed this number of men it will make the pit all the more viable". So it just didn't come off.

Shortly after that the strike happened. Now the pit's got half as many men and they're still saying the pit's not viable. So it was just a con trick.

It appears to me that this has been planned years prior to the strike. They've been telling the workforce lies for ten years. And only now it's been proved they have been telling lies.

This review procedure is just a white-wash. The pit will close. It is just to show to the press that

they're doing something. But it means nothing...doesn't mean a thing.

I hope I'm wrong. I'd like to see the colliery go on. There's thirty years of work there.

It's a cooling off period. In the meantime people are leaving the mines. They're getting other jobs. They're taking their redundancy.

People like me over 50 have had pressure put on us. "It's the best time for you to go," we've been told.

The atmosphere's bad and there's no morale among the men. Most of them have

accepted that they're going to close the pit regardless of what happens with the Review Procedure. So the morale of the men is as low as I've ever seen it.

When I went back to the mines eleven years ago there was a sense of vitality there. But now all the men do is go in, come out and get paid on a Friday. There's no interest in the place. I think that's because management have got the men convinced by devious means that it's going to close.

But I hope I'm wrong. I hope the pit's still going to be there in fifteen or twenty years time.

Supporting the miners



SUPPORTING THE MINERS. Three ten-minute videos - Women's Support, Black People's Delegation, Lesbian and Gay Support. Also available (running time 35 mins) two videos: SCOTLAND AFTER THE STRIKE plus The Fight Goes On Available for hire: £5 (NUM & Women's Groups); £8 (MSGs); £12 (others) or for sale: £10/£15/£20. from West London Media, 118 Talbot Road, London W11. Tel: 01-221 1859, or phone 01-607-9964.



Absent

Were we too harsh on the Labour Party/TUC 'New Partnership' document? Sectarian? Dogmatic? Narrow-minded? After all, if it is described by the Tories as "the most extreme left-wing programme ever" it should have something going for it. Well, this is what the Tories say about it for their

own consumption. Ian Waller in the Sunday Telegraph: "The immediate image presented by the document and the manner of its launching were attractive... There is no mention of socialism in it. Absent, too, are the undertones of envy and class war rhetoric so loved by the Left..."

The Sunday Times - now almost as Tory as the Torygraph - also had an interesting item on the document. "Labour's current plans", it reported, "show shifts on key issues when compared with the party's 1983 manifesto." Clear commitment to renationalisation of what the Tories have privatised has been dropped. References to extending public ownership, already vague in 1983, are now so weak as to be barely noticeable.

The 'national economic assessment' to be agreed between a Labour government and the unions had an ominous smell of incomes policy about it. Now worse: the current document wants instead a 'national economic summit' with unions and employers.

Labour was committed to repealing all Tory trade union legislation. Now Neil Kinnock talks of retaining those parts of the Trade Union Act 1984 which make ballots - on the Tories' terms - compulsory.

Between 1979 and 1983 - according to figures recently given in a parliamentary answer - the salaries of the chairs of big British companies rose by 18% more than the retail price index. That's twice as big a rise as average earnings, which went up 9% more than the RPI.

Meanwhile the Tories have been cutting taxes for the highest-paid.



Russia's bloody war

This interview with an Estonian soldier who had served in the USSR army in Afghanistan originally appeared in the Estonian underground journal "Izekiri". It is reproduced here from 'Voice of Solidarnosc', July 1985.

Did you often have to come into contact with Afghan "dushmen" (Soviet expression for guerrillas, meaning "bandits")?

Of course, not all the Afghans were anti the Soviet army, and couldn't be. But we were not liked by the majority.

The position of the Soviet army was critical and vague, so that it was difficult to say for sure which was the partisan army and which was not. You see, there were regions where we simply did not show ourselves.

To a detached on-looker, perhaps, everything may seem considerably more simple but we, in Afghanistan, were in a state of severe depression. It was as if all thought was paralysed.

Guns rattle behind and in front of you, and you yourself run and shoot. Death is behind and in front of you. If you want to stay alive, you run and shoot.

Is it only the Soviet army which is active in Afghanistan? Doesn't it just lend support to the government army? How does Afghanistan's own army fare? They were old men and half-wits as far as I could see...

So they were actually quite remote from the people - there was very little sympathy towards the officials. And how did the party state officials treat others?

Generally speaking, the impression I gained was that they treated us as if we were their shield... they were never hostile to the Soviet soldiers, because they knew that without us they

wouldn't survive.

You mean that they could not be sure of their own safety without you? Who were they scared of - the people?

Naturally, they could never predict where to expect the next attack. The people didn't respond to them in a supportive manner.

You must have also seen the freedom fighters. How were they armed?

The freedom fighters (Mujahideen) were mainly armed with bad old cock-pistols and old kalashnikovs.

Can I now conclude with another question? Was there anything you would rather forget about your stay in Afghanistan?

No, it's impossible to forget. Even if those memories are horribly painful, and there were of course many that were. You can't forget them... they remain in one's memory, and others should be told about them.

People should know everything - I mean, the different "operations" against the Afghans. In particular we had to fire at innocent civilians... where the new regime had not even been set up. We had to annihilate everyone who crossed our path.

Tell me in more detail how you fought against innocent villagers and what tactics were used?

The tactics used in the event of punitive operations were basically the same. When we entered a village, we had to shoot down all those looking in the slightest bit suspicious, and all those who attempted to run away or tried to hide. We were expected just to shoot them...

Will the Afghans win? Do they expect to win?

They are staggeringly strong-willed. It's practically unbreakable. Resistance will continue up to the point where the Afghans are defeated. That's why the war is so bloody.

Never again

On the 40th anniversary of Hiroshima, last week, the Morning Star had a huge front-page headline, 'Never Again', and gave over most of the issue to the horrors of the atomic bomb.

Very good. But the Morning Star did not tell its readers one thing.

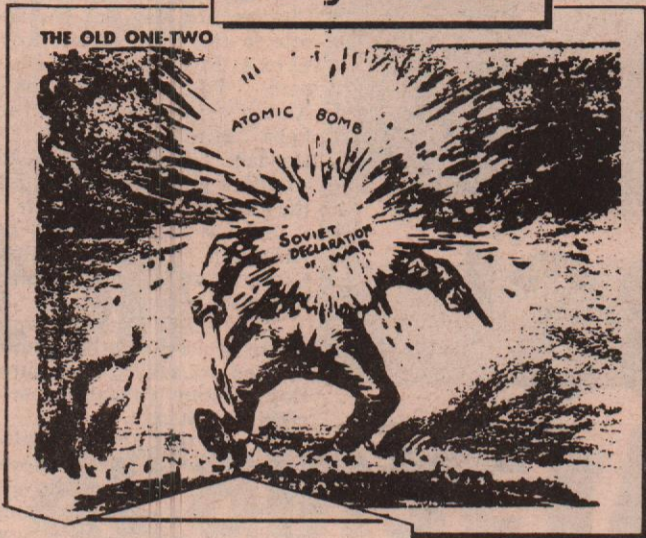
At the time, in August 1945, the Communist Parties world-wide applauded the use of the atom bomb, expressing satisfaction that it would finish off Japan quickly. The French CP paper Humanite, for example, wheeled out the scientist Frederic Joliot-Aurie to hail this "new conquest of humanity" (August 12 1945).

Stalin himself knew about, and approved, the gist of the US plans to use the bomb in advance. As historical Gabriel Kolko recounts it, "Truman ambled up to Stalin [during the Potsdam conference of July 1945] and mentioned that the United States had developed a new and unusually destructive bomb that they were soon to use against Japan. Stalin seemed pleased, expressed hope that they would put it to good use... clearly Stalin already understood enough to know... that the superbomb was the very weapon the Russians were seeking to develop or win for themselves."

The US would soon be using the atom bomb as a threat against the USSR. But for the time being the Stalinist line was that everything and everybody should be subordinated to winning the war.

At the same time as the Nagasaki bomb was dropped (August 9), the USSR declared war on Japan - Stalin justified this in terms of revenge for Tsarist Russia's defeat by Japan in 1904-5! - and took the chance to seize Manchuria, the most industrialised part of Japanese-ruled China. Stalin seized vast amounts of industrial equipment there and shipped it back to the USSR - much to the dismay of the Chinese Communist Party.

Daily Worker



August 1945: The US Communist Party paper gloats and cheers at the A-bomb attack on Hiroshima. (From Workers Vanguard).

Atrocity

There's another aspect of the Stalinist movement's attitude to the Japanese which the Morning Star would prefer to draw a veil over: the treatment of Japanese-Americans.

In February 1942, two

months after Pearl Harbour, President Roosevelt signed an order under which 110,000 Japanese-Americans were herded into concentration camps. The Communist Party supported this atrocity.

Many of the Japanese-Americans were long established in the US. 70,000 of them were US citizens. Yet many had their land, property and houses stolen.

In the concentration camps they suffered terrible conditions. Japanese-American teachers working in the camps were paid one-eighth of the rate for white teachers.

The Japanese-Americans faced not only chauvinism but racism. (The millions of German-Americans were, after all, white). After they were released from the camps, they were threatened, abused, shot at, and had their houses burned down by right-wing thugs.

Denis

Crawshay's XV is a Welsh rugby team currently ignoring even British government policy by touring South Africa. Its president has resigned in protest.

Not so vice-president Mr Denis Thatcher. Labour Party spokesperson Don Anderson has called on Thatcher to resign his post, noting that he "has not shown his distaste in any way for apartheid."



Do you read me? Do you read me? This is Maggie cutting poodles 1, 2 and 3... (Photo: John Harris, IFL).

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APARTHEID TERROR CONTINUES

By Clive Bradley

The combination of partial reform with further repression is characteristic of every tyranny at bay. But now this policy is losing its coherence for the Botha regime.

A year ago, Botha seemed to be in a strong position. The regime had managed to find a good deal of international favour as a result of its policy of 'gradual reform'. Botha visited Thatcher in Britain; and the newspapers were full of the encouraging progress taking place in South Africa. A lull in internal opposition gave Botha's 'reformist' image credibility.

That credibility has been shattered by events since last summer. The mass revolt in South Africa has been met with severe repression. Sanctions have been threatened by Western governments. Even the US government, while stressing its friendly relations with Botha, has criticised the repression.

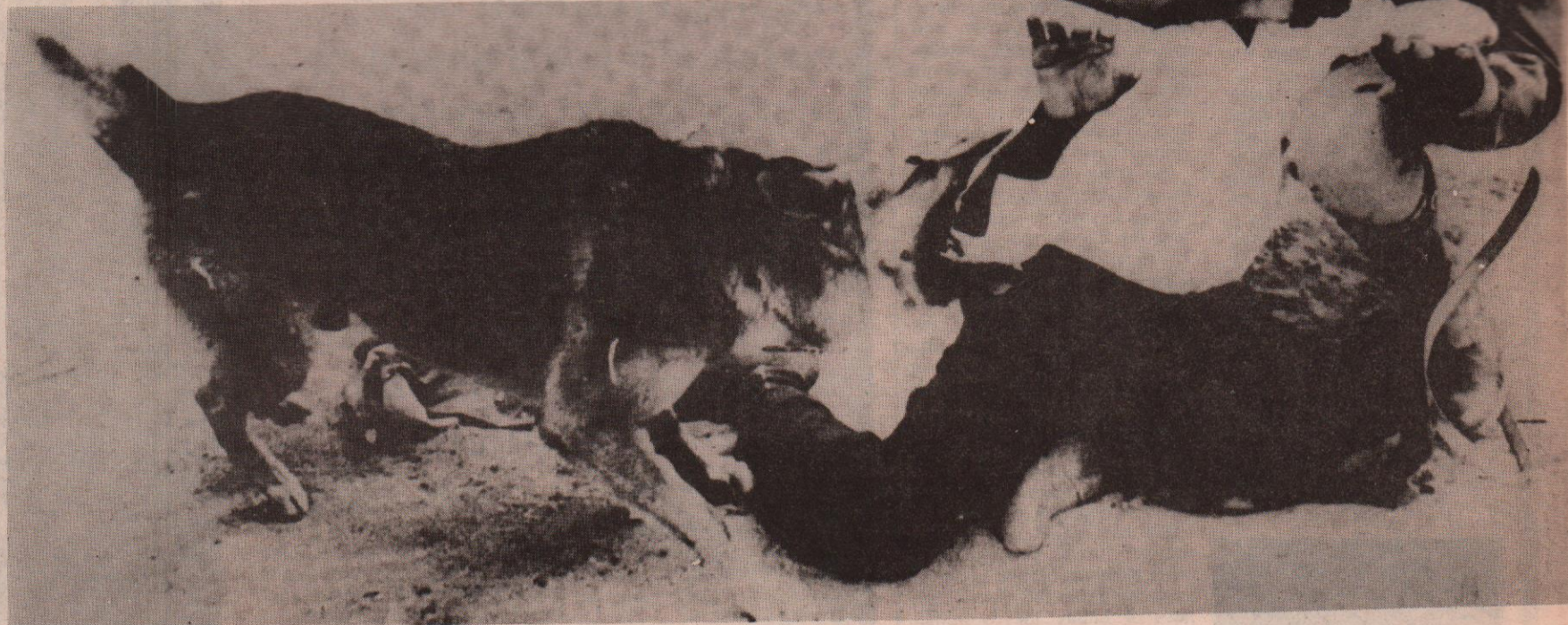
Botha therefore walks on a narrowing tight-rope. Sanctions, and the withdrawal of foreign investment as a result of public pressure (or capitalists' concern about instability in South Africa) would severely hit the economy. It is suffering already from a major recession, and a fall in the price of its major raw-material exports on the world market.

Ford and Coca Cola have already made steps towards pulling out.

Concessions

Repression is one answer. But concessions — at least to divide the opposition and buy off a section of it — are the other side of the apartheid state's attempt to rescue itself.

Every concession made to the blacks causes severe problems among wide layers of whites, especially Afrikaaners, who see all such moves as betrayals of white rule. Botha faces fierce, vocal opposition from the ultra-nationalist



The terror continues. Below: demonstration in Soweto before the armoured cars move in.

HNP of Andries Treurnicht. Although Botha himself clearly favours a policy of gradual reform and 'carrot' as well as 'stick', he continually needs to watch his back in his own Afrikaaner constituency.

Gambit

So far the concessions have whetted black appetites, more than stemming the tide. His gambit — limited legality for non-racial trade unions; abolishing some "petty apartheid" rules; establishing representative Chambers for Coloureds and Asians (but not blacks) — always threaten to spill over and force the government's hand to make more concessions.

Organised opposition to the attempts to co-opt sections of non-white South Africa is very widespread. The elections to the Asian and Coloured Parliaments last year, were very effectively boycotted. Collaborationist local councils for blacks have merely provided a focus for opposition.

Botha's main proposed reforms now are:

*To relax the pass law system.

*To give South African citizenship (but not voting rights) to all blacks born in the country.

*Some improvement in the position of blacks without jobs living outside of the 'homelands', which is currently illegal.

*Incorporating blacks into the President's advisory council.

External

These proposals seem to be mainly for external consumption. Even the US — through Reagan's National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane — has expressed doubt about the reforms ever being implemented. Similar doubts are expressed about the likelihood of ANC leader Nelson Mandela's release.

Sincere or not, these proposals go near the point beyond which apartheid begins to crack up. That Botha is prepared even to suggest such reforms shows how scared he and his state have become.

The State of Emergency begun on July 20 — the first since the aftermath of Sharpeville in 1960 — further highlights some of the regime's difficulties.

The repressive measures have failed to suppress the violence in the urban townships. Communal violence in Natal, although politically quite different to the uprisings directed against the state, does further underline the extent to which the situation is out of control for the apartheid regime.

At the moment, the state is not capable of reasserting its control. It has, of course, vast reservoirs of repressive strength, and it is by no means on the verge of collapse; but whole areas of the country have become ungovernable.

Focus

The State of Emergency has in fact provided a focus for opposition. The impending strike by the National Union of Mineworkers from August 25 will be a test of strength between the working class at the forefront of the movement against apartheid, and the state. The NUM cannot legally call a political strike against the emergency laws as such. But it has called for protest against the State of Emergency through a boycott of white-owned shops.

The union has threatened strike action against any deportations of foreign workers from the mines — action which would be a direct challenge to the State of Emergency.

A strike by the largest non-racial trade union, in strategic industries — coal and gold — will inevitably be a central focus for all opposition.

The underground/emigre South African Congress of Trade Unions has called for a general strike if any foreign workers are deported. SACTU itself is not strong enough on the ground to pull off such action.

But solidarity with the NUM from other non-racial, independent unions could

shake the regime to its foundations. Strike action in South Africa is never easy — even legal strikes face the prospect of violent repression.

Nevertheless there is a rising wave of working class led opposition prepared to take on the repression. The independent union federations, and other non-racial unions, have spearheaded much of the resistance over the past few years.

Our priority must be solidarity with the South African

workers, and in particular the NUM. Trade unions, Labour Parties, Anti-Apartheid branches, must be mobilised to win support and money for the South African miners.

Money

Send money either to: NUM of South Africa, PO Box 10928, Johannesburg 2000 (tel 011 294561), or to "Emergency South African Miners' Strike Fund", AAM, 13 Mandela Street, London NW1.



Race war or class war

South African Asians were forced to form self-defence groups this week, as communal violence killed over 60 people in the Durban area. The house where Mahatma Gandhi lived in the 1920s was destroyed.

The anti-Asian violence seems to have sprung mostly from the Zulu community. Zulus, often migrant workers, form the base of support for Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's 'moderate' Inkatha movement. Although Inkatha claims to have been trying to calm Zulu tempers, it is likely that it in fact instigated the violence.

Inkatha is well-known for organising attacks on more radical movements, like the United Democratic Front. A memorial service for murdered UDF lawyer Victoria Mxenge last week (August 7) was attacked by Inkatha supporters.

Buthelezi, one of the black South African leaders most open

to deals with apartheid, has an interest in the defeat of more radical and popular movements.

Apartheid — separate development — lays the basis for communalism anyway. A major strength of the mass opposition up until now has been its success in bridging communal divides. It would be a tragedy if such unity broke down.

Asians tend to be better off than blacks. And the South African state has fostered divisions between 'blacks', 'coloureds' and 'Asians' from even before apartheid was institutionalised (after 1948).

The conscious divide-and-rule policy continues today. The attempt to introduce Coloured and Asian assemblies alongside the white parliament has been one part of it.

Lack of a clear political lead in the black movement can divert militants into communalism. The

ANC talks about an immediate general uprising, but in concrete terms offers only popular-front protests. More militant blacks turn to the narrower black-nationalist groups. The non-racial trade unions have kept their independence, and talk about working-class politics, but have made no moves towards a workers' party based on the trade unions.

Lacking channels of revolutionary working-class socialism, the intense anger and bitterness among blacks spills into communalism. In some areas ultra-militant black youth have attacked black trade unionists whom they consider to be 'collaborators'.

But all this is still on the fringe of the mass opposition to apartheid. On Monday August 12 there was a stay-away in the Pretoria area, against the State of Emergency. This is linked to a spreading boycott campaign against white-owned shops.

Up and coming diseases

I have a feeling that virus diseases are going to dominate public health fears and medical research for the foreseeable future.

For one thing, viruses cause diseases ranging from colds to cancer. For another, there is virtually nothing that can be done to cure a virus disease, except in a few cases to encourage the body's immune system.

This is mainly because viruses get right inside the body's cells, where they are safe from attack. In some cases, their genetic material gets incorporated into the DNA of the cell and gets multiplied when the cell multiplies. Here they can lie dormant for years or even decades.

Since cures are rare, the emphasis must be on prevention. This may be by immunisation where possible or simply by preventing the spread of viruses. But in order to do this, we must know exactly how a given virus is spread and if we are to fully understand a disease like AIDS, it is important not to prematurely stick a label on it, like "VD" or "Gay Plague".



Science

Doctor John Seale, a venereologist, has illustrated this point with reference to both AIDS and Hepatitis B (another disease much associated with gays by the medical profession) in two New Scientist articles.

In June he attacked the fashion of labelling diseases where there may be a sexual component as Venereal Diseases. Not only does this result in sufferers being subject to shame and hostility because of their supposed sexual behaviour, but scientists can be diverted from taking the most effective measures to defeat the diseases through misunderstanding the ways in which they are transmitted.

The Hepatitis B virus is very common, affecting populations as diverse as the Eskimos and Polynesians. It has been with us for thousands if not millions of years.

The US Public Health service decided in the '70s that it was a sexually transmitted disease. Most people would take this to mean that it is mainly or largely passed on by sexual contact but in fact there is no evidence that this is true.

So how is it transmitted? HBV is a prolific breeder and there are vast numbers of viruses in the blood of victims. In hepatitis carriers, these levels of infection can persist for decades with no symptoms. For infection to spread, infected blood must come into contact with the blood of a new victim but as little as a millionth of a drop of blood will be sufficient.

Spread of infection is easy when infected blood is used for transfusions or when intravenous drug users share a syringe. It is easy, too, in poor, overcrowded communities where blood may be exchanged between

open cuts and sores more easily. Pregnant women can pass it to their offspring through the placenta.

In one bizarre instance, epidemics of hepatitis occurred among Swedish trackfinders (a sport like orienteering). After running bare-armed and bare-legged through forests and getting scratched, the Swedes would go for communal dips in rivers or lakes and pass the virus around. Outbreaks in schools may be linked to bouts of do-it-yourself ear-piercing!

All these examples involve transmission through blood and there is no evidence of transmission through semen or saliva. The only link with sex is that it seems to be common among gay men who practise anal intercourse. This is because the lining of the rectum is quite thin and easily damaged. This can allow viruses to enter the bloodstream.

Rarely if at all would this happen during heterosexual intercourse because the lining of the vagina is much thicker. It is true that hepatitis sufferers can infect their sexual partners, but they are just as likely to infect other members of their families, suggesting that the sheer closeness of family life is sufficient.

The false classification of Hepatitis B as a venereal disease seems to have had little practical importance, but with AIDS it could be more damaging. The AIDS virus seems to spread in exactly the same way as HBV but is far more lethal. Classing it as a VD may result in inappropriate steps being taken to limit its spread.

After its initial description as a "Gay Plague" it is now being seen as a potential killer of heterosexuals (though primarily of "promiscuous" ones). Already there is talk of jet-setting businessmen passing AIDS to each other via prostitutes. If AIDS is passed between heterosexuals not by sexual intercourse but by other means, then concentrating on this will not prevent its spread.

Worse, the stigma attached to VD in general and AIDS in particular may make victims slow to seek treatment, especially if they are going to be accused of being promiscuous, of being junkies or of indulging in certain sexual practices.

Other modes of transmission could include infected needles in hospitals in certain parts of the world, blood-sucking insects or merely close physical contact in the same way as HBV is transmitted.

Seale states that contrary to claims there is no evidence that AIDS virus is transmitted through saliva or semen.

Seale thinks that AIDS virus normally infects a wild animal, probably the green monkey, but has crossed the species barrier and found a new host. But whereas it probably causes few problems to its natural host, it is extremely dangerous to its new host.

In this it is like Lassa Fever or Marburg Disease (Green Monkey Fever). But these viruses either quickly kill their victims or are themselves polished off by the immune system. AIDS, on the other hand, works slowly and seems to be always present in the blood or tissues of the survivors.

Seale points out that these are the requirements for an epidemic and concludes that AIDS is "potentially lethal to all men, women and children, irrespective of lifestyle or sexual activity".

SRI LANKA: B

The British government is helping President Jayawardene's government to massacre and terrorise the Tamil minority, one-sixth of Sri Lanka's population. Rajes Bala, a member of the Tamil Women's League, told Socialist Organiser about the situation.



The Jayawardene government has held negotiations and offered concessions to the Tamils. But they are not offering a solution. No. They are giving some sort of municipal autonomy, which is not what the Tamils demand. They want more autonomy than the government is offering - they want complete control over their own affairs in the north and east.

They say 'If I was a political person I wouldn't come here. There are plenty of guns in Jaffna [the main Tamil city of northern Sri Lanka]. I can grab one. I didn't want to. I wanted to leave. I just wanted to live, that's why I'm escaping'.

Whether a Tamil is political or not means nothing to the Sri Lanka armed forces. They kill you. They kill Tamil people. So for survival they're asking for separation.

The Jaffna Tamils didn't start by asking for separation. They worked with the UNP [the ruling party]. Batticaloa Tamils worked with the UNP. The army is killing Batticaloa Tamils in hundreds.

Army

All the Tamil areas are controlled by the Sinhala armed forces. The Tamils want the army out of their areas. The government says it will keep the army in barracks for a while, but they are not going to withdraw it.

Until last year I was against separatism. But now if the Tamils can't any longer live together with the Sinhalese it's up to them to decide what they want.

I'm working with Tamil refugees here every day. Most of them are nothing to do with any politics.

Killing

Trincomalee Tamils never said anything because they're so scared - they're half and half there.

But the army keeps on killing. Village after village is a ghost town.

Sri Lanka is supposed to be a Buddhist country. Buddhism is supposed to be passive - no killing, don't

hurt people. But what are they doing in the name of this religion? They are burning small children alive. I lost my family: they burned them alive - shot them, and then burned them alive.

The violence is not at the level of hundreds being killed each day like it used to be.

There's a ceasefire since last month. But there are already lots of incidents. Only last week the army stopped a bus in Jaffna and killed people. The killing won't stop until the government thinks that physically and morally they have destroyed the Tamil resistance.

Israel and many Western powers are giving aid and training to the Sinhala armed forces. What that means to me is that they are helping the majority nation to kill the minority nation.

Israel

The Israelis are helping Jayawardene. They suffered persecution in past years, and now they are helping the Sri Lankan government to kill another minority nation. Why are they doing it? The Israeli Mossad [secret police] are in Colombo. Why? They are supposed to be opposed to the oppression of minorities because they suffered so much themselves.

Britain is also helping Jayawardene. Mrs Thatcher talks about human rights in other countries. But she does not think black people have rights too. She talks about terrorism in South Africa being eradicated. Imagine!

Black people's rights - that's terrorism to her. Tamil people's rights - that's terrorism to her.

The British government is giving a lot of assistance to the Sri Lankan government. They have great interests there. The tea we drink comes from my country, plucked by my women, but still under the control of your capitalists.

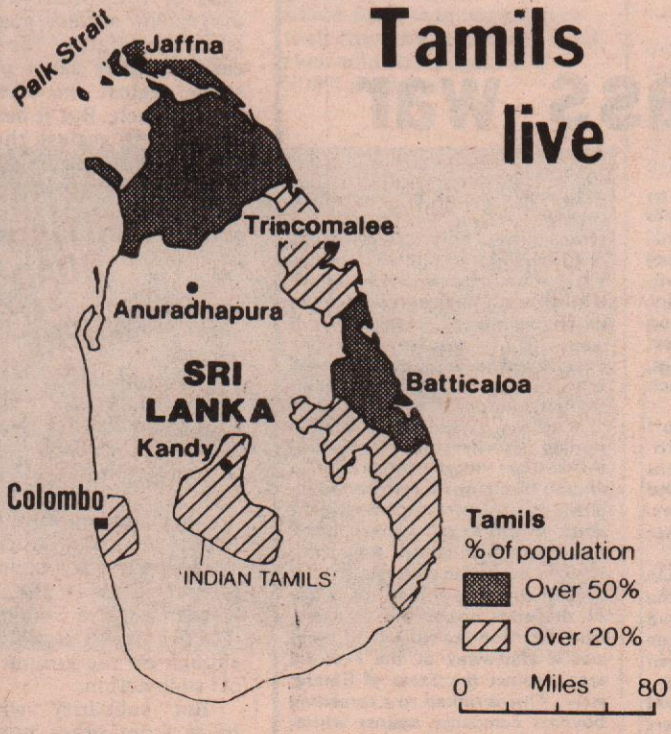
Multinationals

In the late '70s we started to have free trade zones [special areas where multinationalals can produce for export free of local duties, taxes and laws]. Plenty have mushroomed under the Jayawardene government. But when the troubles started people didn't want to put money in. Most of Sri Lanka's foreign exchange comes from tourism, the aid agencies, and the free trade zones, because we haven't got much to export except tea.

On April 11 Mrs Thatcher opened the dam, built with £170 million British aid. Why did Britain want to give £170 million? The land that the dam is supposed to irrigate will be taken by multinationals to produce tobacco. So the poor Sinhalese are suffering, too. Their little pieces of land - you know we don't have big landlords, everybody has a little plot of land - their land will be taken away by the big multinationals.

So my people will have to work in the tobacco fields to earn the money to buy rice from America, when they

Where the Tamils live



"Whether a Tamil is political or not, if they are being killed by the Sri Lanka armed forces, for their survival they're asking for separation."

By Les Hearn

BEHIND THE TERROR



used to produce rice themselves.

Britain wants a stable government in Sri Lanka because of its economic interests. But the main reason why the Western powers support Jayawardene is that they are after Trincomalee harbour to use as a naval base.

Trincomalee is already a 'recreation centre' for the US navy. So you have flourishing prostitution in Trincomalee, including male prostitution. That's because Trincomalee is a tourist area and a recreation area for the navy.

It's getting like Thailand, where there are hundreds of thousands of women working in the massage parlours in Bangkok, and 70% of them have VD.

Unions

In the free trade zone they have no right to have trade unions. But the multinational managers encourage the women to have beauty contests, [most of the workers in the free trade zones are young women], to get them to buy the multinationals' products.

They pay them 600 rupees a month - that's £20. The workers have to pay 300 rupees out of that 600 for a place in a room of nine or ten beds, in the compound of the free trade zone. But people have to wear Western clothes to get a job in the free trade zone. The multinationals are destroying our culture.

Britain has a lot of influence on Sri Lanka because of the colonial past. Now 200

Sri Lankan security men are here at the moment to get trained.

Margaret Thatcher's attitude is that whatever she wants, she'll get it. It doesn't matter who gets hurt. You saw that during the miners' strike. She doesn't care if the miners' children or Tamil children suffer.

Refugees

There are 55,000 Tamil refugees in Western Europe, mostly in France and West Germany. There are about 2,000 in Britain. Out of those only four have got political asylum so far. The rest have got temporary permits.

The refugees are persecuted because they are Tamils, they are Hindus, they have different politics. But the British government will not recognise them as political refugees - because they are black.

Do you think if thousands of South African whites came tomorrow they would be refused? Certainly not. They would be greeted at Heathrow Airport. But these 2000 people from my country who are escaping from murder can't get political asylum.

They're not leaving their homes because they want to be better off. Do you think they are better off here? Oh no. You should see how they are living. Bare floorboards, no carpet, no toilet, no cooker - nine boys cooking on one gas ring. They just want to survive.

Some of them are so frightened that even a fire-

work can scare them because of what they've seen in the last few years - bombs, guns. That's why they're here.

During the Pakistan-Bangladesh trouble, three or four million refugees went from Bangladesh to India. They accommodated them, they fed them.

We're not coming in millions to Britain, only a few thousand. Britain robbed our country, it stole our wealth, and now Britain can't even help a few thousand Tamil refugees escaping from murder.

In Sri Lanka, all that most of the Sinhalese know about it is that the Tigers [the Tamil guerrillas] are doing this, the Tigers are doing that. It's not their fault, it's because that's how the government wants it to be.

It's the trade unions' fault and the left's fault that they are not doing enough. But they are so scared. It's not just the Tamils that are facing persecution from the government, but also the left and the trade union movement. Today unless you are in a government-supporting trade union you cannot get a job.

Divide

The Buddhist fanatics tell them all the time that Sri Lanka is an island given to them by the Buddha, so they shouldn't let the Tamils live. 70% of the people are Buddhist. Today it's the Tamils who are persecuted. Who will it be tomorrow? The Christians?

Of course the left and progressive groups support the oppressed. But that doesn't mean that openly and widely they are having strikes against the atrocities or anything like that. In this country did we have a general uprising by the working class to support the miners' strike? No we didn't. The government divides the

working class.

The Tamil separatist movement started in London, not in Sri Lanka. Middle class Tamils wanted to have their own little kingdom. The people who asked for separation in 1977 never cared about the minority groups within their own area. There are half a million 'untouchables' in Jaffna, and there are 900,000 Tamil estate workers in the midlands who have no rights.

They never fought for equality for them, did they? - the middle class Jaffna Tamils who were in the civil service, who practically controlled the country up to the late '50s.

The separatist movement started because middle class Tamils couldn't get what they wanted out of the Sri Lankan government.

But now that's all in the past. The Sri Lankan government is killing Tamils, and the Tamils have no way out except fighting for separation.

It's no longer a middle class leadership. The liberation fighters are not middle class, although the middle class element has influence.

Although the Tamil organisations have lots of divisions that doesn't mean that we shouldn't support them. They have a right to fight for their own survival. Sri Lankan Tamils have a right to live. We have to campaign for them. They are fighting, so it is our duty to support them.

There are 300,000 Tamil refugees in India - 200,000 of Indian origin who have gone since the '60s, and they haven't been settled yet; and 100,000 since 1983 from Jaffna and Trincomalee. [Over 50 million Tamils live in South India].

This number of refugees is putting pressure on Rajiv Gandhi to get a settlement. In India the Tamil refugees get 120 rupees for a fortnight - that's about £6 - and it doesn't matter how many children you have, it's still only 120 rupees. By the third or fourth day it's finished. A pound of rice costs seven or eight rupees, so it's not easy to feed them when you've got three or four children. Children are dying from malnutrition.

I want to raise funds to send somebody to go and get a report and press the aid agencies to give some help to the Tamil refugees in India.

Life and death

I got a letter from Jaffna the other day. The army comes in daylight with a convoy of vehicles. They wouldn't come with one vehicle because they're so scared - so they come with 10, 20 vehicles. They go round the

villages for checking - that means looting, raping, murdering.

In the night-time you never know who's going to knock at the door. A Tiger? [Tamil liberation fighter]. Or who?

There's no life for Tamil women. In the daytime the army attacks, in the night-time the liberation fighters come to harass us to join them. If you don't join them, you go through harassment.

But people are getting more and more political - because it's a matter of life and death. Progressive and revolutionary ideas are no longer words in the paper - they're life and death.

Gandhi

What's going to happen, I don't know. I think the TULF [Tamil United Liberation Front, the parliamentary Tamil party] will come back again. The Tamil middle class has a cunning way of getting hold of power, and they're all over the world. They can influence the Sri Lankan government to come to a settlement that gives a bit of power to the TULF.

That's what Rajiv Gandhi is going to support. He does not want the revolutionaries taking power, because of the effect in South Asia as a whole.

The Tamils in the midlands are scared. Most of them are running away to India. Most of them are stateless anyway. And they are defenceless. They're surrounded by Sinhala areas.

They're not going to a golden land. They know they're going to face worse poverty in India than in Sri Lanka. But at least they can survive.

The Labour Party is supposed to be internationalist. But most of the Labour Party leadership aren't internationalist. They don't want to change anything.

The Labour Party should help the Tamil refugees who are here; campaign for political asylum for them; and campaign for the government to let other refugees in freely and to stop aid to Jayawardene.

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...or not means nothing to
They kill you. So for
paration."

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer:

A SOCIALIST AGENDA FOR LABOUR

Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have submitted the proposals below to the Labour Party National Executive Committee "as an indication of the general areas of policy which we believe will need to be reconsidered" for a new Labour Party programme.

1. The restoration of full employment. Our first task will necessarily be to tackle the problem of unemployment and this will involve us in a substantial shift of power from market forces towards criteria that allow the needs of our people to be given priority.

However, if we are to do this we shall have to reckon with the opposition of those national and international centres of economic and industrial power that now control our economic life.

The introduction of exchange control, import control, the direction of investment in the private sector, much more progressive taxation and the redistribution of resources to secure greater equality in our society could meet with strong resistance.

2. Common ownership.

With this in mind we believe that urgent consideration must be given to the common ownership, in various forms, of the Banks and Financial Institutions, of a substantial number of major companies to secure the investment we shall need, and of land for housing and development, as well as the re-acquisition of privatised assets without paying twice for them.

3. Trade Union rights.

The repeal of the anti-trade union legislation, the granting of an amnesty, and its replacement by new laws that encourage



We need an alternative to Kinnock's move to the right. Photo: Andrew Moore.

trade union membership and safeguard the rights of unions to protect their members and play a full role in all decisions which affect them.

4. Democratic self-management. The enactment of legislation that would make provision for a genuinely democratic system of self-management entrenching the ultimate right of employees in public and private industries and services to elect and remove their managers.

5. The Common Market.

The immediate restoration — pending our liberation from the

Treaty of Rome — of full parliamentary control over legislation ceded by the 1972 European Communities Acts to the EEC, because:

a) even our existing economic and industrial policy would be held to be illegal, by the British Courts, responsible as they are, for enforcing Community Law in Britain which would create a major constitutional crisis with the courts and the civil service.

b) The current proposals for a move towards a fully Federal Europe would be completely unacceptable to the Labour

Party, the British people, and would undermine Parliamentary Democracy in this country.

Labour, being an internationalist party, must have perspectives for socialist co-operation that stretch across the whole of Europe and far beyond the confines of the Rome Treaty.

6. Education and training.

The provision of a genuine comprehensive system of education and training throughout school and college and in all further and adult education.

This must be linked, in every case to the provision of real jobs, the development of individuals and the meeting of social and economic need.

7. Welfare benefits.

The rebuilding and reconstruction of the welfare state by the provision of a whole range of statutory benefits covering all kinds of social need to be available as of right, to replace the present means-tested system.

8. The re-unification of Ireland. The violence in Northern Ireland, caused by the partition, can only be resolved by negotiating the termination of the British jurisdiction in the six counties, and plans will need to be drawn up to secure this objective without any Unionist veto.

9. Foreign policy.

The adoption of a much more constructive foreign policy to allow Britain to play a major role in peace making, especially in Europe, and in supporting political liberation and economic development in the Third World.

10. Defence cuts.

Major cuts in Defence expenditure, because we shall not be able to afford the present cost, let alone an increase in the conventional arms budget taking up any savings deriving from the ending of our nuclear weapons programme.

11. Relationship with the USA. A critical reappraisal of our relationship with the Americans if, as is quite possible, they were actually to refuse to remove their nuclear weapons from British soil.

12. Machinery of Government.

Major changes in the machinery of government, the civil service, the public sector, the law and the police, which have now become instruments of Tory policies staffed, at top levels, with Tory appointees; and all of which will need to be reformed and made fully accountable.

13. Constitutional reform.

The abolition of the House of Lords which, after a short honeymoon period, will certainly do all it can to delay, obstruct and prevent an elected Labour government from carrying out its mandate.

14. An effective local government.

The establishment of local government on a new basis which would give general powers to these authorities to act in the interest of their constituents.

15. An end to all discrimination.

Legislation that will completely outlaw all forms of discrimination on the grounds of class, sex, race or faith.

16. A democratic and pluralistic media.

The preparation of plans to safeguard the freedom of the media so that a full range of opinions can be made available to the people.

TOWARDS A LABOUR VICTORY

The Labour Party has always done best when it has presented a radical programme to the electorate, based on socialist concepts, and has been believed by the voters, to be in earnest about implementing it — as in 1945, 1964, 1966 and 1974.

Our worst results have always been when our manifesto was vague or lacked support from the leadership as in 1951, 1959, 1970, 1979 and 1983.

This time the sheer gravity of the crisis will lead to an expectation from the voters that if they elect a Labour government there will be a real and serious effort made to advance towards a fairer society.

Socialist policies, of the kind outlined above also have a special relevance now, since the Tory Wets, the SDP and the Liberals have already moved into the anti-Thatcherite, non-socialist — and bitterly anti-socialist — middle ground of politics.

If we were to model ourselves on their approach, the electorate will see no difference and will feel free to support any, or all of those parties and groupings with the likely consequence that we may end up with a hung Parliament and a paralysed government.

Labour's best chance of victory lies in its appeal to all those, especially the organised working class, who are deeply opposed to monetarism and militarism, and to millions of others who do not bother to vote because they cannot see any difference between the parties.

Such people would be more likely to respond to a serious socialist alternative that offered jobs, homes, education, good health, dignity in retirement, the prospects of peace, greater human rights and democracy — backed up by a readiness to will the means as well as willing the ends.

A starting point for the discussion

AT A TIME when Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley are pulling Labour to the right as fast as they dare, Tony Benn and Eric Heffer have done the movement a service by putting down a marker with their 'socialist agenda'.

It should be a starting-point for thorough discussions in Labour Parties and trade unions — discussions in which we examine the inadequacies not only of the Labour leaders' present right-wing course but also of the left-wing manifestos of 1974 and 1983.

Exchange controls

Will exchange controls and import controls really secure jobs? At best they might save some jobs in Britain at the cost of losing them elsewhere; more likely they will help to push the whole world down a spiral of protectionism and slump.

Common ownership? Yes. But the experience of the extensive nationalisations in France after 1981 shows we need more.

Public ownership needs to be extended to all the decisive sectors of the economy, so that the laws of profit can be replaced by democratic workers' planning for need, through a state which is really controlled by the working class.

If workers' self-management is confined to choosing which individual will run enterprises according to the priorities of profit, then it will be very limited. It must be extended to the whole economy — to create a new socialist democracy, better than the cross-on-a-ballot-paper-every-5-years parliamentary system.

Other immediate measures for jobs should include those outlined in the Merseyside charter (see p.11): work or full pay, extended public works, training and re-training at full pay.

Women's rights need to figure more boldly in any agenda really capable of mobilising the working class for socialism. Adequate nursery provision, free of charge, to liberate women from being imprisoned by childcare; full legal and financial independence for women; free contraception and abortion on demand on the NHS; positive discrimination in training and re-training — these should be the first steps towards real and not just formal equality for women.

EEC

Is 'Britain out of the EEC' a socialist slogan? The EEC is capitalist; but Britain out of the EEC would be no less capitalist. Socialism cannot be built in a single country on its own. Europe is a natural unit: a socialist federal Europe must be our aim.

It should include Eastern Europe, too: active support for Solidarnosc and similar movements should be part of Labour's programme, alongside an all-European economic policy.

And beyond Europe? Central to any socialist programme today must be massive aid and cancellation of debt charges to help the millions starving in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World.

The various sectors of the state machine are — as Benn and Heffer point out — "instruments of Tory policies". They will not quietly implement left-wing policies. First through delay and red tape, then through open obstruction; eventually if need be by armed force as in Chile, they will sabotage left-wing policies.

To tackle that sabotage, and to develop the wider socialist democracy that we need, our programme should include proposals for dismantling the existing state machine and replacing it by a democratic, accountable structure.

MARTIN THOMAS



An amnesty for all sacked or jailed miners should be central to Labour's programme. Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, IFL.

Moshe Machover, a founder member of the Israeli socialist organisation Matzpen and currently a member of the editorial board of the journal 'Khamsin', will be speaking on Zionism and Palestine at the Socialist Organiser summer school on August 23-26. As a summary of his views he has asked us to print the following article by himself and Abu Sa'id, originally written in 1969 and adopted as a policy document by Matzpen.

A socialist union of the Middle East

THE Middle East is approaching a crossroads. The four great powers are conferring in an attempt to reach an agreed "solution", which they will then proceed to impose on the inhabitants of the region, and which they hope will restore the stability that was shaken by the June 1967 war and its aftermath. Our aim here is to analyse the dangers which wait at this crossroads and which threaten the future of the revolution in the Middle East.

An important new protagonist has appeared on the Middle Eastern political stage: the Palestinians. True, they had taken action into their own hands a few years before the June 1967 war, but the real impetus came only after that war. The positive factor here is that Palestinian action has transferred a struggle formerly between governments into a mass struggle.

Progressive

For nearly twenty years the Palestinians had been an object of history, passively awaiting salvation by the Arab states in general, or by the "progressive" Arab states, in particular Egypt, under the leadership of Abdel Nasser. The 1948 war exposed the bankruptcy of the old middle-class and landowners' leadership of the Arab national movement. As a result, a new leadership — petit bourgeois in its class nature — came to the forefront; it overthrew the old regime in several Arab countries and scored considerable successes in the anti-imperialist struggle. But the June 1967 war revealed the limitations of this leadership; limitations resulting from its class nature and its nationalist ideology. Among other things it proved its total inability to solve the Palestinian question. Despite the Soviet support, Nasserism and Ba'athism are in a state of political bankruptcy.

Against this background the emergence of Palestinian mass struggle can be understood. As mentioned above, the emergence of this new factor is a positive phenomenon. But one can also discern a negative and dangerous trend in it. Some sections of the Palestinian movement have adopted the view that the Palestinian masses can and should "go it alone" and solve their problem themselves, in separation from the all-Arab revolutionary struggle. Those who hold this view present the problem solely as a Palestinian one, which can be solved in a purely Palestinian framework. The stick has not been straightened, it is being bent in the opposite direction.

Localist

The former passive attitude, hoping for salvation by others, risks being replaced by a narrow localist attitude. The only help which is demanded from the rest of the Arab world is aid to the Palestinian front itself. This attitude disregards the connection between the Palestinian struggle and the struggle in the Arab world as a whole, and it therefore advocates "non-intervention in the internal affairs of the Arab states." The Arab governments encourage this attitude. The very mobilisation of the masses in Arab countries — even if only for the Palestinian cause — threatens the existing regimes. These regimes therefore wish to isolate the Palestinian struggle and to leave it entirely to the Palestinians.

The Arab governments — both reactionary and progressive — are trying to buy stability for their regimes with a ransom to the Palestinian organisations. Moreover, the



Unemployed Jewish workers in Tel Aviv

governments want to use this financial aid to direct the Palestinian struggle along their own politically convenient lines, to manipulate it and to utilise it merely as a means of bargaining for a political solution acceptable to them. The Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian governments are mainly interested in regaining the territories they lost in the June war (and in thereby regaining their lost prestige and consolidating their authority), while the Palestinian cause is, from their point of view, only secondary, a means rather than an aim. This is what the Arab governments mean when they call for "liquidating the results of aggression."

Clearly, if the Arab governments achieve their aim (e.g. through the four great powers), they will be prepared to desert the Palestinians, and even to take an active part in political and physical liquidation of the Palestinian movement. The four powers will probably insist on this as a condition for a political settlement. As the consequences of the 1948 war provided the background for the downfall of the old national leadership in the Arab world and for the emergence of the petit-bourgeois leadership — so the consequences of the 1967 war have set the stage for replacing this leadership by a new one, representing a new class.

Organisation

Since the propertied classes proved unable to solve the social, political and national problems of the Arab world, it has become apparent that only the exploited masses themselves, under a working

class leadership, are capable of solving their historic problems. But the existence of suitable *objective* conditions does not mean that this new leadership will automatically emerge. For this further requires a subjective factor — a political organisation with a revolutionary theory and a revolutionary all-Arab strategy.

Programme

However, it is precisely this need for political work and for an all-Arab revolutionary strategy that is explicitly rejected by some important sectors of the Palestinian movement. They advocate the *confinement* of the struggle to the Palestinian front alone and its *limitation* to armed operations without a political programme. The balance of forces, as well as theoretical considerations, shows the impossibility of solving the Palestinian problem in a separate Palestinian framework.

What is the balance of forces? The Palestinian people are waging a battle where they confront Zionism, which is supported by imperialism; from the rear they are menaced by the Arab regimes and by Arab reaction, which are also supported by imperialism. As long as imperialism has a real stake in the Middle East, it is unlikely to withdraw its support for Zionism, its natural ally, and to permit its overthrow; it will defend it to the last drop of Arab oil. On the other hand, imperialist interests and domination in the region cannot be shattered without overthrowing those junior partners of imperialist

exploitation that constitute ruling classes in the Arab world. The conclusion that must be drawn is *not* that the Palestinian people should wait quietly until imperialist domination is overthrown throughout the region, but that they should rally to the wider struggle for political and social liberation of the Middle East as a whole.

Just as it is impossible *in practice* to defeat Zionism without overthrowing imperialist domination throughout the region, so it is *theoretically* absurd to present formulas for solving the problem within the territory of Palestine alone. If one speaks about the situation existing before the overthrow of imperialism in the entire region — then the de-Zionisation of Israel and the establishment of a Palestine without Zionism is quite impossible. And if one thinks of the situation after the overthrow of imperialism — then what is the sense of a formula which refers to Palestine alone, without taking into account the necessary changes which would take place in the whole region?

Reformist

In the last analysis, the formula that restricts itself to Palestine alone, despite its revolutionary appearance, derives from a *reformist* outlook which seeks partial solutions within the framework of conditions now existing in the region. In fact, partial solutions can only be implemented through a compromise with imperialism and Zionism. In addition, the solutions which are limited to Palestine cannot grapple successfully with

the national problem. The formulas which speak of "an independent democratic Palestine all of whose citizens, irrespective of religion, will enjoy equal rights" have two defects.

On the one hand, they imply the creation of a new separate Palestinian nation whose members do not differ from one another nationally but only religiously. The authors of these formulas are themselves aware of the absurdity of separating the Palestinians from the general Arab nation; they therefore hasten to add that "Palestine is part of the Arab fatherland". This looks suspiciously like the old slogan of "Arab Palestine" dressed up in new — and more nebulous — garb.

This attitude results from a misapprehension of the national problem in general and of Israeli reality in particular. It is true that the Jews living in Israel came to settle here under the influence and leadership of Zionism, and that they — as a community — have oppressed and are still oppressing Palestinians. But it is impossible to ignore the patent fact that today this community constitutes a national entity (which differs from world Jewry on the one hand and from the Palestinian Arabs on the other), having its own language and economic and cultural life. In order to solve the Palestinian problem, this community (or at least a substantial part of it) must be severed from the influence of Zionism and attracted to a joint struggle with the revolutionary forces in the Arab world for the national and social liberation of the entire region. But clearly this cannot be achieved by ignoring the existence of that community as a national entity.

Binational?

This problem cannot be solved within the narrow framework of Palestine. If one is thinking of a democratic state pure and simple — "one man, one vote" — then in fact it will be a state with a Jewish majority, and there is nothing to prevent it from being like the present state of Israel, but having a larger territory and a bigger Arab minority. If one is thinking of a binational state, then it will be an artificial creation separating the Palestinian Arabs from the rest of the Arab world and from the revolutionary process taking place in it. Besides, in a binational structure there are no inherent guarantees that one of the two national groups dominate the other. All this refers to proposed solutions which can be considered feasible within the present condition of the Middle East, i.e., which do not presuppose a comprehensive social revolution.

On the other hand, if one considers the situation which will exist after a victorious social revolution, after imperialism and Zionism are defeated, then there will not exist a separate Palestinian problem, but rather the problem of the various national groups living within the Arab world (Kurds, Israeli Jews, South Sudanese). This problem can be solved only by granting these nationalities the right to self-determination. Of course, recognition of the rights to self-determination does not mean encouragement to separation; on the contrary, it provides the correct basis for integration without compulsion or repression. Moreover, self-determination in the Middle East is impossible so long as that region is under direct or indirect imperialist domination, but is possible only after it is liberated from all imperialist influence, i.e., after a victorious socialist revolution. In particular, this situation presupposes the overthrow of Zionism.

To sum up: The existing objective conditions enable and require the creation of a revolutionary mass movement, led by the working class, guided by a revolutionary Marxist theory and acting according to an all-Arab strategy, which will recognise the national rights of the non-Arab nationalities living within the Arab world and prove capable of attracting them to a common struggle for the national and social liberation of the entire region.

The heart of the beast

I read both your criticisms of the Socialist Workers Party in Socialist Organiser no. 235 and your special issue on the councils with great interest. I reckon your publications are open enough to include a contribution from the point of view of the SWP.

I don't have enough space to deal with all the points you raise — though I've got to say that you're the only people in the country who noticed a failure on our part to "argue for the necessary class-wide solidarity action during the miners' strike." Did you listen to or read anything we said?

I'll stick to your main criticism of the SWP:

"For revolutionary Marxism — that is, Bolshevism — politics comes first. For the SWP on the other hand, organisational questions come first, and politics second."

It's you who's making this distinction between "politics" and "organisation", and it's a very dangerous one. As revolutionary Marxists, we're agreed on the basic aims — the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of workers' states based on workers' councils. But as Ken Livingstone says in your special issue: "no one can say at the moment we're in a pre-revolutionary situation".

So the big question must be: where and how can we most effectively put across our analysis to the largest numbers of workers and students? This is an organisational question in your terms.

Pure

You say that according to the SWP's analysis there shouldn't be any good socialists in the Labour Party for us to send open letters to; "why have they not had their brains rotted?"

The point is this: it's possible to have a dazzlingly pure political line in theory, in your head, but what you're actually saying or doing depends on where you are and who you are talking to.

As a tiny minority in the working class, revolutionaries cannot set the agenda. We can only intervene in debates or struggles. Your pamphlet "Illusions of Power" proves this beyond any reasonable doubt.

It documents the debates you and other socialists have had over the last six years about how to run the Labour councils. You claim you want to organise a "Marxist left in the Labour Party" which can "keep faith with its revolutionary principles". But judging by this pamphlet the real arguments you've been having for the last six years have been over rate increases and the implementation of cuts.

Here are a few quotes:

"If a council feels incapable of fighting both cuts and rate rises, that position (raising rates) should not be opposed" and "better to have a Labour council in Lambeth next year, even if it has to raise rates, than to have commissioners sent in by the Tories."

"Even a revolutionary group of councillors might have no alternative than to comply to some degree, with

the policies of a central government which it could scarcely hope to overthrow with its own efforts."

The last quote says it all — you're working in organisations where cuts and rate rises are on the agenda and where it's virtually impossible to organise an effective fight-back against the Tories.

Again and again your contributors realise that what socialists in the council can or can't do is 100% dependent on the actions of organised workers in the workplace — as you say, "it is a question of mobilising the working class as a whole politically against the Tories."

Vague demands

But as you're working in the councils, you end up making compromise after compromise over administrative issues while making vague demands for mass action. As half-built and isolated campaigns in Hackney, Islington, Sheffield, etc., collapse around your ears you continue to predict a "decisive confrontation between Edinburgh and Liverpool and the Tories". You call us unrealistic!

When workers' own organisations are on the defensive, demoralised by Labour's social contract, mass unemployment and Tory attacks, how do you expect to make the councils "bastions of opposition"? As Bill Bowring notes in "Illusions of Power", "Labour councillors are not shop stewards, touting for the best deals they can get, they're people who manage the local state."

The "Labour movement" is not one cohesive unit as you assume. The purpose of local councils, the purpose of the Labour Party is to run capitalism — in organisational terms that is what they do. The purpose, the job of unions on the other hand is to defend workers' living standards and conditions.

That is why the SWP concentrate on working in unions and not in the Labour Party or councils. Unions exist where workers have power, where they experience exploitation, where they confront the bosses. Sometimes, even union bureaucracies are forced to lead a fight against a section of the boss class.

The Labour Party orientates towards a talking shop, where there are hardly any workers anyway.

In Parliament, talk about socialism has pretty much dried up. In the councils you spend years talking about raising rates. It's only in the unions, in the workplace, that the Marxist ideas of mass mobilisation and solidarity will actually make sense and can be acted on; it's only there that the boss class can be taken on.

Organisational questions are political. Where and how you organise determines whether you spend your time helplessly dithering about rates and cuts or whether you are operating as revolutionaries, putting your theory into practice and striking at the heart of the beast.

Fraternally,
CHRIS NINEHAM



Dorothy and the talking hen. And below: The Tin Man turned to stone.

Childhood revisited

Edward Ellis reviews the film 'Return to Oz', now on general release

The Emerald City in ruins; its people all turned to stone; the Yellow Brick Road all broken up: this is the Land of Oz as Dorothy finds it — half a century or so on.

Oz has indeed changed. Now ruled by the Gnome King — who is basically the alive inside of a mountain — it is in a very bad state. The ruins of the City are patrolled by rather nasty creatures called Wheelers, whose boss is a particularly unpleasant witch with a large number of spare heads.

Tin Woodsman and Cowardly Lion, like everyone else, have been turned to stone. Only Scarecrow has survived, and he's trapped in the Gnome King's mountain.

On her return trip Dorothy makes some new friends with which to confront the powers of evil. Tick Tock is a somewhat squat clockwork soldier, who unpredictably 'runs down' at inconvenient moments. Jack Pumpkin Head is just like he sounds he would be. And Dorothy takes with her, instead of Toto the dog, a talking hen (who saves the day in the end).

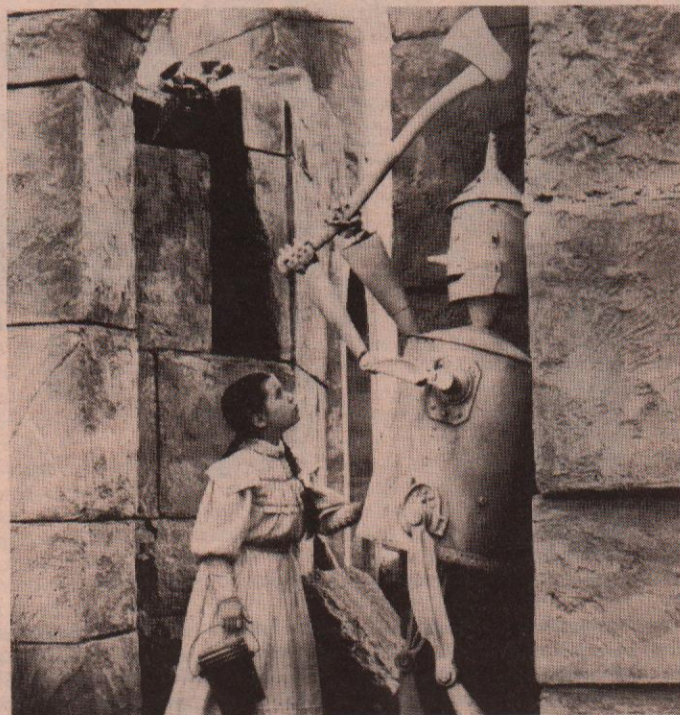
Dead moose

But by far the best character is this bizarre creature created and brought to life by Dorothy using magic powder stolen from the Wicked Witch. Its body is a settee, its wings are large fern leaves and its head is an old dead moose-like mounted trophy.

"Last thing I knew I was wandering around in the forest, when I heard a loud bang. Next thing I'm flying through the air" moans the beast — which they appeared to be calling a Gump.

And later, when being sent into the bowels of the earth by the Gnome King, it mutters: "I should have quit while I was a head". Geddit?

This is all jolly good stuff. It is, it should be said, quite different from the Judy Garland original: no singing, no dancing, no munchkins, etc. This is to the good. An



attempt to repeat the style of the 'Wizard of Oz' (can you imagine a 1985 version of 'Over the Rainbow?') would have been doomed to failure and a very high cringe factor rating.

Instead, the film establishes its own style. Oz here is more like Narnia or Middle Earth — dramatic scenery, gothic demons — and less like a picture postcard Fairy Land.

And the film is, in parts, pretty scary. When Dorothy goes to steal the Powder of Life from the Wicked Witch — and has to take it from a room full of her various heads ready to scream out the alarm — you have to grip your arm rest. And the living, rippling rock that moulds itself into different facial expressions of the Gnome King or his henchmen, is not the sort of thing which I would wish to be confronted with, when out walking over the hills.

My only complaint is Ozma, the good fairy princess, who is too 'nice' for words and a pain in the neck. Apart from her, a good evening out.

First years of socialism

Max Beer, A History of British Socialism. New edition by Spokesman, £11.95.

According to Beer the word 'socialist' was first used in 1827. This book — actually volume 1 of a two-volume work written just before World War 1 — ends in 1834.

The timespan covered is not quite as narrow as that, but three quarters of the book is indeed focused around "1825-34, the most productive decade of original thought among Socialist and Labour writers and leaders in Britain" and the immediate run-up to it.

The rest of it covers early communists like John Ball (a leader of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381), Thomas More, and Gerrard Winstanley ("the fiery soul of the Digger Movement" during the English Revolution of the 17th century).

The early 19th century in Britain was the time and place when the impact of the French Revolution — by far the greatest popular revolution of all history up to 1917 — was felt in the world's first industrial working class.

Beer tells us about Robert Owen, the pioneer of socialism through cooperatives; the beginnings of Chartism, the world's first labour movement; and the working class economists whom Marx hailed as "the proletarian opponents of Ricardo".

Beer, a socialist but hardly a Marxist, rejects the labour theory of value which David Ricardo developed scientifically from a bourgeois point of view; which early socialists turned against the bourgeoisie to claim "the full product of labour"; and which Marx transformed to lay the basis for his critique of capitalism. But he tells the story clearly and carefully.

I wouldn't buy the book: the illustrations, though profuse, are often small, murky, and not very interesting; and the pages fall out. But order it through your library.



Songs of liberty and rebellion



THE BANKS OF MARBLE

You travel round this country
From shore to shining shore
And I never cease to wonder
The things I've heard, the things I saw.

Chorus:
Yet those banks are made of marble
With a guard on every door
And the vaults are filled with silver
That the workers sweated for.

I've seen the weary miner
Scrub coal dust from his back
And I've heard the miner's children
Cry for coal to heat the shack.

Chorus:

I've seen the weary sailor
Standing idly by the shore
And I've heard the masters say
There's no work here any more.

Chorus:
Let us rise and take our own
Take what's owing, take our land
Yes it's time we got together
And together made our stand.

Then we'll blow up those banks of marble
We'll shoot the guard on every door
And we'll share out those vaults of silver
That the workers sweated for.

Liverpool council SET FOR CONFRONTATION

LIVERPOOL'S Labour City Council is set for confrontation with the Tory government.

On June 14 it adopted a budget - with no cuts and a rate rise of only 9% - which leaves income a huge £118 million short of expenditure. The council is demanding that the Tory government restores £88 million taken in penalties, and £30 million cut from the council's grant over recent years.

Some time around the end of August or the beginning of September - according to Militant of July 26 - the council will run out of credit. Or before that the council may be taken to court, or the government might pass special legislation to send in commissioners.

One way or another, the council is set for a showdown which will mean a virtual local general strike against the government.

A strong, bold and urgent campaign by the council leadership to mobilise the labour movement is therefore called for - especially so because other left-wing councils have left Liverpool in the lurch.

Worryingly, Militant, the



Liverpool: low-key campaign.

strongest political force in the council Labour group and in the District Labour Party, seems to be campaigning in a very low-key way. Workers in Liverpool complain that they don't know what's going on and what the council is planning.

There are reports of council expenditure being blocked. Militant says this is sabotage by senior officials, contrary to council policy, but there is a danger of council workers being confused and demobilised.

On June 21 Militant came

out with a bold, clear headline: 'Strike to defend councils'. But since then Militant's coverage has become vaguer and softer, rather than building up towards direct action.

A team of council workers (reports Militant of August 9) has been appealing for support from building workers, dockers, bus workers, and others. But, less than a month before the likely showdown, the nature of the 'support' asked for is left vague.

The same issue of Militant reports the council's relations with the government as if they were in the middle of negotiations, not over four months into a five-month countdown to confrontation. "Liverpool City Council is making far-reaching preparations in its bid to force the government to release an extra £30 million... So far Jenkin, the environment minister, has remained intransigent."

It is understandable that the council wants to defend itself against charges that it wants confrontation for the sake of confrontation. But as the deadline approaches Militant's coverage seems to be steering in the direction

of more philosophical detachment rather than more precise calls to action.

The August 2 Militant, for example, reports that "The Labour council has announced it will oppose rate-capping. A victory now will be important for next year." The main article on Liverpool in the July 12 issue has this conclusion (instead of any immediate call to action): "It once again highlights the need for the labour movement to campaign for the nationalisation of the banks and insurance companies..." Ads for a Militant rally on November 3 read: "As the campaign to defend Liverpool City Council gains support, Derek Hatton, the council's deputy leader, will be addressing the rally on this major theme." The immediate crisis is submerged in a long perspective.

Hopefully the problem is journalism rather than politics. But time is running out. A broad campaign committee must be set up, uniting the council Labour group with other sections of the labour movement, debating strategy openly, and keeping workers in the city and activists elsewhere fully informed.

Jobs demo Sep 7

170,000 Merseysiders are now unemployed. Over 75,000 have been continuously out of work for over one year.

The Merseyside Unemployed Centres have launched a campaign against unemployment and adopted a Charter.

A national demonstration has been called for September 7.

The timing is calculated to coincide with the end of the Trades Union Congress, the series of National Party Conferences and the end of the government's consultation period on their proposed review of the Welfare State. The demonstration falls on the first day of a national week of action on benefits.

The Charter calls for:

*Work or full pay and an end to low pay.

*Shorter working week - ban overtime without loss of pay - worksharing.

*A programme of public works to provide jobs on full pay.

*Planned training and re-training to prevent job losses due to changes in demand.

*Proper training for youth financed by employers under trade union control.

Speaking about the Charter Bob Towers, Secretary of the Unemployed Centres Co-ordinating Committee says:

"Ships of the Cunard Line lie idle in Birkenhead. Grain piles up in EEC silos. And thousands of seamen are unemployed. The real crime is that people go hungry. If the political will was there, unemployment would be totally unnecessary."

PTA jailing

Peter Lynch was arrested in December 1984, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

It was six months before the committal proceedings were held at the start of July. Peter has been and still is held in Risley Remand Centre, away from his family, awaiting a chance to contest the conspiracy charge brought under the PTA.

As a regular visitor to Peter in Risley, I have been asked to urge comrades to write to the Home Secretary to enquire why he has not been given bail after over seven months on remand.

A. McGuinness
Contact: Peter Lynch Support Committee, c/o 448 Stratford Road, Birmingham B11 4AB.

Rail: vote yes for a strike

The cold war over Driver Only Operation (DOO) is hotting up and British Rail are spoiling for a fight.

For five weeks now at three locations - Immingham, Port Talbot and Kings Cross - management have sought to impose - outside the Machinery of Negotiations - driver-only operation 'experiments'. Strike action spread on Monday August 12 when a driver - a member of the 'rebel' Federation of Professional Railway Staffs - agreed to move a freight train without a guard.

At Kings Cross, train crews are operating an overtime ban and so disrupting 60% of services. At Port Talbot all

By Rob Dawber (secretary, Sheffield & Chesterfield NUR District Council, writing in a personal capacity)

guards have been on strike now for over four weeks. At Immingham the two train crews on the two 'experiments' have been sent home each day. So now BR plan to increase the number of 'experiments' to 16 per day from Monday August 12.

Having thrown down the challenge they plan to extend it. They have also offered to put a 'second man' in the cab of each, to attempt to woo ASLEF away from the Feder-

and only wished to talk about redundancy money. After the AGM in December 1983 stopped any further progress along the BedPan service (Bedford-St Pancras route) experimenting on DOO, there has been no campaign from head office among guards to explain the issues - only the Guards and Shunter Grades Conference of the NUR has done this. And so there are problems.

Nonetheless, the singular lack of success for BR's attempts to run even one DOO service before this week has helped to stiffen Knapp's and the NEC's back. And there does now seem to be a

policy of non-compliance.

Meanwhile the dispute has spread to other areas with BR's attempts to 'retrain' guards and drivers. Glasgow is now operating an overtime ban and LDCs (stewards) have been sent home at Work-sop and Shirebrook for refusing to discuss its implementation at meetings with management.

NUR General Secretary Jimmy Knapp has let it be known in the past that but for union policy he would go ahead with DOO!

And that in its turn has created its own constituency of support among guards who thereby saw it as inevitable

willingness to campaign for a vote for strike action in defence of jobs on August 29.

Of course BR at the same time as the hard attack are trying the soft talk approach.

They claim to have used the Machinery of Negotiations. But they haven't been able to get their way, so they have decided to impose their aims anyway.

And that snags that if we lose this one, all agreements, and all conditions of service, for all staff are under threat.

They claim that only fifty guards will be affected at first - true for a few weeks anyway. But BR make no secret of the fact that they want DOO on all freight and most passenger trains in a very short space of time.

Tom Greaves, BR's Traction and Train Crews Manager, recently said: "Our objective is to make the train crew element of British Rail the most productive of any Western European railway by 1989/90."

They say that no guard will be made redundant. But with such a devastating threat to the industry's ten thousand guards, there aren't enough places to go to.

So many depots will be closed (BR plan only 27 train crew depots nationwide) that keeping a job will mean travelling enormous distances or moving home.

BR want a fight because they want a victory over the NUR. A victory that would mean BR doing as they please, ignoring all procedures and agreements, and trampling over everything we have won.

Guards have no choice but to vote 'yes' for strike action. There is nowhere else to go. And with an overwhelming vote for strike action we can go forward - with the support of all the grades - to win this battle.

New threat to Ravenscraig

THE closure of the giant Ravenscraig steelworks in Motherwell edged a step closer last week when the British Steel Corporation announced that the neighbouring Gartcosh strip mill is to close by March of next year, and that there is to be no new investment at Ravenscraig itself.

Gartcosh is Ravenscraig's main outlet, consuming 25% of its total production. Closure of Gartcosh would cost a total of 1,100 jobs - in an area where registered male unemployment is already 26%.

The steel from Ravenscraig now consumed by Gartcosh is to be sent down to Shotton in Wales for finishing. Gartcosh is twelve miles from Ravenscraig. Shotton is two hundred. The high transport costs will be used as evidence of the lack of "competitive-

ness" and "viability" of Ravenscraig.

The BSC is also refusing to invest £90 million, needed to renew decaying coke oven batteries at Ravenscraig.

Scottish Secretary of State George Younger has claimed that the future of Ravenscraig is safe, at least for the next three years.

It will be three years before the modernisation and investment programme announced by the BSC for the Llanwern and Port Talbot plants is completed. Ravenscraig can supply the shortfall during those three years - and then be ripe for closure.

The future of Ravenscraig - and its three thousand jobs plus many more jobs dependent on it - therefore hinges on the future of Gartcosh.

But the leadership of the Scottish TUC is pursuing the same strategy that has failed

so often in the past: winning over "public opinion" and holding joint rallies with dissident Tories, church leaders and representatives of the CBI and local Chambers of Commerce, instead of seeking to mobilise labour movement opposition to the planned closures.

The STUC has already set up an emergency committee to begin to respond to the situation. It includes members of the CBI.

The STUC will be holding a one-day conference in a fortnight's time. As in the past, representatives from the churches, the Tories, the CBI, Chambers of Commerce and other 'bosses' organisations will be invited.

Such a strategy is anything but new and imaginative. It is a recipe for disaster.

With jobs under threat on the railways and in mining, what is needed is the rebuild-

Socialist Organiser

Oct 10 YOUTH AGAINST THE TORIES

March and lobby of Tory party conference. Leaflets and details from Rachel Kennedy or Paul Gamble, MANUS, c/o University Student Union, Oxford Road, Manchester 13; or Andy Burke, TWANUS, c/o DSU, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham; or Simon Pottinger, 01-272 8900.

NO CUTS, NO SLAVE LABOUR!

MARCH ON THE TORIES!

By Michele Carlisle

SINCE the Tories won the 1979 election, students at colleges and universities have seen the value of their grants go down by twenty per cent.

The tens of thousands of further education students who rely for money on their families, the dole, or pathetically small discretionary

grants, have been promised nothing and given nothing by the Tories.

Further education colleges are overcrowded and without basic facilities. Local authorities have cut back under pressure from central government.

Many colleges are being forced to merge, with jobs

lost through natural wastage and even redundancies. Students at merged colleges are bussed right across London. Science students from Westfield College in North London are being bussed right into the heart of East London for lectures at Queen Mary College.

Five teacher education de-

partments are due to be axed, but last week four were reprieved. Hertford is still due to be closed.

As the Manpower Services Commission has assumed 30 per cent of further education spending, more colleges are being formed into government centres where MSC schemes and projects, including YTS, are taking place.

Over the summer, the government's plans for higher education over the rest of the decade and into the 1990s have thrown down a challenge to the National Union of Students and everyone interested in protecting the education system.

The Tories want to stop some universities doing research; make every university prepare for cuts every year and for falling student numbers.

While making sure that colleges run on a shoestring and that departments turn out the required technocrats, the government is getting ready to conscript 16 and 17 year olds onto YTS.

Though shelved because of the cost and probable political outcry, compulsory YTS remains in the government's plans, to be introduced at the favourable moment, possibly



Thatcher is sure to be there on October 10. Photo: John Harris.

April next year.

Manchester and Tyne & Wear Area NUSs are taking up the challenge the Tories have thrown down.

A lobby and march on Tory party conference has been called for October 10. Labour movement speakers have been invited along with Billy Bragg and a surprise TV personality.

Although the new term does not start for a few weeks yet, preparations are already being made. Coaches have been booked from the North East, the North West, Yorkshire, Humberside and London.

Leaflets and two-colour posters are being produced advertising the march.

All youth are invited to come to the lobby. Conting-

ents against mergers and against teacher education cuts are being planned. And it isn't only for students and trainees in colleges. We want support from all trade unionists.

Already some Women Against Pit Closures groups have promised support, and colleges are inviting pits they twinned with during the strike to take part in the march.

Leaflets and details from Rachel Kennedy or Paul Gamble, MANUS, c/o University Student Union, Oxford Road, Manchester 13; or Andy Burke, TWANUS, c/o DSU, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham; or Simon Pottinger, 01-272 8900.

Socialist Organiser invites you to

Debating Socialism

August 23rd-26th

Cost: £5 (£2 unwaged) or £4/£1.50 if you book in advance.

Accommodation: available free.

Creche: available free, but please book in advance.

Food: cheap meals available.

Contact: SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY; or phone 01-609 7459 or 01-354 3854



Speakers confirmed and invited:
MAREK GARZTECKI
HILLEL TICKTIN
GEOFF BELL
MOSHE MACHOVER
LOUISE CHRISTIAN
PAUL WHETTON
SHARON ATKIN
KEN LOACH
HILARY WAINWRIGHT

Provisional agenda. (Extra sessions may be added, and exact timings are subject to alteration).

Friday	Registration and lunch		
12	Introduction		
12.45	What will socialism be like?	Socialism and Irish labour	Solidarnosc today (with Marek Garzdecki)
1-2.30			The Labour Left today (round-table discussion)
2.45-4.15	Labour and the police (with Louise Christian)	What is a revolution like?	The Irish Republican movement
4.30-6	Anti-semitism	Will the family vanish under socialism?	
Saturday			
10.30-12.15	Zionism and the Middle East (with Moshe Machover)	Who was Marx?	Lessons of the miners' strike
12.15-1.45	The Arab Revolution	The nature of the USSR (debate with Hillel Ticktin)	The Protestants of Northern Ireland (with Geoff Bell)
1.45-2.30	Lunch		
2.30-4	Plenary session on SOUTH AFRICA		
4.15-6	Plenary session on THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AFTER THE MINERS' STRIKE		
Saturday evening: social			
Sunday			
10-1	Plenary session: debate on PALESTINE, with Moshe Machover		
1-2	Lunch		
2-3.30	Who was Lenin?	Women and Labour councils	Scargill and the NUM
3.45-5.30	Plenary session: round-table discussion on THE LEFT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT		
5.30-6.30	Videos, including new videos on the miners' strike		
Monday			
10-11.30	Plenary session on NICARAGUA	Why a federal united Ireland?	The struggle for reproductive rights
11.45-1.15	Who was Trotsky?		
1.15-2	Lunch		
2-3.30	Plenary session on the way forward: campaigning for a general election; the fight against YTS conscription; and how Marxists must organise in the labour movement.		

**Camden Tenants' Hall, Camden Estate,
Peckham, London SE15**

BR board on the attack One sacked, all out!

British Rail has threatened to sack 270 guards at Glasgow Central, Margam and Llanelli, for striking against driver only operation. The guards have been sent personal warnings that unless they cease their action they will be dismissed.

Any sackings must be met with all-out strike action. BR clearly wants to provoke a confrontation, counting on the fact that ballots on strike action are not to be held until August 29. They think they will get away with sackings in the meantime.

Strike action must take place, if necessary, before the ballot to answer any dismissals. Victimisations will be intended to defeat the whole

campaign against DOO. BR must not be allowed to get away with them.

More on page 11

FUND DRIVE

Thanks for fund contributions this week to:
Cate Murphy, £50;
Gillian Anciano, £1.55;
Andrew Garms, £10;
Helen Rigby, £10; Dave

Gore, £20; Will Adams £5.

Send donations to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.