

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

INSIDE:

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Israel / Palestine

**Two
nations.
Two
states!**



8 page pull-out inside

Afghanistan is USSR's Vietnam

The bitter fruits of Russian rule

By Gerry Bates

One million dead, and a society poised to revert to medieval barbarism. That is what the superpowers between them have done to Afghanistan.

The USSR's invasion and military occupation, carried through with great savagery and barbarism, pulverised Afghan society, drove millions into refuge across the borders in Pakistan or Iran, and boosted support for the reactionary Islamic leaders of the Mujahedin.

The US backed the Mujahedin to the hilt with guns and dollars. The US's ally Pakistan has given direct support to the most hardline fundamentalist factions.

The immediate prospects for Afghan society are bleak. The fundamentalists and tribal chiefs look set to conquer the cities and deliver an orgy of retribution upon the 'godless communists' whose friends from Moscow dropped napalm on their villages and demolished their homes. The anti-Russian factions will probably also slaughter each other in a chaotic contest for supremacy.

All this should still not make us sorry to see the Soviet tanks leave. The Kremlin's dirty war in Afghanistan has strengthened Islamic reaction in the region, not weakened it. It has strengthened Islamic reaction in Afghanistan. It played a role, if a subordinate one, in strengthening Khomeini's grip on Iran: the mullahs could point to Afghanistan and say, "That is communism for you". And if communism is an army of hostile foreign tanks, who would be a communist?

It will take Afghanistan a long time to recover from all this ruin. Possibly some socialists who have opposed the Soviet occupation are thinking twice now that the full horror of a Mujahedin victory is imminent.

But Afghan reaction no more



justified the Soviet invasion than Islamic medievalism in Iran would justify a Soviet invasion there, or than Pol Pot's atrocities justified the US bombing of Cambodia. Just as the overthrow of Khomeini is a

task for the Iranian people, so too is genuine progress in Afghanistan something the Afghan people will have to find for themselves.

Socialists believe all peoples have the right to self-determination, that

is the right to be free of foreign domination. A socialist government would not try to bludgeon Afghanistan into socialism.

But at no time has socialism been on offer anyway. The 'progress'

that Moscow has wanted to impose on Afghanistan was at best one of jails, a police state, and bureaucratic dictatorship.

The longer the USSR's army stayed, the more harm it did.

Israeli socialist visits Britain

Israeli peace campaigner and socialist Adam Keller will arrive in Britain on Friday for a two week speaking tour.

On top of a number of public meetings (see Activists Diary), Adam Keller will be meeting members of the Jewish community, trade unionists and British socialists.

He hopes to promote the circulation of the journal he edits — *The Other Israel* — a regular digest of news and comment from Israel and the occupied territories.

Adam Keller is part of a radical strand of Israeli Jewish opinion. He is in favour of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and unconditional recognition of the PLO. As part of the struggle for peace in the area Adam has served

time in jail.

Tour launch meeting
The Struggle for Israel/Palestinian peace.

Speakers include:

- Adam Keller
- Representatives from the PLO
- Clare Short MP
- Dianna Neslen (from the Jewish Socialist Group).

7.30 pm, Monday 13th February, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,

Holborn, London.

Adam Keller's book, *Terrible Days*, his analysis of Israeli society is available for £9.50 (cheques to 'Visit Fund') from the Adam Keller Tour committee.

Further details, order of the *Other Israel* etc, from the Secretary, The Adam Keller Tour Committee, 24 Rye Court, Peckham Rye, SE22. Or phone: 01-639 7967.

Save our libraries!

By Belinda Weaver

Seven thousand people protested in writing when the government's Green Paper, 'Financing our Public Library Service' was released last year. The title is a joke. It should be called 'Not Financing our Public Library Service'.

The Green Paper was a litmus paper, designed to test possible reactions to enormous changes in library services. The test showed that plenty of people found the plans outrageous and unacceptable.

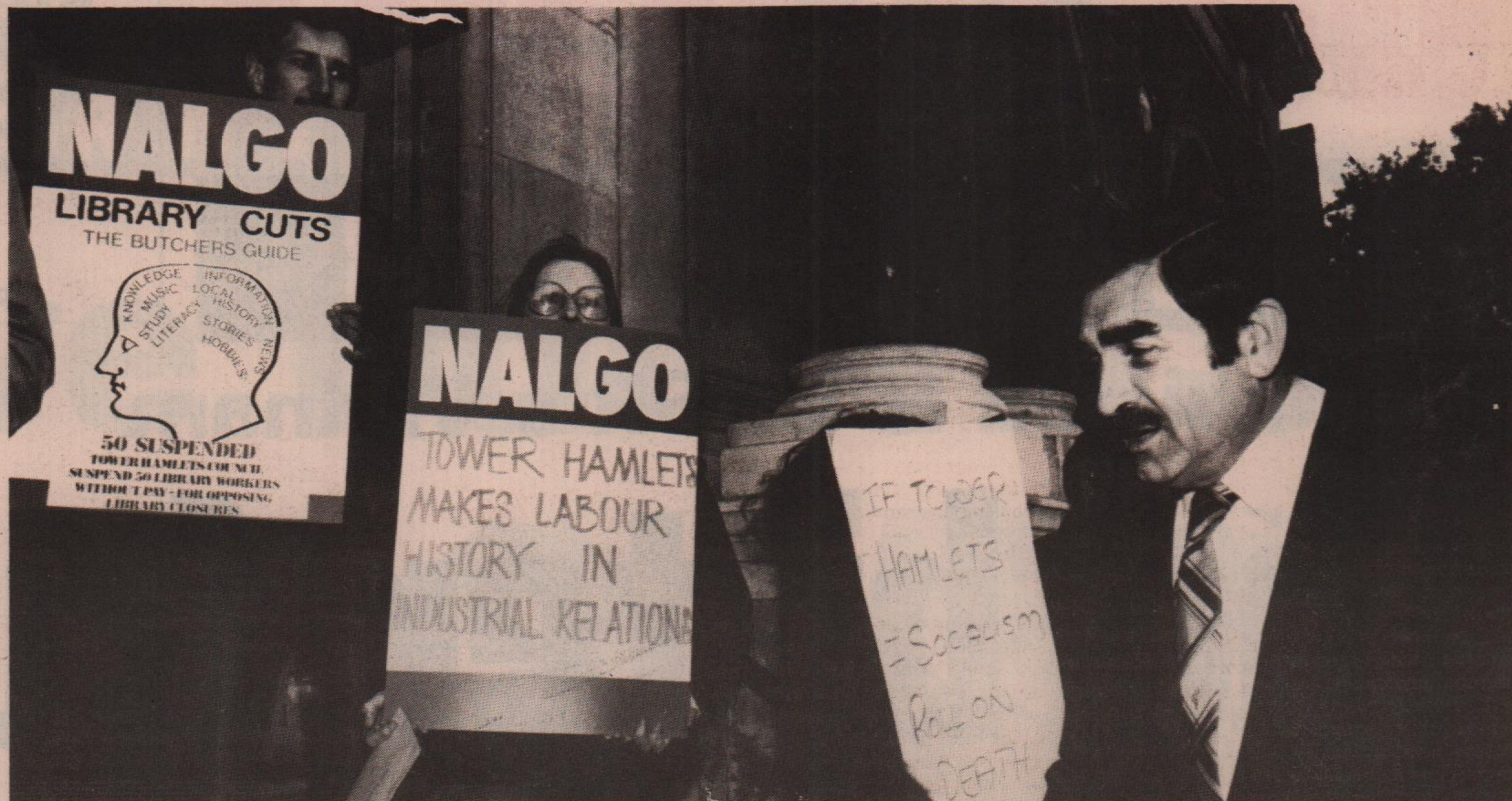
The Paper included charges for reserving and obtaining all new fiction (including bestsellers), for general non-fiction, for talking and music cassettes, for 'extra' help (ie. any help at all) with enquiries, reference books or local history material, for loans from other libraries, for large print material, for children's picture books and toys — in fact anything at all that wasn't the 'basic service'.

Most librarians would argue that the above (and no less) constitutes only a basic service, but the government sees things differently. Their initial plan was to charge for anything at all beyond the lending and return of older books (since all new material would be chargeable). That is their idea of the basic service.

They've had to back-pedal, but cuts and charges are still in the plan. Now local authorities will be 'encouraged' to charge for the loan of records, tapes and other 'non-print' material. Any information provision by computer, such as on-line searching of dial-up databases, will be chargeable too.

If that isn't enough, investigations on contracting out (cuts by another name) will also get underway. It's a pretty grim scenario.

Contracting out has been used by the Tories as a means of breaking up union organisation, and destroying the job security and wages and conditions of workers. It's no acci-



Library workers protest in Tower Hamlets

dent that libraries should now be targeted for privatisation.

Library workers have shown spirited resistance to cuts and closures, and have built strong campaigns in many local areas. Library workers in Hackney recently occupied a library threatened with closure. The libraries campaign was the most vocal and organised of all groups of workers at the last NALGO conference.

Library workers know that the Green Paper shows how far the government would like to go in slashing services. They have only been stopped by public disapproval so far. But their plans haven't been shelved. The new changes will be the Trojan horse. We must oppose

them.

Of course, libraries now are not exactly free services. Fees and charges have been creeping in for a long time. Most libraries charge fines for late return; some charge as much as 8p or 10p per day per item. Reservations of books are also charged for, though the rate varies.

Many libraries charge for the provision of photocopied magazine articles obtained from sources such as the British Library.

And loans of music cassettes, records and compact discs have long been a paying service. The excuse is that this service is 'extra' because the material is 'non-print'.

Many librarians are unhappy about these existing charges. For

example, many feel annoyed that the format of material is the excuse for charging fees for its use. Why should there be a charge for a cassette of 'Wuthering Heights' simply because it is a tape and not a printed book? (The story hasn't changed).

Similarly, why should people pay because the information they want is only available on a computer database, while the person who looks up an expensive reference book gets information for free (for the moment)?

The format is always used as the excuse, yet it's a feeble argument. Quite often a record costs less than a book, yet the record loan must be paid for. Books and records have similar shelf lives. Similarly, why should partially sighted people pay for large print material simply because they cannot read normal sized print?

We use libraries to borrow material we cannot afford to buy ourselves, or to consult material for which we may only have short term use. Libraries play an enormous,

under-appreciated, educative role in communities. Apart from being storehouses of information they are also recreational places, sociable places, places where meetings can be held and activities advertised.

They are at the heart of communities. Many libraries run mobile services to housebound people, to schools or to local shopping centres. Libraries are the place where most people begin their reading lives, through school visits.

If the Tories succeed, the planned charges will hit those who can least afford to pay. Information will become the prerogative of the rich. We'll be fobbed off with the wreck of the old free service. We mustn't let it happen.

Many libraries have campaigned to defend services from cuts or closures. They need our help when they take industrial action to defend services. The struggle for free library services was an important victory for the working class. Let's fight to keep our libraries free and available.

A threat to football and to freedom

SPORTING LIFE

By Janine Booth

The government's plan for football identity cards fails to tackle hooliganism, threatens football and is a serious attack on civil liberties.

For several years, the media and government have made much of the violent ravages of the hooligan. Incidents have been glamorised, and the Tories have found an excellent 'enemy of the nation' to use as a scapegoat. The social and political causes have been conveniently ignored, as politicians and self-appointed 'experts' fall over each other to proffer their perfect solution.

Birch them! Ban alcohol within travelling distance of the game! Bring back National Service!

Heavier policing has made matters worse, rather than better. Luton Town may think they have solved the problem by barring visiting fans, but they have also undermined the notion of a sporting contest between opposing teams, each entitled to have their supporters present. Club membership schemes have failed so miserably that once-packed terraces have become 'members-only' open spaces.

The identity card scheme is likely to be as spectacular a failure as its predecessors, but with far more dangerous consequences. It will be a nightmare to administer, and will undoubtedly send attendances plummeting.

As a result, many lower-division teams (possibly even the great and glorious Peterborough United) will be forced into liquidation, or into the mire of semi-professionalism. Jobs will go and conditions worsen. Soccer will lose its backbone and its breeding ground for new talent.

Ironically enough, the government that goes on about making soccer a 'family game' will force your Granny to go buy a membership card before you can take her to a match. Casual spectators will give up and transfer their loyalties to other sports, and I dare not think how long it will take an average crowd to file in through the turnstiles.

Identity cards will give the police the legal right to keep confidential files on everyone who ever goes to a football match — files that can be used to victimise supporters.

Soccer violence will never be eradicated in a society which encourages and glorifies violence, and which frustrates and alienates so many people. Even if the violence can somehow be forced out of soccer grounds, it will continue in some other place, some other situation.

In the immediate, though, there are several steps which could be taken, which would both combat hooliganism and improve the game.

- Democratise soccer! Supporters must be given an effective voice in the governance of the sport — nationally, through such organisations as the Football Supporters' Association, and at club level as well. Involvement of the local community, as initiated recently at Millwall FC, should be taken up by more clubs.

- A serious challenge to the racism which poisons so many football crowds, and precipitates violent incidents. We should also expose, and attack, the role of organised fascists in orchestrating violence.

- Positive action to attract women to the game, with the facilities — such as creches — to back it up.

- Better facilities at grounds — more comfortable (and weather-proof!) stands, nicer catering, more pleasant toilets, more informative programmes, easier access.

- Responsible media coverage of soccer and other sports.

The Tories have failed to address any of this. Their proposals are the work of people who know nothing about football, and care even less, which will seriously affect those who love the game. Sports Minister Colin Moynihan was considered qualified for the job because he rowed for Oxford.

Still, it could be worse. If Mick Channon had his way, all the young men would spend two years in the armed forces, no doubt being taught how to be docile, placid, non-violent, peace-loving citizens. Instead of hooligans.

The top brass?

By Nik Barstow

Tory plans to curb council workers' political rights were unveiled in the Widdicombe Report last year.

They said people in "top council jobs", would be banned from being councillors in other boroughs. Now they have set an arbitrary limit of £13,000 a year, above which council staff are forbidden to be councillors or to be active in political parties at all.

In London the list would include surveyors, office managers and social workers, hardly the top brass.

The real top brass are doing better elsewhere. Hot on the heels of promoting equal opportunities as leader of Lambeth Council, Linda Bellos has a top job in Hackney.

It's working out a restructuring that gets rid of separate race, women's, lesbian and gay, and disability units — and incidentally would make her the Council's deputy chief executive.



Linda Bellos

Islington Council is reorganising too, and the top brass are getting the top brass. While they get rid of cleaners, library assistants, park keepers and low wage clerical workers, they've also decided to pay an extra £2,000 to their Chief Executive, £600 to the Director of Personnel, over £7,000 to the Director of Housing and almost £8,000 to the Director of Recreation. Tough at the top?

Fighting the poll tax

EDITORIAL

How can we fight the poll tax? The poll tax will start operation in Scotland from 1 April. In England and Wales, registration for the tax starts in May, after the local government elections.

In Scotland, the crunch is coming. In England and Wales, campaign groups are beginning to organise.

The poll tax will hit the poor and benefit the rich — almost everyone has to pay the same, whatever their ability to pay. It will damage democracy, leading many people to avoid the electoral register in order to avoid the tax.

Opinion polls show that many people want to defy and stop the tax. But how?

It must be defiance, but it has to be MASS defiance and organised as such, with local democratic organisation. A concerted attempt must be made to ensure accountability of Labour Councillors, the formation of council Labour Group opposition and, most importantly, rank and file union involvement for non-implementation of the tax.

Campaigning for non-payment and non-implementation go together. Activity for non-payment

involves essential community based organisation, whereas non-implementation involves trade union and Labour Party activity. They rely on each other for their own success.

Labour councils and local government trade unions should refuse to cooperate with the tax. If they do this, they will need the support of community campaigns to defy legal reprisals and to stop the poll tax being imposed by other means.

Such a lead by the labour movement, however, will give a great boost to non-payment, which otherwise will be more difficult.

Even when unions and councils have voted to operate the tax, a fight for non-implementation remains relevant — non-implementation of proceedings against people who refuse to pay the tax

Non-payers may have the poll tax deducted from their wages. Trade union action could stop this and thus support the community campaign.

Anti-poll tax unions should be ward-based and democratic. Each 'union' can send delegates to a constituency-wide coordinating body, along with Trade Union and Labour Party affiliates.

These campaigns can provide a basis for recruitment to the Party to ensure councillors stand firm. They



Poll tax protest in Edinburgh

are also ideally placed to respond to fines, victimisation, etc.

Non-registration is not a good tactic. The vast majority of people will be registered whether they try to avoid it or not — so it is silly to invite fines of £50 or more on individuals for an ineffective gesture.

Frustrating registration by delay is a better tactic: it buys time and builds the campaign.

Many people will fail to fill in their registration forms and will be fined. Anti-poll tax groups must advise and defend them.

Many tactics can be employed —

occupations, rent strikes, telephone blockades, lobbies, pickets, demonstrations, strikes. Public meetings also have their place, as do petitions and publicity stunts (camping in a Tory councillor's garden to illustrate the before and after effects of the tax is just one of many).

Dishing the dirt

PRESS GANG

Daily Express

The Guardian

DAILY MIRROR

DAILY STAR

THE INDEPENDENT

By Jim Denham

Murdoch's satellite supremo, Andrew Neil, has been having some difficulty whipping up any interest in the countdown to the Sky revolution.

One idea aimed at maximising press coverage was to offer every TV reviewer on Fleet Street a free dish and set top tuner. In an unprecedented display of principle, the hacks all refused Neil's generosity saying they'd rather take their chances at Dixons along with the rest of the punters.

A total, Eddie Shah-style, fiasco has been (just about) avoided by shameless use of what is euphemistically known as "cross-promotion". This means huge amounts of Sky advertising in the

Digger's papers, favourable news items about Sky in the Digger's papers, and enthusiastic previews...in the Digger's papers.

The *Sunday Times* (editor: A Neil) has now completely revamped its TV section, giving Sky the same prominence as all the old boring "terrestrial" channels put together. The *ST* also took the precaution of hiding Patrick Stoddart's caustic TV column away on an inside page. Stoddart, one of the few free spirits left at Wapping, might just prove to be less than ecstatically enthusiastic about a diet of Dolly Parton in the bath, Frank (far out, man) Bough, and Sale of the Century (without Nicholas Parsons!)

The *News of the World* took a less subtle (!) approach. To make up for the lack of dishes in the High Street, the *NOW* gave us "DISHES GALORE...SKYBIRDS ARE TAKING OFF!" In case you haven't got the message, the caption accompanying a photo of no less than five "Skybirds" was: "Tune in and turn on to the five sexiest satellite dishes in the solar system...so beam us up girls — you're giving us a real Skyfull".

The cynical amongst you may be thinking that this kind of thing rather casts doubt upon Mr Neil's oft-repeated denials that the Sky revolution could possibly result in anything vaguely resembling soft porn ever sullying the dishes of the nation.

But Neil has a powerful rejoinder to such cynicism: Sky will soon be beaming the wonderful Disney channel into the homes of lucky subscribers paying just £12 per month. Absolute proof of the Digger's commitment to squeaky clean family entertainment.

On Saturday, *Today* devoted nearly



Murdoch at the launch of Sky TV

half of its new colour section to the Sky revolution. In keeping with that paper's image, we didn't get any Skybirds but instead were treated to full colour pictures of "the glamorous newsreaders who are destined to hit the fashion headlines when they make their Skyhigh

debut."

Neil's biggest break on the publicity front came courtesy of Neil Kinnock, who last week sacked Austin Mitchell from the Labour front bench. Mr Mitchell, you may recall, had taken a job as co-presenter (with Norman Tebbit!) of

Sky's "Target" current affairs programme. Kinnock was quite right to give the little creep his marching orders, but he really should have done it a day earlier when the Health Review would have kept the story off the front pages. Or maybe not. After all Sky's first news programme led with a story about an eccentric German count buying British kidneys. Their second story was about Myra Hindley going for cancer tests.

I don't have a dish myself, but Mark Lawson in the *Independent* has been sending in dramatic reports from the Pine Room of the Inn on the Park, where the Digger has installed six sets tuned into Sky especially for the critics. Lawson was particularly struck by the new arts programme "Wild West End", featuring panties that sing "Let Me Be Your Sweetheart".

Ungrateful, but not fresh air

WORLD BRIEFS

General Stroessner of Paraguay, deposed in a military coup last week, had been the longest surviving dictator in Latin America.

He seized power in 1954, and for 34 years used the ruling Colorado Party as an efficient political machine, doling out political favours and carefully exercising its control

Under Stroessner's dictatorship, Paraguay pioneered the kind of repression associated with Pinochet's Chile or the 1976-1983 military regime in Argentina. Opposition was so crushed and dispersed that Stroessner never felt the need to experiment with liberal reforms.

Under Stroessner, Paraguay changed enormously. Enormous amounts of wealth passed through the country, most of it illegal; corruption was rife, it still is, and the military is up to the eyeballs in it.

Like much of Latin America, Paraguay is awash with drugs. It hasn't quite reached Bolivian levels (where the government has borrowed money from cocaine dealers), but it's pretty serious.

Paraguay is one of Latin America's

poorer countries. In 1982 Gross Domestic Product stood at \$745 a head, compared to \$1,879 a head in Argentina. 50% of its rural population and 19% of its urban population live below the official United Nations poverty level. 20% of the population are illiterate (compared to 7.4% in Argentina).

Stroessner's successor, General Andres Rodriguez has promised elections. Elections are not new in Paraguay, but under Rodriguez they will probably be rigged, like all of Stroessner's. Rodriguez was Stroessner's right-hand man: ungrateful, but hardly fresh air.

But the coup indicated crisis in Paraguay's ruling circles. Room for the workers' movement to stir may well emerge in the near future.

Secret talks between the constitutional nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Unionists in Northern Ireland did not get very far. But both sides hope contact will continue. Such was the news leaked last week.

A Unionist document given to SDLP leader John Hume suggests a way gradually to run down the Anglo-Irish Secretariat established by the Anglo-Irish agreement. The SDLP rejected the proposal, but expressed a desire

to have further talks.

The Unionist document was supported both by James Molyneaux's Democratic Unionist Party and Ian Paisley's Ulster Unionist Party.

At the moment, Sinn Fein is also pressing the SDLP for a 'united front'.

Talks began this week between the Polish government and the banned trade union Solidarnosc. Re-recognition of Solidarnosc seems imminent.

Last August, faced with a wave of strikes, the Polish government held out the possibility of talks with Solidarnosc to diffuse the situation.

The talks created a new and potentially explosive situation. The regime hopes by talking to Lech Walesa it can buy off a movement that has signally failed to disappear since it was crushed at the end of 1981.

The Solidarnosc leadership, for its part, will want to come to some amicable arrangement with Jaruzelski. Whether it can persuade the rank and file of the workers' movement is less likely.

Militants are already critical of the leadership's moderate approach. If the terms of a deal limit Solidarnosc's activity, as they will, there is likely to be a rank and file revolt.

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

Karl Marx

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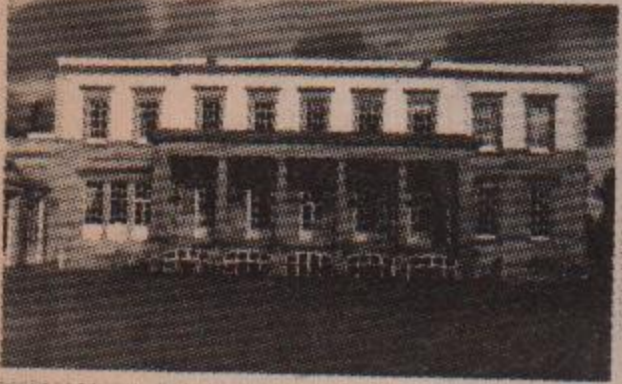
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LETTERS

NOTHING'S TOO GOOD FOR THE WORKERS



Eric Hammond's under-achieving leadership is the cause of the...
The manor house is a country household and conference centre, catering for Eric Hammond's big business pals.



Luxury on whose agenda?

GRAFFITI

Everyone's favourite union, the EPTU, has a new lucrative sideline.

In an exciting and innovative move, the union has recently bought Buxted Park, an 18th century manor house, set in its own 312 acre private park.

The manor runs the manor as a country household and conference centre, catering for Eric Hammond's big business pals.

The manor boasts jacuzzis, deer herds and no less than three trout lakes, and has the distinction of having been featured in three successive issues of that well known labour movement publication 'Country Life'.

All well removed, it seems from the mundane world of trade unionism. Ah, but apparently, at weekends EPTU members can book into the hotel for short breaks, at a 60% discount. And a stay can cost £115 per person per night. This is still not exactly cheap.

Hammond's comment? "I have never felt that there are things that are too good for the workers. We want to give our members a taste of the very best".

Well except when it's wages and conditions of course. Anyone for tennis?

White people in Liverpool are four times more likely than blacks to be allocated new council houses and accommodation with gardens.

A report by the Commission for Racial Equality also found that though more black families were nominated for housing association homes, white families families again did better.

Liverpool City Council has asked the University to check the figures, but the Commission has said that if it does not receive a satisfactory response it will apply under the Race Relations Act for an order to the Council to stop discrimination.

Council leader Keva Coombes said: "The situation is certainly not intended. If the figures are correct, we will change our whole method of allocation."

A waste disposal contractor has been caught dumping contaminated medical waste on an unlicensed landfill tip.

Specialist Waste Management took on a £200,000 contract from Riverside Health Authority in 1987. Riverside's five acute-service hospitals have no incineration facilities of their own, despite Health and Safety Commission guidelines that clinical waste should be destroyed on site.

The waste included amputated limbs, radioactive isotopes, and refuse from patients with Hepatitis B and AIDS. The contractors hired lorries to transport it to a tip in Lancashire.

Riverside has now terminated the contract. But Specialist Waste Management serves over 130 hospitals in 12 health authorities. They claim now to have stopped using landfill tips for clinical waste. But how many more cowboy outfits are still raking in their profits at the expense of our safety?

The Soviet government is setting up new mechanisms to control prices.

Gorbachev's economic reforms, ordering factories to balance their books, and legalising the setting up of co-operatives, have led to inflation of between 5 and 8%. The official inflation rate is 1 to 2%.

The new controls include centrally fixed prices for essential goods for children and old people and enforcement of price controls on co-operatives. The co-ops have become notorious for using cheap state supplies then profiteering on finished goods.

The new consumer organisations will be encouraged to police prices.

Market mechanisms in other East European countries have led to uncontrollable inflation, and the new proposals clearly have this in mind.

But the project of getting individual enterprises to make profits and shutting down loss-makers is contradicted by restrictions on pricing. It is difficult to see how Gorbachev's reforms can make any sense with this problem at their heart.

Left rallies round unilateralism

By John Bloxam

Labour's leaders are using the Russian bureaucrats as an ally in their campaign to ditch the Party's policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. But the left is fighting back.

Last week four Labour leaders visited Moscow. All except Ron Todd, publicly favour a change in Labour's policy. The Russian bureaucrats chimed in, saying that they wanted a future Labour government in multilateral disarmament talks. No doubt this view will now appear prominently in the report of the Party's Defence Review, due to appear in April.

The Kinnockites will use Gorbachev against unilateralism. In fact the episode should make us more critical of Gorbachev — and remove any complacency about the size and urgency of the job of defending unilateralism in the Party.

Already the right-wing are confidently predicting that they will overturn the TGWU's unilateralist policy at this year's Biennial Delegate Conference. Their confidence is exaggerated; but it only requires the defection of one or two big unions for unilateralism to be overturned.

Sections of the left have begun to respond. Tribune is organising an appeal signed by prominent soft leftists to defend unilateralism. Joan Ruddock has started campaigning for 'reciprocal unilateralism' — hoping for something in return but not requiring it.

Last week various Labour left papers and campaigns met to discuss common action. Tribune's initiative was reported, as were Labour CND's activities. These will be supported, as will common campaigning in the different unions.

Labour CND is circulating the following model resolutions for this year's Party Conference.



1. Conference believes that ridding Britain of all nuclear weapons is an important step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide. We therefore reaffirm our continued commitment to the unconditional removal of all nuclear weapons and nuclear bases from British soil and waters within the first Parliament of the next Labour government.

2. Conference reaffirms its continued commitment to the unconditional removal of all nuclear weapons and nuclear bases from British soil and waters within the first Parliament of the next Labour government.

Conference likewise confirms its commitment to reduce defence spending, initially equal to the average level of other

West European countries and to transfer the savings made by the elimination of nuclear weapons from Britain to health and other social services underfunded by the Tories.

Similar resolutions are being circulated in the unions. The left needs to start campaigning now to win the arguments on these. It should also use them as the basis for public campaigning in, for example, the forthcoming Euro-elections.

Labour CND has also called a conference, 'Unilateral Nuclear Disarmament: A Policy for the 1990s', on Saturday 11 March from 10.30am, at Manchester Town Hall. Registration £3/£1 to Labour CND Day Conference, c/o 3 Birch Polygon, Rusholme, Manchester M14.

A deceptive quick fix

LETTERS

Ian Hollingsworth (SO 386) argues that we should support Charter 88 in the absence of a labour movement campaign on civil liberties and democratic rights.

Charter 88, he says, cannot be ignored simply because it's 'not perfect'. We should pressurise the campaign to adopt a clause on workers' rights.

But what exactly is Charter 88? Stuart Weir, one of the instigators of the Charter, insists that it is not "a call for some sort of electoral pact". But then he would, wouldn't he?

Further on in the same letter to the Guardian he declares that "some issues are more important than party gambits".

In the New Statesman and Society editorial launching the Charter

he summarised it thus: "It will initiate, we hope, a new and historic reforming alliance of citizens of the libertarian left and the democratic centre in Britain, outside, between and within the political parties".

As far as I can see, if this means anything at all, then it is a dressed-up call for an anti-Thatcher coalition, for a 're-alignment' within British politics.

Thatcher is so bad, the labour movement is so weak, that the only hope is for all right-thinking folk to band together in a crusade for basic democratic demands with which we can all agree. This is the only way to avoid a fourth term of Thatcher, and let's face it, Labour is finished as a party of government.

Indeed supporters of Charter 88 have wheeled out a startling array of evidence to prove that Labour hasn't a chance of getting into power. Demographic change, redrawing of constituency boundaries, the redundancy of 'old-fashioned' trade unionism — for the 'new Chartist' all these demand

a new politics, a politics which writes the organised working class right out of the picture.

Certainly 10 years of Thatcher have seen significant erosions in our civil liberties. We do need a campaign to establish fundamental democratic rights.

But the areas in which civil rights have been most under attack — workers' rights, refugees, gay rights, Ireland — are the very areas not mentioned in Charter 88. Charter 88 stands completely outside all the real struggles there have been over civil liberties.

I don't think this can simply be put down to the Charter being 'not perfect' — to include a positive declaration on such issues would blow apart this "historic reforming alliance". I can't see the likes of Roy Jenkins and Clement Freud standing for that — and I don't think Ian really can either.

There is a mood of desperation around on the radical left. A mood reflected not only in Charter 88, but in elements of the 'Chesterfield movement'.

Labour is unpopular. The workers have suffered defeat upon defeat.

The leftist supporters of Charter '88 place their hopes on a revival of 'citizenship' and some participants in the 'Chesterfield movement' look to the formation of a new, radical purity outside the labour movement which is seen as too reprehensibly Labourist (not to mention white and male) to break the log jam.

This is the politics of despair. There are no short cuts around making our labour movement take up the issues. Charter 88 represents an attempt by the Democrats and their fellow travellers to play on the desire of radical leftists for quick, broad success.

The logic of Charter 88 is coalitions. We shouldn't allow ourselves to be hoodwinked by it.

Clive Bradley
South London

Kate O'Leary,
Dulwich.

Too quick to condemn

I really don't understand Liam Conway's letter about Salman Rushdie (SO 387). Liam says that Rushdie sees all white people as incurably racist, and that this is undemocratic.

It's not a very thought-out analysis, obviously; but to go on effectively to align Rushdie with the 'local government left' anti-democratic culture on the evidence of two inconclusive quotations from *New Society* is not very fair. It wouldn't convince an open-minded lawyer, anyway.

On the evidence of Rushdie's books, Liam's judgement is unreasonable. 'Midnight's

Children' climaxes with an indictment of Indira Gandhi; 'Shame' ridicules Ali Bhutto; and the 'Jaguar Smile' at least criticises the Sandinistas on grounds of democracy. I haven't read 'Satanic Verses' yet, but I doubt that it's much comfort to Bernie Grant et al (who want it banned, after all).

Rushdie's general sentiments seem to be for democracy, indeed verging on liberalism (he is a signatory of Charter 88).

It is a bit off to condemn him outright on the basis of what, to put it mildly, doesn't seem much more than loose talking.

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Gloves come off in the ports

By Stan Crooke

The Tories and employers are pressing ahead with their attacks on the National Dock Labour Board (NDLB).

9,500 dockers in this country, handling over 75% of cargoes passing through the ports, are registered under the Dock Labour scheme. The scheme is run by boards with equal numbers of union and employers' representatives, and guarantees registered dockers a fallback wage, whether or not there is work for them.

the Dock Labour Scheme has been under threat before. Now it looks like the gloves are coming off for a showdown. For the last 12 months the campaign against the scheme has been in full cry, with MPs being lobbied, journalists briefed, and anti-scheme bulletins produced.

Nick Finney, director of the National Association of Port Employers, has attacked the scheme for weighting the 'balance of power' too much in favour of the dockers. Disciplinary boards (with an equal number of union and employers' representatives), he has complained, 'very rarely' support dockers being sacked. He wants to see 'greater neutrality in collective bargaining' — or, in plain English, weakened union organisation.

In mid-January, the Tory Centre

for Policy Studies ran a conference entitled 'The Future of British Docks', which provided a platform for Tory MPs and academics to fire broadsides against the scheme, denouncing it as 'absurd' and an 'economic crime'.

When Liverpool Stevedoring Limited shut down last month, at the cost of 172 dockers' jobs, other local employers refused to take on the dockers formerly employed by Liverpool Stevedoring, although they are obliged to do so under the NDLB scheme.

Liverpool dockers voted 894 to 27 to strike if the Liverpool Stevedoring dockers were not transferred to other employers. This dispute may be defused by the offer of 'golden handshakes' of up to £35,000 for the 172 dockers.

Attacks on the scheme will have been encouraged by attacks on similar schemes abroad. 12,000 Italian dockers struck at the beginning of January against government plans to privatise container terminals and other port operations, including stevedoring, and to curtail the powers of union-controlled cooperative companies which allocate work in the docks.

Dockers here are ready for a fight as well. Local and national dockers' meetings have underlined their readiness to fight to prevent abolition of the scheme. Such militancy should be built upon, and the campaign for strike action to defend the scheme be carried into non-scheme ports.



Tilbury dockers picket during the '84 strike

Dockers are ready to fight

The attack on the National Dock Labour Board (NDLB) has been steadily building up for some time now, and there's a lot of Tory MPs putting pressure on the government to have it scrapped.

An Early Day Motion signed by 240 Tory MPs has been presented to Parliament and there is enough momentum behind it for it to become a Bill. But there is no mention of scrapping the NDLB in the Transport Bill now being discussed, and it was not mentioned

Eddie Trotter, chair of TGWU branch 7/45 (Leith registered dockers branch), a member of TGWU Regional and National Docks and Waterways Committee, and a member of National Dock Labour Board (East of Scotland), spoke to Socialist Organiser.

in the Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament either.

Some of the Tories think it is better to let us "wither on the vine". The average age of registered dockers here is now 52. But the Centre for Policy Studies, the Tories' 'think-tank', is pushing for the NDLB to be scrapped.

In Glasgow there are now three firms not using registered dockers. Shepherd were licensed to handle scrap and were committed to employing registered labour. But then they went back on their commitment.

When this happened, two other companies, Young and Adam, gave

notice to the Clyde Port Authority that they would stop employing dockers registered with the NDLB if Shepherd was allowed to continue to get away with not employing registered dockers.

It may well be the case that these companies in Glasgow are being encouraged by the employers' organisation, the National Association of Port Employers, and are also being aided and abetted by the Clyde Port Authority. The situation there may be an attempt to force us out on strike.

The NDLB has taken the companies to court, and the dispute is

now being dealt with by an industrial tribunal. The result will be known by the end of February. Hopefully the verdict will be in our favour.

However, if the decision goes the other way, then there will be a national ballot of registered dockers for industrial action against this deliberate breaching of the scheme. The ballot will take place in line with the unanimous decision of the TGWU national docks delegates recall conference which was held last December. If it comes to a ballot, we are confident of the outcome, confident that there will be an all-out strike by registered dockers.

This was the mood of the meeting held on Saturday 28 January in East Ham, London. The meeting was an unofficial meeting of docks shop stewards — John Connolly (TGWU National Docks and Waterways Officer) was not in attendance — followed by a conference open to all dockers.

Every speaker made it clear that the future of the NDLB was not negotiable. We are not prepared to see it watered down, we will not discuss any points the employers want to raise. The National Port Shop Stewards Committee, which organised the meeting on 28 January, is in total opposition to any attack on the NDLB and is supported in this by the General Executive Council of the TGWU.

Representatives from ports not covered by the NDLB scheme were also present at the meeting. Normally they abstain on votes at such meetings, but last weekend there was only one abstention. The rest committed themselves that, in the event of a dispute, they would not handle any extra cargoes.

We hope that dockers at ports not covered by the scheme will also come out in the event of a strike and force the government to extend the scheme to these ports. In legal terms, they would be ruled out of order, but we will be calling on them to give support.

Why I love Pope watching

WOMEN'S EYE

By Lynn Ferguson

Pope watching may seem a prather esoteric pastime. However, even socialists have to have some leisure pursuits, and I have to admit that papal pronouncements do hold quite an interest for me.

Imagine my astonishment then, when I came across a report saying that the Pope had expressed an agreement with certain 'feminist beliefs'. Pig might fly, I hear you say, but as the Catholic faith is based on even more unlikely occurrences, it did seem worth reading on.

Maybe the Virgin Mary herself had appeared to JPII in a flurry of angels to set the record straight, and to transform Catholicism into a matriarchal cult.

Of course not. What the Pope

did say was the women should not be treated as sex objects. All well and good, but I suspect this stems rather more from an opposition to sex than a commitment to the right of women to a self-determined sexuality.

Indeed, the rest of the papal encyclical, as you would expect, continued with the sort of slimy soft-soaping that we've come to expect not just from the Vatican but from all defenders of the sexist status quo.

Some of the demands of the women's movement are positively damaging to women. Women achieve full dignity by... yes, you've guessed it, performing the ultimately fulfilling and central role of the loyal wife and doting mother.

Yes girls, let's take the Virgin Mary as our guide, and not only will we gain true, pure satisfaction in this world, but garlands of flowers in the next. All the trials and tribulations of motherhood under Thatcher will, or course, pale into insignificance when we think of the poor housing, lack of state benefits and completely non-existent maternity care which Mary had to

endure. What a shining example to us all!

Mind you, it's not just the zealots of the Church of Rome that use these arguments. All the time we are told 'behind every great man there's a woman', that motherhood is an important job, nay even a career.

We get patted on the head and told to get on with the wonderful job we're doing. Why should we want to do anything else when we have such a precious task entrusted to us anyway?

Sadly, the Pope probably has more in common with some feminists than he thinks. A couple of months ago, I was asked along to a college women's group to speak about 'Women and the family'.

As the women's movement of the '70s based itself on a radical critique of the family, indeed saw women's role in the home as the fundamental lynchpin of our oppression, I thought there would be much common ground.

Most of the women there did reject the idea that the ultimate fulfilment for us is childbearing, cooking, cleaning and generally nurturing. But some women there,

women who considered themselves to be feminists, advanced precisely those arguments.

Why, they asked, should we want to go out into the 'world of men'? Mothering has been undervalued, they argued. We need to reassert its importance, its legitimacy as a career in its own right.

Somewhere along the line, for parts of the feminist movement, things have been turned upside down. Yes, childcare is important — so important that the state should provide resources to ensure that our children get the best.

The French feminist Simone De Beauvoir once said that women often turn their prison cell into a gilded cage. That's exactly what these feminists are doing.

We won't get our liberation by going along with the Pope, prettyfying our cells and thinking ourselves more virtuous. We need to break down the bars and fight to take our place in the world, to turn a man's world into a world for men and women.

Not the Pope, not the state, and not misty-eyed pseudo-feminists will convince me otherwise.

Hungary shows Gorbachev his future

"A genuine market economy without any qualifying adjectives". That's Hungary's official policy. What does it mean? Lynn Ferguson reports.

If one or two Soviet factories go bankrupt in the next few months, if the spectre of unemployment begins to stalk the streets of Moscow, or if modern dealing on a Soviet stock exchange suddenly rears its head, it is not implausible that the responsible Soviet minister will pick up his telephone to seek advice in Budapest.

So said the Guardian (5 May 1988). Why Budapest? For the past 20 years Hungary has been operating its own version of perestroika, the New Economic Mechanism.

In 1956 great events took place in Hungary. Workers rose up against state tyranny, fought the Russian army on the streets and formed their own democratic organs of power — workers' councils.

All over Hungary the symbols of Stalinist oppression were torn down. Statues of the great dictator himself, Stalin, were destroyed.

A new 'reforming' government came to power, led by Imre Nagy. When Nagy announced his intention to withdraw from the Warsaw Pact, the Russian troops returned. Nagy was executed.

The Hungarian revolution was bloodily put down. Stalinist order was restored — under a renegade ex-supporter of Nagy, Janus Kadar.

Kadarism meant a return to business as usual — to bureaucratic state repression. But it came to mean something else too — an attempt to reform the state-monopoly system and thus neutralise the threat of workers' revolution.

Hungary has bankruptcy laws. Enterprises have to borrow money for investment from banks — and pay interest. Detailed plan directives and mandatory targets for

production were replaced in 1968 by 'economic negotiators' — guidelines for wages and prices, taxes and interest rates, the sort of economic regulators used by governments in western market economies.

The involvement of foreign capital has been actively encouraged. The Central European International bank, for example is 34% owned by the Hungarian National bank and the rest by European and Japanese banks.

But 20 years of the New Economic Mechanism have done little to gee up the Hungarian economy. Maybe without the reforms Hungary would be worse off, but Hungary now is certainly no advertisement for perestroika.

The economy is stagnant, with a growth rate of around one per cent a year. Official figures predict a fall in living standards of 8% over the next three years. Inflation is run-

"Hungary has bankruptcy laws. Enterprises have to borrow money for investment from banks — and pay interest"

ning at 20%, and the foreign debt of \$18 billion is the highest per head of population in Eastern Europe. Unemployment was officially ten thousand at the end of 1987, but is projected to rise to 100,000 in 1989.

25% of Hungarians are on or below the poverty line, and average male life expectancy has fallen from 67 to 63 over the past 8 years. Suicide, alcoholism, and drug abuse are on the increase.

Kadarism has not worked. The combination of market mechanisms and bureaucratic management has provided the worst of both worlds.

Despite all the government's vows to run enterprises on a profit making basis, friends in the right places and string-pulling count for a

lot more in business success. Hungary has most of the vices of a free market economy without the 'virtues' of a free market's harsh economic discipline.

In May 1988 there was a 'palace revolution' in the Hungarian government. Kadar and most of his supporters were unceremoniously booted out of the Politburo and the Central Committee to be replaced by people who want to take Hungary further along the road of market economics.

The new General Secretary is Kavoly Grosz, who has been quoted as saying that it was simply 'bad luck' that Hungary ended up with a one party system. His Politburo contains two well-known reformers — Rezso Nyers and Imre Pozsgay. Pozsgay has links with more radically market-oriented economists, and says that he has no arguments 'in principle' for a one-party system.

Last November, the government announced that a new constitution, to be ready by 1990 would allow for the formation of other political parties, so long as they accepted the 'primary role of socialism'. Pozsgay, commenting on the announcement, said that the introduction of a multi-party system out of a wave of spontaneous mass action would "dangerously destabilise" Hungary. Far better for the state to introduce some hedged-around legality for other parties.

The formula seems to point to a formalised pressure group system, with other organisations recognised as 'having a say' but with real power residing, as ever, with the ruling party.

Over the past two or three years more and more overtly political non-party organisations have been springing up — alongside a wide range of cultural, sports, literary and other groups independent of the government.

The Democratic Forum of which Imre Pozsgay is a member discusses a range of political issues. Its avowed aim is to act as a bridge between the opposition and the government.

The ambivalent attitude of the party to the Forum is highlighted by the fact that though Pozsgay is a member, four less prominent party members have been expelled for participating in the Forum.

An alternative youth organisation, the Federation of Young Democrats, has been launched in opposition to the official youth movement KISZ. The FYD was set up in March 1988 and within a few weeks grew from 37 to around 1,200 members.

The first independent union to be set up in Eastern Europe since Poland's Solidarnosc was established in Hungary last May. The Democratic Union of Scientific Workers has at present some 1200 members, but aims to organise all 75,000 scientific workers in universities and research organisations. The union is explicitly non-political, but even a bread-and-butter independent trade union is a step forward. Hungary also has a students' union independent of the government.

In July the government voted on a new economic strategy. The choice was between 'Plan B' — more of the same — or a more radical 'Plan A', drawn up by some of Pozsgay's co-thinkers. 'Plan A' was voted for. The goal of 'Plan A'



Inside a Soviet factory

is defined as "a genuine market economy without any qualifying adjectives".

There is to be a real Stock Exchange, and it has been officially stated that the private sector could account for 30% of the economy. It may in fact be that much already, if the big 'black' and 'grey' economies are taken into account.

In November 1988 Eastern Europe's first free trade zone was

"Hungary, like Yugoslavia, shows the bureaucratic state-monopoly system in extreme decay. But the reformist bureaucrats have nothing to offer..."

announced, in Hungary. Foreign companies will be permitted to set up wholly-owned outlets and independent plants in the zone.

Austerity plans have been set underway, and a new range of taxes, including a personal income tax have been introduced.

Already these measures have provoked strikes particularly in the mines. The leader of Hungary's official (state-controlled) union federation has called for strikes to be officially recognised as legitimate expressions of grievances.

Just last week there was an official statement from the CP's central committee that the 1956 events were not, as previously defined a 'counter-revolution' but a 'popular uprising'. Its roots were the "socialist model chosen or enforced in 1948-49 which has proved to be a false path in its entirety."

Hungary, like Yugoslavia, shows the bureaucratic state-monopoly systems in extreme decay. But the reforming bureaucrats have nothing to offer except imitation of the West — like Poland's prime minister, who says he wants to be a pupil of Margaret Thatcher. Only the working class can make the hopes of 1956 live again.



Workers in revolt, 1956

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Yes, the bureaucrats are a ruling class

**Clive Bradley replies
to Stan Crooke on the
USSR**

Stan Crooke proves too much (Discussion, SO 386). Arguing that there are "only two possible regulators for the supply and extraction of human social labour", namely a plan or a market, he concludes that neither regulates the USSR. The bureaucracy, therefore, has no control over the surplus product, and is not a ruling class.

But is there even a surplus product? If, literally, *nothing* regulates the supply and extraction of human social labour, presumably any surplus is purely random and accidental. Now there must be a surplus, or society would stagnate and disintegrate. And *something* must govern the allocation or reallocation of the surplus, if only inadequately. Mustn't it?

However, if Stan can concede that there is *some* sort of surplus, the use of which is determined *somehow*, he is left with a peculiar result. The USSR conforms to neither mode of regulation theoretically possible; and yet it exists.

The heart of Stan's peculiar confusion is that he insists, "There can be no plan because there is no democracy."

That there can be no socialist planning without democracy, I would agree. One of the idiocies of the theory that the USSR is a workers' state is that it deduces, from the mere existence of a five year plan, the proletarian character of the state. The workers' state theory sees Soviet economy torn between the 'logic' of the market and the 'logic' of the plan.

Planning in the socialist sense is a 'social relation' between direct producers. Clearly no such planning exists in the USSR.

But surely there are other sorts of plans. Most capitalist companies, and most capitalist governments, plan to one degree or another, sometimes to a high degree. Of course, the market frequently screws up the plan. But if their planning was always an utter waste of time they wouldn't bother spending money on it.

If a Third World capitalist government decides to spend huge amounts of money building a steel factory, or a hydro-electric dam, or a road, come to that — it may not be very proletarian, but it certainly is planning after a fashion. And it is, often, using criteria which depend only indirectly on the market.

When so much capitalist production is at least partially divorced from the law of value and subordinated to planning, it seems to me perverse to the extreme to argue that production in the USSR is determined by nothing at all.

The bureaucracy has no control over the surplus? Who decides that SS20 missiles will be built? God?

If the bureaucracy literally has no control over the surplus, it would seem to me to define out of existence the bureaucracy, not only as a 'ruling class', but as any sort of distinct social layer at all.



A Russian factory manager raises his glass

Ah, but, Stan insists, the bureaucracies are "unstable", the working class is "atomised", and so on; they are not class societies. Yet his analysis raises very profound questions: if the bureaucracy (unstable) has no control over a surplus produced by entirely atomised workers, do *any* classes exist in the USSR? Does the working class itself exist?

Hillel Ticktin, if I have understood him correctly, argues no working class exists in the USSR, either. Surely if this is so, it is a bit rich to criticise all us closet Shachtmanites who are writing off the perspective of socialist revolution.

It seems to me that Stan, like Ticktin, has theorised himself into a corner. The objection to the description of the USSR bureaucracy as a ruling class, as opposed to a 'caste' or an 'elite', rests on two basic arguments which Stan reiterates.

(a) If the bureaucracy is a ruling class, what is the nature of the class system it rules? What are its laws of motion? To affix a label to the bureaucracy is to say almost nothing.

(b) If this class society is not capitalism, where does it stand in relation to the transition from capitalism to socialism? If it stands *between* the two, socialism is off the agenda for a whole historical epoch. Trotsky added that since this system was about to collapse, to call it a 'new class society' was idiotic.

It is true to say that 'class' where others say 'not class' isn't very earth-shattering. But the objection that you have to specify all the laws of motion of a system before you can call it a class system at all, is silly.

Recent Marxist research has indicated that there were quite a variety of pre-capitalist modes of production. Whether the theories of these modes are valid or not, it seems pretty certain that European feudalism was very unlike the Arab empire, the Ottoman empire, medieval China or Inca Peru. Marx thought so too, and coined the term 'Asiatic' mode of production to describe India.

Maybe I underestimate him, but I doubt if Stan has a fully worked-out theory of the dynamics of Ottoman Turkey. Or pre-colonial sub-Saharan Africa. Or the Aztecs.

Did a ruling class exist in the Ottoman empire? It was certainly a very peculiar ruling class, as many of its members were slaves.

But how was the "supply and extraction", in Stan's rather dental phrase, regulated? Not very efficiently. Nor did *individuals* have much control over the surplus.

And the Ottoman empire was *stagnant* in a far more exact sense than today's USSR is.

The non-existence of a ruling class would have come as a bit of a shock to generations of Sultans, though, I think.

So Stan's definitions are too narrow. Just as *various* class systems, some more dynamic than others, existed alongside and parallel to feudalism, so the system in the USSR exists alongside capitalism.

That it is so similar in so many respects to ordinary capitalism (for example, there is a working class that goes on strike and often identifies with socialism) lends weight to the theory that it *is* capitalism. Personally I tend to the theory that it's not capitalism, but stands in more or less the relation to capitalism that the Ottoman system stood to feudalism. It's a system shaped by capitalism, and by the revolution of 1917 — but much, much closer to capitalism.

Stan's theory that it is not a class system, and has no ruling class, is, at best, theoretical block-headedness.

Is the working class exploited or not? Does *struggle* exist between the workers and the bureaucracy, or not? If this is *not* class struggle, then what is it? A struggle between sections of the working class? A struggle between atomised and confused individuals who can't quite decide where the surplus product went? A seance, maybe, to find the ghost of the surplus product and its reluctant regulators?

Surely, there is a class struggle, of workers against their exploiters. Arguments otherwise don't convince me.

ACTIVISTS' DIARY

- Wednesday 8 February**
York SO meeting: 'Ireland and the National Question'. York University, 1.00
- Saturday 11 February**
'ABC' student activists' weekend conference. Octagon Centre, Sheffield, 12.00. Contact Mark: 01 639 7967
- Saturday 11 February**
Marxism Today 'New Times, New Thinking' conference. Caxton House, St Johns Way, London N19, 10.00
- Sunday 12 February**
Adam Keller tour meeting: 'The struggle for Palestinian-Israeli peace', Sheffield
- Monday 13 February**
Adam Keller tour meeting. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1, 7.30
- Wednesday 15 February**
Adam Keller tour meeting, Sheffield
- Wednesday 15 February**
Adam Keller tour meeting, Leeds
- Thursday 16 February**
Adam Keller tour meeting, Manchester
- Friday 17 February**
Adam Keller tour meeting. Church Hall, nr Central Station, Newcastle, 7.30
- Saturday 18 February**
Socialist Organiser Industrial weekend schools (two days). Manchester Poly Student Union. Contact Tom, 01 639 7965
- Monday 20 February**
Adam Keller tour meeting. Hardman St Unemployed Centre, Liverpool
- Monday 20 February**
London SO educational series: 'The formation of the Labour Party', Cathy Nugent. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, WC1, 7.00
- Tuesday 21 February**
Adam Keller tour meeting, London
- Tuesday 21 February**
West London SO meeting: 'The state of the unions'
- Wednesday 22 February**
Adam Keller tour meeting, Brighton
- Saturday 25 February**
Labour Committee on Ireland conference (two days), Birmingham
- Monday 27 February**
Sheffield SO debate with Socialist Outlook on Eastern Bloc
- Tuesday 28 February**
Northampton SO meeting: 'Gorbachev and the Eastern Bloc'
- Monday 6 March**
London SO education series: 'The General Strike of 1926', Vicki Morris, 7.00
- Saturday 8 April**
Gorbachev and the European Left conference (two days). ULU, Malet St, London WC1. Contact Gus Fagan, 30 Bridge St, Oxford OX2 0BA
- Saturday 29 April**
CLPs conference on Party Democracy
- Saturday 17 June**
Socialist Conference Third Conference (two days). Octagon Centre, Sheffield

How not to get members

By Stan Crooke

1 989 is to be the year of the Great Recruitment Campaign to the Labour Party. Party membership currently stands at 288,000, less than 3% of those who voted Labour in the 1987 General Election.

This year's recruitment campaign, as explained in the special 'Membership Campaign 1989' pack now circulating around all Labour Party branch membership secretaries, aims to "create a more active and representative membership" and to "strengthen the democracy of the party by involving all members in decisions."

If only! In fact Labour's leaders are eroding the party's democratic structures and channels of communication in order to manufacture a docile and passive membership which stirs into life only at election times.

"Strengthening democracy" will certainly not be achieved by the recent National Executive Committee's decision to refuse to allow amendments to Policy Review documents at this year's national conference. Nor will a "more active membership" be achieved by the leadership's steadfast refusal to initiate a real campaign against the poll tax.

A letter from Larry Whitty in the membership pack cites "campaigning on the poll tax" as "an opportunity to recruit". But in Scotland the Labour Party's capitulation in the face of the poll tax is costing it members and voters, not recruiting them. Has Larry Whitty never heard of the Govan by-election?

"Extensive research", claims the membership pack, has been conducted in order to lay the groundwork for the recruitment campaign. This "extensive research" found that Labour supporters thought that "members are strange fanatical people...middle-aged men wearing cloth caps...scruffy teenagers who sell 'Socialist Worker' and shout," or "members all want to be MPs".

Asked about Labour Party meetings, supporters replied: "Meetings are very boring...meetings are very bureaucratic...everyone smokes at



meetings...everyone drinks at meetings", and "everyone bickers at meetings."

When people were asked about joining the Labour Party, replies included: "It's impossible to join the Labour Party...You have to write to Neil Kinnock...You have to write to Walworth Road...You have to know what Walworth Road is...You have to know where Walworth Road is."

Thanks to the new recruitment campaign, however, "You have to

write to Neil Kinnock" is now the correct answer! The sample recruitment leaflets included in the pack include membership forms which are to be sent to "Neil Kinnock, The Labour Party...", rather than simply to the Labour party.

Other aspects of the recruitment campaign pack are more positive. On the format of branch meetings, for example, it takes up issues such as childcare provision, assistance for the elderly, "long and boring verbal reports" and the use of

jargon which excludes newer members from participation. The "Charter for Members' Rights" states: "There must be full access for members with disabilities; men-only premises must not be used"; and "being barred from a Labour Club or the local pub should not mean being barred from party meetings."

The membership campaign does talk about recruiting members through local campaigning and street stalls. But on what issues? Unilateral nuclear disarmament (which Kinnock wants to ditch)? The poll tax (which Labour-controlled councils are implementing)? Or housing (when Labour councils are shoving up council rents and selling off council houses)?

The recent Labour Party political broadcast was meant to be the launch of this Great Recruitment Campaign. My Constituency Labour Party has yet to receive a single application as a result of it. You can be sure that it's not the only one.

Poll tax fight builds Labour Party

By Nick Lowles and Tom Urwin

One hundred people said they were interested in joining the Labour Party after our ward party in Sheffield distributed an anti-poll tax leaflet to 7,000 homes.

We then set up a public meeting and a broad-based anti-poll tax union was launched. We have produced leaflets and posters, and had stalls at the two main shopping areas in our ward; and we are calling two public meetings towards the end of February.

Contact has been made with local tenants' groups and trade unions, many of which have asked for speakers.

Divisions have weakened

Scotland's anti-poll tax campaigns. In Sheffield we have overcome this problem through a city-wide campaign with, at present, 26 local groups affiliated to it.

This central group has aimed to organise and not dictate. It has called a demonstration which attracted several hundred people, and a day school on 4 February.

75 people attended the school, and mostly agreed that we must fight for non-implementation of the tax. Other methods, such as frustrating registration, will also be necessary to build a mass movement.

Our ward is leading the fight inside the Labour Party. The Sheffield District Labour Party decided to implement the poll tax, but we are trying to organise a meeting of Labour Party activists who want to fight.

This effort could unite the left in the Sheffield labour movement, and enable it to take up other issues such as council cuts and extravagant expenditure on the World Student Games (which alone will mean an extra 46p per week on every adult's poll tax for the next 40 years).

CLPs meet on 29 April

By Lol Duffy

The second rank and file Constituency Labour Parties conference will be on Party democracy and will be held on Saturday 29 April in Liverpool.

It will cover the witch-hunt, selection and reselection, members' rights and other aspects of Party democracy. Our first conference was held in September last year, and since then we have held another organising meeting and produced a newsletter. The organising meeting agreed to organise two conferences in 1989, of which April's is the first.

The drive to rid the Labour Party of any elements of socialist policies is being stepped up to top gear. The leadership are intent on dumping unilateral nuclear disarmament, even if the 1989 Conference keeps it as policy.

The January meeting of Labour's National Executive voted to prevent amendments to the Policy Review documents. It also voted that any clash between a Policy Review document and a Conference resolution would be decided on by a joint meeting of the NEC and the Shadow Cabinet.

You can guarantee that unilateralism will have very few supporters in that meeting.

The leadership is able to get away with all this because of our failure to organise effectively to defend and extend socialist policies in the Party. The CLPs Conference is an

attempt to organise those CLPs who want to defend Clause IV, unilateralism and Party democracy.

To follow on the April conference, we will hold another CLPs Conference just before the full Labour Party Conference. It will be a general conference, with CLPs setting the agenda by the resolutions they send in.

The CLPs Conference newsletter will be arriving at your CLP secretary's door over the next few weeks, along with publicity leaflets for the April conference. The newsletter carries articles on the witch-hunt in the Party from Mandy Moore, a member of the National Constitutional Committee, and Mike Maguire, ex-secretary of Knowsley North CLP, and reports from around the country.

If the CLPs are going to have an effective voice in the Labour Party and start to turn back the leadership's campaign to dump socialist policies, then we need to organise together. The CLPs Conference gives us that chance.

I hope that other CLPs join with us to make sure that 1989 is the year that the membership of the Labour Party started taking back the Party from the careerists.

One-day Conference on Democracy in the Labour Party
Saturday 29 April. 11am - 5pm
AEU Hall, Mount Pleasant
Liverpool
Details from: Lol Duffy, CLPs Conference, 11 Egremont Prom, Wallasey, Merseyside L44 8BG.
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Life on grim streets

By Edward Ellis

Salaam Bombay' takes on a depressing theme — the utter hopelessness of life in the Indian gutter — and, by humanising it, portrays not desperation, but survival.

Krishna, not yet ten years old, is forced by circumstances to move to Bombay, to earn the 500 rupees he needs to go home. There he makes his living selling glasses of tea, in a district of drug-pushers, prostitutes and street urchins.

He sees a young virgin sold into prostitution and dreams of rescuing her so they can escape together. But his real life is bound up with his heroin-addicted friend, Chillum, and a group of streetwise kids.

Things take a turn for the worse when Chillum is sacked as a drug-vendor by the local hardman, Baba. From there it is a downward spiral. The beautiful daughter of Baba and his sad prostitute mistress, long since cynical of Baba's promises, is caught up in the affairs of the street and dragged off to a prison for small children. Everywhere lives are destroyed by the chaos of existence and the arbitrary interventions of the state.

Yet grim as things are, there are moments of happiness. The kids dance to music, go to the cinema, get stoned, have a laugh. And so, in the face of unbelievable adversity, people get by, despite everything.

'Salaam Bombay' is a lovely film, full of humour and rich with fascinating characters. The kids are not just stereotypical rascals who know how to thief and talk dirty: each is distinct (and brilliantly acted, apparently by real Bombay street kids).

Even small bit-part characters are precisely characters; no-one is faceless — from the gum-chewing,



Krishna and the virgin

swaggering brothel keeper to the boys' prison boss glued to the cricket commentary on his portable transistor radio.

There are some beautiful moments. Baba and the prostitute's little girl is sent by Krishna to deliver a gift of a few biscuits to the virgin; but she hides behind a

door and eats them all as quickly as she can.

It certainly is a sad, even a tear-jerking story. But it is told with such life and absence of sentimentality that it succeeds absolutely. You believe these people exist; you believe this place, Bombay, exists, and feel certain that if you can ever

go there it will be exactly like that — hot, overcrowded, probably smelly, hideously poor, but alive. Unlike so many other films about Mother India, it is actually about India, rather than the traumas of watching the Raj go home or having to cope without servants.

At the beginning, when Krishna

buys his train ticket, the ticket officer says, "There you are, go to Bombay and be a movie star", which is precisely what actor Shafiq Syed has done. Whether he and the other kids have since been put back on the streets, I don't know. All of them deserve Oscars for their performances here.

Let them eat what?

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN



If Edwina Currie has performed any kind of service to people, it was to draw attention to the food eaten by the animals whose flesh, milk and eggs are consumed by us.

It comes as a bit of a shock to realise that our docile domestic animals are closet carnivores and even cannibals.

Modern intensive farming has the goal of getting animals to turn food into protein (meat, milk or eggs) as fast and cheaply as possible. Adding protein supplements to animal

feeds is one way of achieving this.

It may be combined with other supplements such as calcium (bone and shell), and injections of hormones to stimulate growth.

Cheap sources of protein for animal feed include the waste of the livestock industries themselves — bones, skin, hooves, teeth, beaks, ears, tails, claws, gristle, cartilage, intestines, hair, feathers, brains, glands, lungs, sex organs and so on.

Feeding chickens on the above is not as unnatural as it seems. Chickens are naturally omnivorous, eating worms and insects as well as grain (I've seen them eat wasps). The problem comes when the birds are forced to live and die in overcrowded battery cages.

As well as eating the slaughterhouse waste of their relatives, they also peck at the bodies of their deceased neighbours.

These conditions could hardly be better for mass infection of battery hens by salmonella bacteria. Even their free range cousins are at risk if they feed on inadequately cooked supplement made up of battery chicken by-products.

As pointed out in the Science Column last August, at least two thirds of frozen chickens are contaminated with salmonella. The new virulent strain, *Salmonella enteritidis*, that is a particular problem in eggs, has spread wide and far by these means.

Protein supplements have allowed food poisoning bacteria to spread in other animals too. For instance, it is permitted to feed cattle on floor sweepings from battery farms. It doesn't sound very food-like, consisting of sawdust,

feathers, remains of dead birds, broken eggs, and poultry excrement (chicken shit to you). Indeed, it had to be flavoured before the cows would eat it.

In addition to containing protein it carries food poisoning bacteria which will infect the cattle unless it is well sterilised first.

Cattle, pigs and sheep would also be fed fish and bone meal and other protein supplements, sometimes from their own species.

As with chickens this element of the diet is not entirely unnatural. Where minerals are lacking in the soil ruminants will sometimes gnaw old bones or shed antlers.

Some sheep and deer on Scottish isles have taken matters a horrific step further. The sheep have been seen to bite the legs and wings of the chicks of Arctic terns, while the deer bite the heads off Manx shear-water chicks.

The question for us, though, is not whether it is natural for cows to be cannibals — it is whether the feeds are properly sterilised.

A new disease of cows which has just broken out seems to be caused by eating unsterilised protein supplements. This disease "cow madness", may be the result of the sheep disease scrapie crossing over the species boundary. It causes the brain to degenerate and affected cows behave unpredictably and aggressively. It may be spread through infected brain tissue.

Similar diseases are already known in humans and there should be concern lest scrapie cross into humans too.

By the way baby food are allowed to contain offal such as testicles and brains. Bon appetit!

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T&G right on the warpath

INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

Have you noticed how certain industrial and political correspondents from the national press seem to know an awful lot about what's going on inside the TGWU?

And how their stories often quote "senior officials of the union", "well placed union sources", and so forth? Or that the stories always contain phrases like "dissatisfaction with Ron Todd", "malpractice by the hard left" and "membership in revolt"?

Todd has certainly noticed. After last September's General Executive Council (itself enlivened by a remarkably well-publicised walkout by 17 right-wingers — oops! — moderates) an investigation was launched into how certain journalists came to know so much about the internal goings on of the union.

A lot of activity is coming up in the TGWU. The Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) takes place in June, both the Assistant General Secretary

and Deputy General Secretary are due for election by July and Todd himself must stand for re-election by June 1990. Elections for the new executive are due at the beginning of 1990. Most important of all, a major battle is looming over the union's 30-year old commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament — an issue where the union's block vote could be decisive at Labour Party Conference.

Todd had no sooner stepped off the plane bringing him and the rest of the Labour Party's defence delegation back from Moscow, than the latest press campaign began: "Todd faces defeat by own union on defence," proclaimed the *Sunday Times*, which went on to inform readers that, "leaders of a grassroots revolt against Todd's unilateralist line are confident the union's 1.25m block vote at Labour conference will ensure victory for Neil Kinnock's attempt to swing the Party's defence policy towards multilateral disarmament."

Andrew Grice, "Political Reporter" of the *ST* quotes "sources in the union" as saying that eight of the TGWU's 11 regions are backing BDC resolutions calling for a "switch from unilateralism in the light of the progress towards world disarmament." Several resolutions apparently refer to "the need to change policy to boost Labour's electoral prospect."

This all sounds like another off-the-record press briefing by that old team of



Nicholson and Wright, the men who make Bernard Ingham look like a model of openness and accountability. Brian Nicholson was the union's President until his defeat in last February's Executive elections. Despite no longer holding any significant office in the union, he still gets an awful lot of facility time from his employers, (the Port of London Docks Authority), in which to pursue "union work". George Wright is the Welsh Regional Secretary, defeated by Todd for the General Secretary's job in 1984. Wright and his supporters were the driving force behind moves to drop unilateralism at the last BDC.

A resolution from Region 4 (Wales) calling for a national referendum on the question of nuclear weapons came within a whisker of being passed. It was noticeable then that the right-wing were much better organised and high profile than the so-called 'Broad Left'. Since then, the right has stepped up its activi-

ty, organising secret meetings, liaising with journalists (noticeably Tom Condon of *Today*) and keeping in close touch with the leadership of the EETPU and the AEU, via the Mainstream organisation run by John Spellar, an EETPU 'research officer'.

The right-wing have turned a number of the union's regions into virtual no-go areas for Todd and his deputy Bill Morris. Last year, Todd was excluded from a Region 5 (Midlands) committee meeting by Regional Secretary Jim Hunt.

Meanwhile the Broad Left remains a narrow "word of mouth" organisation made up of full-time officials and people with subscriptions to the *Morning Star*. They hold no open meetings and have done no organising amongst the rank and file. The warning they were effectively given over unilateralism at the 1987 BDC does not seem to have sunk in. While it is not true (as the *ST*'s "sources in the union" claim) that only London, Scotland and Northern Ireland are committed to defending unilateralism at this year's BDC (for a start Region 6 — the North West is almost certain to back the present policy), it is nonetheless a fact that the Broad Left has done no campaigning on the issue since the last BDC.

No systematic discussion has taken place at branch level and the T&G Record has scarcely mentioned the issue. Both left and right within the

union have concentrated on bureaucratic manoeuvring at regional level and behind the scenes nobbling of conference delegates. The signs are, however, that the right will prove better at this game than the left.

Todd himself holds a deep personal commitment to unilateralism, as demonstrated by his famous "cordless telephone" speech at the last Labour Party Conference. But he is coming under increasing pressure from some of his own allies on the TGWU Executive and from the Tribune wing of the Labour Party to "soften" his line. His inclusion in the defence delegation to Moscow was part of the softening up process, with even the Kremlin's General Lobov wheeled out to make pro-multilateralist noises for the benefit of Brother Todd.

Since his return from Moscow, Todd has taken to using the phrase "reciprocated unilateralism" — a form of words that, de-coded, sounds suspiciously like "multilateralism".

Between now and June, the right's campaign to overturn existing policy will undoubtedly be stepped up, with the full backing of Brian Nicholson's friends in the press. The TGWU left needs to respond by taking the unilateralist case to the membership and by openly challenging the right wing in their own regional bastions. Secret meetings of *Morning Star* readers won't be enough.

We need to unite left teachers

Lian Conway takes a critical look at the recent history of the left in the NUT.

The Socialist Teachers Alliance was established in 1976. Various political

tendencies were involved, most notably the IMG (now Socialist Action and Socialist Outlook). The Socialist Workers Party (IS) were not in at the beginning. They were the motivating force behind another teachers' group, Rank and File.

Eventually the SWP folded Rank

and File despite considerable opposition from Rank and File members who were not in the SWP. The SWP were admitted to the STA in 1985.

The STA is now bigger and more influential than ever, gaining considerable support at National Union of Teachers conference for its resolutions and establishing significant strength on the NUT National Executive. However, its strength is partly due to widespread disillusion with the Broad Left (soft left) union leadership, and STA will need to sharpen its cutting edge if it is to overturn the Broad Left permanently.

So what's up with it now? Three broad strands are noticeable in the STA.

The first is the IMG strand. It is split into many different viewpoints and contains many people who have nothing except their politics in common with the old IMG. They share namely a tendency towards suspicion of the membership, a certain intellectual elitism, and a preoccupation with Third World politics.

They see their role in educating the membership not just about how to fight the BL and the Tories, but also how to fight the wars in Ireland, Palestine, South Africa, Nicaragua, etc, etc. They have been closely associated with the politics of anti-racist education and were strong supporters of Brent Council's suspension from employment of a head teacher, Maureen McGoldrick, on dubious charges of racism.

This strand has singularly failed to build the Socialist Teachers Alliance into a national rank and file opposition to the current leadership. Alongside the SWP, the ex-IMG have actively opposed the setting up of local and regional STA structures and the inclusion of non-London members on the executive committee of the STA.

Recently the STA executive decided to hold the main STA meeting at NUT conference in March on Ireland. Incredibly the following executive voted *not* to recommend local associations of the NUT to prioritise the STA's own motion on Ireland. The STA is therefore in the ludicrous position of holding its major meeting on a

subject it doesn't think is urgent enough to discuss on conference floor.

The second strand was the SWP. They were prime movers of the Ireland meeting and are often at home with the leaders of the ex-IMG strand.

The SWP have shown little or no interest in rank and file STA groups unless, (i) they are big and growing (unlikely at the moment), and (ii) the SWP can dominate the group and pick up new SWP members.

The SWP rant about the dangers of 'new realism' at the head of the union but oppose any attempts to organise the STA at a low level, linked up by the national organisation.

The SWP were also ready to shout 'sell-out' at every turn. When Haringey NUT — under strong left-wing leadership — dropped their 'no cover' action (the refusal of teachers to take the lessons of absent colleagues) in return for official backing for strike action, the SWP denounced them. A few weeks later the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA) was faced with the same choice. The SWP did an about-turn and dropped their demand for 'no cover' action to be maintained.

Were they influenced by the fact that some ILTA officials were SWP members? No — I think their ILTA decision was based on sound tactical reasoning. It's a pity they didn't give the same benefit to the Haringey officers.

Generally the SWP are difficult to predict. They like to pose as the 'hardest' militants, warning against any united front with non-STA rank and file teachers.

But the SWP have considerable credibility inside the STA, and this has a negative effect on rank and file teachers. Moreover, the IMG strand fear a split inside the STA and rely on alliances with the SWP.

The third strand in the STA includes Briefing supporters, a handful of Militant supporters, independent lefts and ourselves. Until recently we have failed to take on the SWP politically.

For Socialist Organiser teachers our basic problem is small numbers. Nevertheless, we have successfully moved the STA towards a more rank and file orientation and away from both the IMG's magazine

readers club and the SWP's sectarian meetings. This is an important task as many rank and file teachers who are genuinely pissed off with the NUT leadership see the STA as a left intellectuals' club remote to the needs of teachers.

Over the last 18 months this reaction has generated a new rank and file group known as the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union (CADFU). This group is the lunar opposite to the STA — based outside London, concentrating exclusively on teachers' demands and limiting itself to the task inside the union.

Although CADFU has a crude bread and butter approach to NUT politics, its seemingly honest endeavours have attracted support from considerable numbers of classroom teachers.

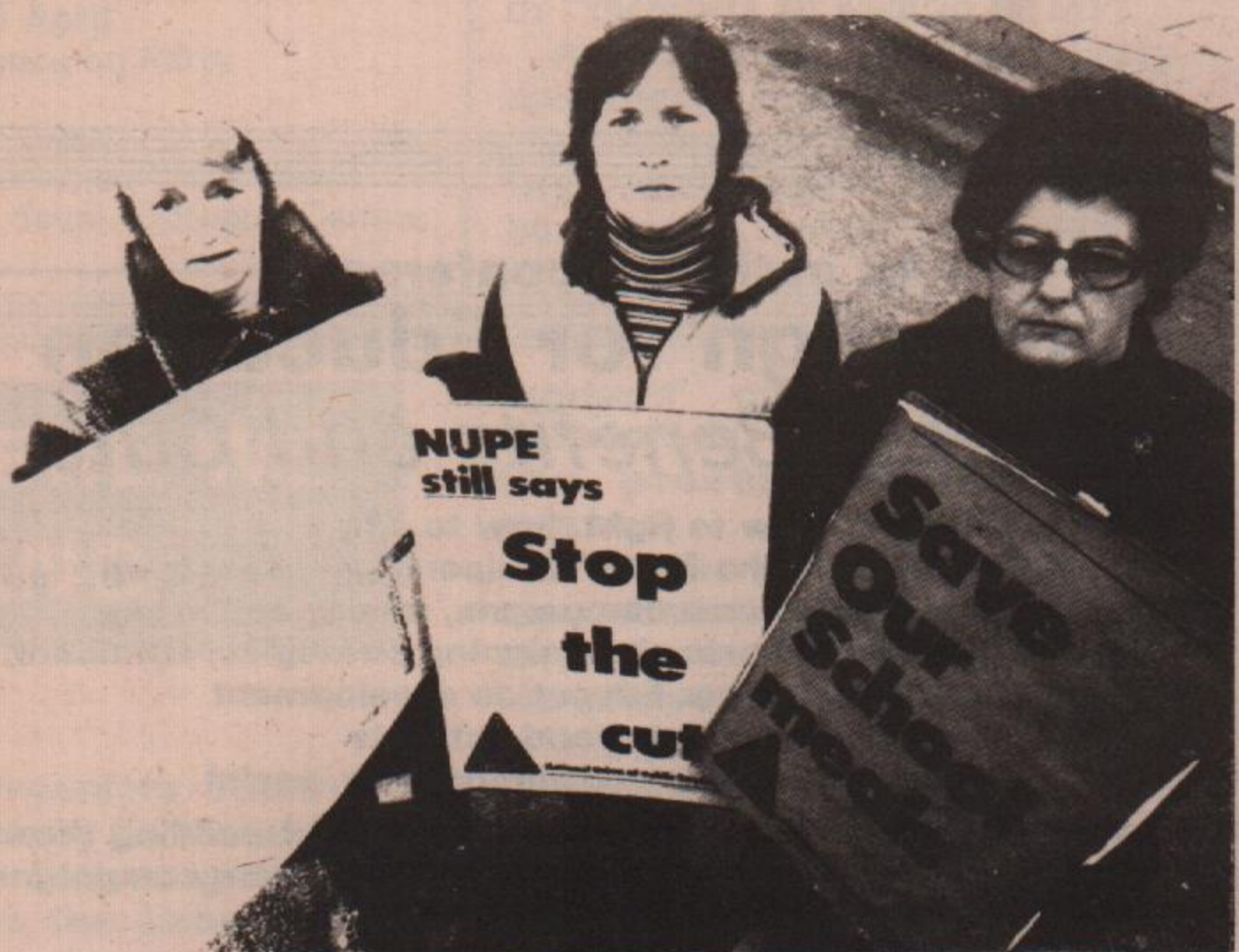
Sadly, great hostility exists between CADFU and STA, fuelled by the SWP who say that CADFU shouldn't be touched and are tainted with 'new realism'.

Unfortunately, this year's NUT conference will now see competing left resolutions and meetings. We should be seeking merger and a united front of the left.

We have always argued that the STA should actively encourage the formation of local STA groups on a non-sectarian basis, open to any teacher looking to fight the NUT leadership. Most important, such groups should not just be electoral machines but a permanent mobilising force meeting regularly and in contact with as many union members as possible. This means working with CADFU and any other union members who wish to take up the struggle.

The aim of all our work inside the STA is to organise the left inside the NUT and sharpen its fighting edge. The STA is the largest force inside the milieu (with over 700 individual members), but we must turn the STA both towards eventual merger with CADFU and towards a sympathetic understanding of the many independent rank and file teachers who are willing to fight.

Unfortunately many of those trade unionists are suspicious of the STA's politics and uncertain about its leadership capabilities. Our task is to make the STA worthy of trust and support at the grassroots so that it can seriously take on and defeat the Broad Left leadership.



Socialists and the trade unions

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CPSA: reject the pay deal!

By Trudy Saunders

No FT, No Comment'. Members of CPSA (Civil and Public Servants Association, the main civil service white collar union) get more information about our union from the pinky-peach pages of the Financial Times than from a union circular.

The latest FT 'scoop' is the long-term pay stitch-up between our right-wing General Secretary, John Ellis, and the Tories.

Many civil service workers live below the official poverty line. Every year we ask the government for 15 to 20% — every year we are lucky if we get 4%.

In 1987 the right-wing National Executive Committee organised a regional rolling programme of strike action. This pathetic attempt unsurprisingly failed to bring the Tories to their knees.

When a Broad Left Executive came to power and balloted for an all-out strike over pay, the right-wing did their best to scupper it — and succeeded.

Ellis has been using the whipped-up hysteria over the all-out ballot to argue for a long-term pay system.

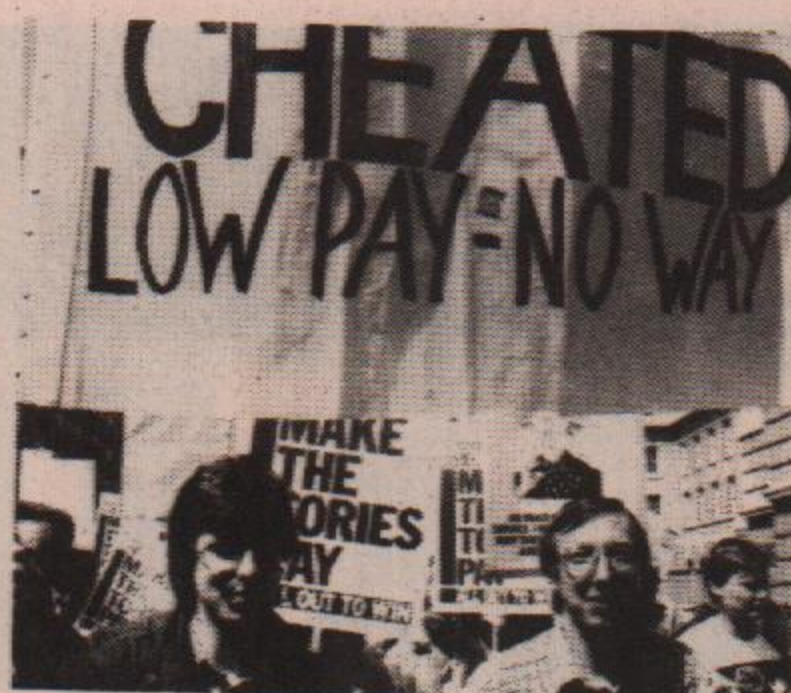
But the Tories would only agree to a long-term pay system if the union agreed to merit pay and regional pay. At 1988 union conference merit pay and regional pay were overwhelmingly re-

jected.

Ellis has now agreed to them in return for a pathetic pay deal — 4% in April 1989 and 3% in October 1989.

Ellis will be presenting the deal to our members as 7%. This won't fool anyone. Merit pay (performance related pay) means only a tiny minority of CPSA members will have high enough yearly 'report' markings to receive a rise. Regional pay will only be paid to CPSA members in locations where staff recruitment is difficult. The vast majority of CPSA members will lose out.

Rank and file activists in the union must organise against this poverty pay deal which threatens national pay bargaining and ensure it is kicked out in the forthcoming ballot.



In '87 the right-wing wasted the anger that existed over low pay.

Don't get Moodie!

Workers from London Social Security (DSS) offices met last Tuesday, 31st to organise the fight against the Moodie Report.

This followed the strikes on 16

January in 15 London DSS offices in protest at the Tories' announcement that Moodie would be phased in from August.

Moodie will mean the loss of 1200 jobs in the 21 London offices affected. The offices will be reduced to a counter only service and processing of claims will be moved to new computer centres in Belfast, Glasgow, and Wigan, where 1000 'new' jobs will thus be 'created'.

Moodie goes hand in hand with the Operational Strategy computerisation of DSS (Op. Strat), which aims to get rid of 20,000 jobs in DSS over the next 3 years.

This attack is only the first part of a national attack upon social security workers and must be treated as such.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the right wing union leadership (the 'moderates' and their Broad Left '84 Kinnockite and Stalinist allies) have done absolutely nothing to fight Moodie or Op. Strat., putting their faith in 'second thoughts' from the Treasury to get them off the hook. Indeed some go further. Leading NUCPS Stalinist Tom Gill has stated "We don't expect to stop Op. Strat. We don't want to. We expect to get benefits from it".

The meeting on 31 January called for total non-cooperation with Moodie, a London-wide delegate conference to agree a strategy to defeat Moddie, and a one day strike to build for an all out London wide strike.

agreement was reached. Only voluntary detached duty will now operate. But this is only a partial victory.

As the DSS cuts staff to pay for the Operational Strategy computerisation, management are using compulsory transfer, detached duty and post blocking to manage run-down offices.

It is vital that workers resist all these attempts to cover staff shortages.

It is also vital that CPSA members do not volunteer for detached duty. This will only make management's job easy. We must fight them all the way in order to protect our jobs and conditions of service. We must demand enough staff are employed to run a proper service in the DSS offices.

West Derby DSS have shown the way forward. Despite the right-wing DHSS Section Executive Committee giving no lead or encouragement, CPSA members have once again shown that there is a will to fight — and win.

Liverpool DSS workers win

By Greta Green

Strikers at Liverpool's West Derby Dept of Social Security (DSS) Office returned to work victorious on Monday 6th.

The strike broke out on 2 February when management attempted to bring in compulsory detached duty to cover staff shortages at neighbouring Liverpool Offices — with no guarantee of a job at West Derby at the end of any detached duty!

The bosses backed down after only one day of a solid strike by members of the two unions, CPSA and NUCPS.

Only 8 of the 70 staff crossed the 40 strong picket line. NUCPS members came out without even waiting for official union backing — despite none of their members being under threat of compulsory detached duty.

On Friday 3 February an

Redbaiting backfires

SOCIALIST STUDENT

By Neophitos Ttofias

Last week Cosmo Hawkes from the NUS Exec came to speak at a Hall of Residence belonging to Sheffield

University. The meeting was meant to be about NUS Reform and why NUS is a good thing.

Unfortunately Cosmo (the so-called independent who "represents ordinary students") did not mention NUS Reform. His whole speech revolved around slugging off Socialist Student. He called us "Trotskyist scum and filth intent

on destroying NUS".

Cosmo could not come up with anything constructive. He had no ideas about how to keep the campaign against loans going. In fact all he did was give NUS a bad name.

The Tories who were present must have loved the sight of this NUS Exec member insulting the left inside NUS.

Students at the meeting did not appreciate Cosmo's botched attempt on his election trail — he is standing against Socialist Student supporter Liz Millward for National Secretary of NUS. He was accused of being a megalomaniac with his ideas about how to promote and strengthen NUS. Students pointed out that the people he chose to call 'scum' were the very people who initiated most of the campaigns at Sheffield University SU.

In the end Cosmo apologised for his Mc Carthite ramblings, saying he "Didn't mean to offend serious student unionists".

Fortunately Cosmo's name is now a real joke at Sheffield University. Vote Socialist Student!

headquarters have voted for industrial action over VDUs. 100 more journalists working for the World Service are due to ballot.

The unions are insisting on hourly breaks and a guarantee that pregnant women will not have to work with VDUs. BBC bosses are threatening suspensions.

The going rate for pay rises during the last three months of 1988 was 6.9% according to CBI figures — confirming the trend for pay deals to chase after the rising inflation rate.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has ordered an inquiry into the second death in a fortnight of a worker on the Channel Tunnel project. The consortium responsible for digging the tunnel has already been prosecuted twice by the HSE.

IN BRIEF

Peugot-Talbot have offered over 15% in a two year pay deal which unions will discuss this week.

Workers at Jaguar are voting on industrial action this week over pay. They are insisting on a one year deal.

Bosoes are offering a pay cut (in real terms) spread over two years. However, the present proposals for a series of one day strikes is inadequate — all out action is needed.

150 members of the National Union of Journalists at the BBC's London

TV bosses target unions

Independent Television companies are declaring war on their unions.

This week the ITV Association — bosses' representatives from the ITV regions — voted to break off joint national pay bargaining. This follows the decisions of two companies (Tyne Tees and TV South West) to get it alone.

The reasons are clear: union busting and attacks on pay and conditions.

TV South West have already issued

new contracts of employment to be imposed by April.

It is the latest move in a long process of undercutting union organisation — a process speeded up by the implications of the government's White Paper on Broadcasting published last Autumn.

ITV bosses are now united in their attack — the unions too need to stick together. A joint response — strike action — could black out ITV and quickly force them to back down.

Post workers protest at rigged ballot

By Joe Baxter

The communication workers' union UCW has negotiated a deal with the Post Office over DRAS area bonuses and decided to ballot only those areas benefitting financially from the deal.

Tom McGee, Edinburgh Outdoor branch secretary, commented: "We moved the resolution against DRAS at last year's union conference. Along with all other UCW postal grades

members we participated in the ballot which gave the Executive Council the right to call industrial action last year.

We do not see how we can be excluded now from the ballot to decide the outcome of the negotiations on that issue, and we will not just quietly accept the ballot arrangements.

Our first move will be to try to change the conditions of the ballot by appeal to the national chair of the union. If that fails we will be attempting to win a special delegate conference to discuss the ballot arrangements and overturn them".

Post office deal delights bosses

Post Office bosses and the executive of the communication workers' union UCW are trying to pull the wool over postal workers' eyes again.

Last autumn's back-to-work agreement rested on new negotiations over the Difficult to Recruit Area Supplements (DRAS) imposed by the Post Office. Now, four months later, we are presented with a package described by one London postal worker as "simply DRAS in another form. There is no attempt to deal with the basic problem of low pay in the industry. This is a continuation of pay supplements."

Bill Cockburn, managing director of Royal Mail Letters, said the same thing differently: "We are delighted with this deal. It gives us all the things we were looking for to improve and speed up the service."

There are two basic ingredients in the package. A series of lump sum payments and weekly supplements for new recruits will be paid in areas of 'recruitment difficulty'. These areas will be defined as those with 15% or greater staff turnover and a local unemployment rate below 5%.

The payments are only guaranteed for two years, and there is no right to these maximum rates. Payment will depend on gaining a 'certificate of confidence' — management assessment of your work record, sick record and willingness

to perform 'tasks' they set. If you fail to meet the bosses' criteria, you get no extra payments.

The second basic ingredient is a restructuring of overtime — proposals almost identical to those thrown out a year ago.

Many pay packets will shrink under this arrangement; it ignores the relationship between overtime and surges of extra work, eg. from mail houses. And it commits postal workers to working a 50 or 60 hour week!

There are a few sops offered by management: "Not everything in the deal is bad," said a London postal worker. "New recruits will move onto maximum pay after six months instead of a year, and the embargo on IWM reassessments will be extended." But the deal is being presented as a package — take it or leave it. And the package stinks.

Worse, the Executive want to restrict the vote on area supplements only to those who will receive them! This is a cynical manoeuvre to disenfranchise the rest of the union and push the vote through.

Postal workers should insist that the whole membership is given a branch ballot on all the proposals — and call for a special delegate conference to force the Executive's hand. We should argue to throw out the deal.

Last year's strike showed the power and anger of the UCW membership — what is needed is a leadership to match.

Stop this sacking!

By Sarah Cotterill

A Rehousing Officer in Manchester has been sacked by the City Council for supposed gross misconduct.

Her union, NALGO, believes she is innocent and is backing her fight for reinstatement. Rehousing Officers throughout Manchester struck in December to lobby the Council meeting and demand that she be given her job back. A well-attended NALGO Housing meeting voted overwhelmingly for a strike on the day of her appeal, Monday 6 February.

Branch officials decided that a democratic vote was not good enough and called a ballot over the strike action. The NALGO leadership failed to

persuade a can for a yes vote (despite the branch vote in favour), and instead circulated a letter which stressed the case against action.

Not surprisingly the ballot was lost, although a large minority voted to strike.

Rehousing Officers and people who worked directly with the sacked member called a successful lobby of the appeal, although NALGO leaders tried to frustrate any action by lying about where the hearing was to be held.

The appeal has now been adjourned until 26 February.

Housing workers believe that the Rehousing Officer committed no serious offence. If the Council can get away with sacking her all workers will be at risk for the smallest mistake.

We will have to mobilise support for action to win the appeal on 26 February.

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Save our NHS!

By Ian Prenelle

London Health Emergency has called a meeting on the Tories' new plans for health, on Wednesday 15 February, 7 pm, at Camden Town Hall, Judd St, WC1.

Health workers, patient groups, and community health groups will be meeting to discuss a campaign against the white paper.

Under the Tories' plans:

- The 320 biggest hospitals can opt out of NHS control. The decision will be taken not by health workers, patients and members of the community, or even the district health authority, but by hospital managers and consultants.

Some London teaching hospitals will be the first to opt out. Guy's hospital will be the first to opt out. Guy's hospital has already expressed interest.

These hospitals have a monopoly in areas of expertise which in a health service ruled by market forces would be very saleable. Other less profitable services such as geriatric care, accident and emergency, and psychiatric care will be squeezed out by the governing boards of trustees, for whom profit will definitely come first.

Hospitals will have contractual obligations to provide a certain amount of these unglamorous services but probably they will follow the example of hospital managers in America, who claim to have too few beds, staff or funds in order to dodge such obligations.

The boards of trustees will consist of ten people, none of whom will be hospital employees, trade union representatives, or representatives for women, black



and minority groups. They will be business people interested in medicine for profit.

- The NHS is to be run with an internal market. Health authorities will be able to sell services to each other. Kenneth Clarke has already said that no more money will be made available to the NHS. No health authority will be able to expand a particular service enough to sell it to other health authorities

without cutting other less profitable services. Far from patients having greater choice, they will face long journeys to different health authority areas to get the treatment they need.

- GPs are to buy hospital care from a set budget.

What happens if the GP practice uses up its budget?

If no more money is available, then the practice closes and patients

suffer and jobs are lost.

If more money is made available the GP will be "called to account" for overrunning the budget.

Many GPs will fail to give patients treatment they deserve in order to remain within their budget.

Worse, any of the budget not used goes into the doctor's own pocket. This will encourage some doctors to offer people less treatment in order to gain money. Bad doctors will get richer and

better doctors will continually over budget.

Busy GPs just won't have the time to shop around for cheap treatment — unless they take the time out of what they give to their patients.

All the proposals point in the direction of private health care, with the shift of emphasis from quality of care to cost and the plans to make hospitals into profit making businesses.

The planned tax relief on pensioners' private health insurance is intended not to ease the lives of elderly people but to boost the role of private health.

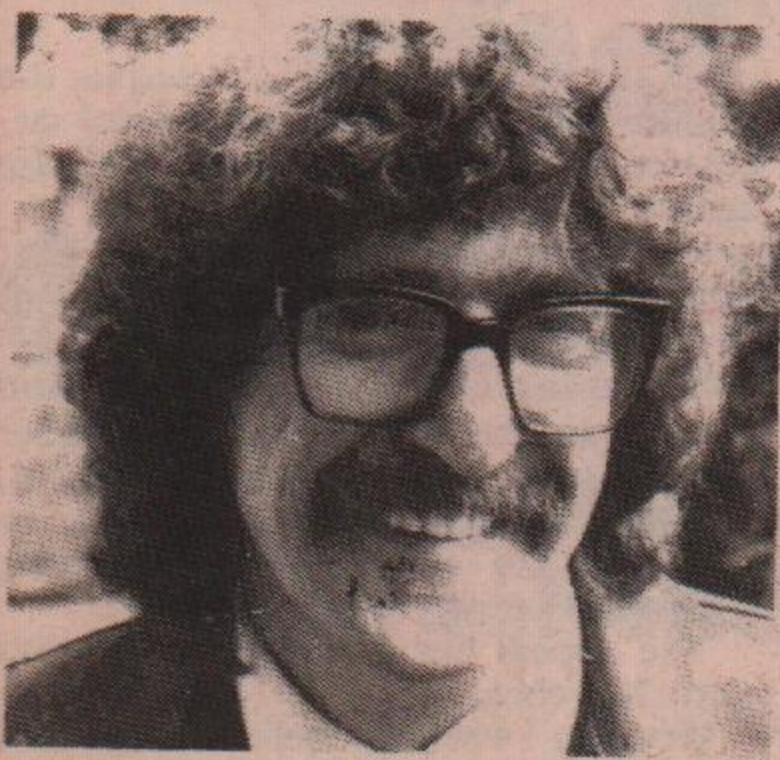
The Tories claim that the health review will increase patient choice is a farce, since choice will be limited by the budgets of GPs and health managers. The claim that the review will put patients first is ridiculous, since it's clear that it serves the interests of no one but business people who want an entrance into private medicine, and the Tory government for whom this is a big step towards their aims to ultimately privatise the health service.

Health workers should be aware that if a hospital opts out then all the existing Whitley council employment contracts become invalid and hospitals can then pay workers what they wish. Self governing hospitals could refuse to recognise and negotiate with unions, greatly weakening them.

Workers should be ready to fight this review, which challenges the very existence of a free health service. If these attacks get to be carried through, the next move by the Tories will certainly be full privatisation of the NHS.

Campaign against pits sell-off

WHETTON'S WEEK



A miner's diary

Further announcements of pit closures are being made by the Coal Board. Speculation grows about a number of pits.

It's all part of the run-up to privatisation. But now there's attempts to fight privatisation, at last. There's been a big conference this last week in Sheffield, and other conferences, I understand, are planned. Several unions are getting together, not just the miners.

To my mind it all relates back to what Arthur Scargill said after the defeat of the ballot on the overtime ban. The Tories will legislate, they will sell off, they will do everything that they can, and sooner or later we're going to have to stand up and fight and win.

That's not just the miners. The rest of the labour movement is going to have to stand up and fight and win. We can't keep backing

off. While we back off, the Tories will continue to press ahead and escalate their attacks.

Now the Tories are trying to introduce a requirement that you must get at least a 70 per cent majority in a ballot for a strike. In order to carry out her attacks on the welfare state, Thatcher has to shackle the trade unions.

Prison officers are not everybody's favourite bunch of workers. But they are workers, and they are expected to contend with some intolerable conditions.

They have to face the shitty end of the stick every day, with overcrowding in the prisons. The lid's got to blow off sooner or later, whether it comes from the prisoners or from the prison officers.

They are workers, they are in struggle, and they're fighting

against terrible conditions imposed by the bosses; so we should be giving them our support. In fact, one of the banners put out by a convict at Wandsworth said 'Support the screws, kick out the Bill' — which seems to be an indication that even the inmates support the screws as opposed to having police sent in.

Support unilateral nuclear disarmament. The aim is to see that every nuclear device is off our shores.

The Labour leadership is attempting to fudge the issue. They've got this, to my mind, mistaken idea that if they tone down unilateralist demands then they might appeal to more voters. But once you start to climb down from that position, it's a hell of a job to lift yourself up again.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire.

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For the Palestinians right to a state of their own! For a socialist federation of the Middle East with the right to self-determination for all nations, including the Israeli Jews!

Israel / Palestine

Two nations, Two states!

Since 1967 Israel has held the West Bank and Gaza Strip under military rule. There is little work within these areas for Palestinians and many travel daily to jobs within the pre-1967 borders of Israel.

Most trade union activity is banned; newspapers are subject to heavy censorship. Palestinians are often driven from their homes, as Jewish settlements are built in the area.

Yet despite this repression, the Palestinians resist. According to an opinion poll among Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 93% consider that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) represents their interests. A mere 0.1% would favour continuing Israeli rule of their areas — even if the quality of life was improved and democratic freedoms guaranteed.

Clearly we should support the PLO as the organisation the Palestinians choose to represent them in their struggle against oppression. We should protest at the denials of democratic rights to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and also within pre-1967 Israel and support Palestinian resistance to this. We should also demand Israel's immediate withdrawal from the territory their armies occupied in 1967.

As an overall solution to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict we need a policy that is best able to satisfy the demands of the different national groups in the area.

The Palestinians rightly demand their national rights — the right to a nation state within Palestine. We must also recognise the national rights of the Israeli Jews.

Though socialists earlier this century rightly opposed the creation of a Jewish state on land occupied

by the Palestinians (the result of which was the driving of many Palestinians from their homes), things have obviously changed. We must recognise that an Israeli nation has been built in the Middle East.

To try to turn the clock back to before Israel existed is not a realistic policy. Most Israeli Jews regard Israel as their homeland, whatever their country of origin. A majority were born in Israel and know no other homeland.

Socialists need a policy that is able to satisfy the national aspirations of the Palestinians and also protect the national rights of the Israeli Jews, while combatting the actions of the current Israeli state against Palestinians inside and outside its borders.

The creation of a Palestinian state alongside a Jewish state would allow for this. This is the PLO's demand. And Israeli Jews, too, can be convinced that the Palestinians have national rights and they should be allowed to build a state.

The existence of a Palestinian state would allow for the development of a Palestinian working class movement. This is something that has been held back both by the refugee status of many Palestinians and Israel's repression. Joint working class action between Israelis and Palestinians would be far more likely in a set-up where neither felt an immediate threat from the other.

This policy provides a framework for a struggle now by socialists within Israel and the occupied territories and for Palestinian rights within Israel, in which Israelis and Palestinians can both participate. It opens the way for Arab-Jewish workers' unity and a struggle for a socialist United States of the Middle East.

**INSIDE****Lies the left tells itself****Trotsky on the Jewish state****Unravelling the issues****Origins of the conflict**

Origins of the conflict

Clive Bradley looks at the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

The Israel-Palestine conflict is the product of the modern era in more than the obvious sense.

Its origins lie in the conditions created by capitalism since the end of the nineteenth century.

In the colonies, capitalism was generating new social and political forces. Anti-colonial nationalist movements emerged that wanted independence. An Arab nationalism

appeared which was cheated of an Arab state by Anglo-French colonialism after World War One — when the Turkish empire collapsed, and the 'Middle East' was divided between France (what is now Lebanon and Syria), and Britain (Iraq, Jordan and Palestine).

In Europe, capitalism's transformation into a war-torn imperialism was producing racism at a greater intensity than ever before in history. And the most violent expression of this racism was directed against the Jews.

Various political movements amongst the Jewish communities sought answers to this problem of anti-semitism. One of these

movements was Zionism. In fact Zionism was quite a broad movement ranging from a right wing, represented by people like Theodor Herzl, who used and advocated bourgeois pressure-group tactics, through to others who saw themselves as revolutionary socialists. Later there were even to be Zionists who were fascist-inspired.

But Zionism as a whole was influenced by the anti-colonial struggles. The answer to anti-semitism, they said, was a Jewish state. More particularly, they wanted a Jewish state outside of the hell-hole of Europe — and Palestine, where ancient Israel had been, was the obvious choice.

Most socialists opposed this argument. They insisted that the way to defeat anti-semitism was by organising a fight against it — in Europe — and by uniting the working class. The project of building a Jewish state in Palestine, they argued, would pit the Jews against the Arabs with dangerous results.

This is in fact what happened. These two social and political movements — Arab nationalism on the one hand and Zionism on the other — came to be pitted against each other in the Middle East. The result was today's bitter conflict. But it is important to remember the background.

The workers' movements of Europe were defeated. Fascism took power in Germany. The Second World War began — and the Jews were massacred. Inevitably, in light of that catastrophe, the Zionist movement won a tragic victory. A Jewish state did seem to many Jews to be a better answer than the one socialists had offered.

In Palestine after the war, Zionist guerrillas launched attacks on the British colonial authorities, forcing them to quit Palestine. The newly-formed United Nations drew up a plan to partition Palestine and create an Arab and Jewish state side by side. This proved unacceptable to the Arabs — and the Arab states went to war with the Jews. The Arabs lost — very badly — and the Zionist forces and the Jordanian monarchy between them partitioned Palestine.

During this first Arab-Israeli war of 1948, thousands of Palestinian Arabs fled their homes and when the war was over, found they were not allowed to return. Scattered throughout the Arab east, in refugee camps poorly funded by the United Nations, the Palestinian refugees were simply forgotten — by Israel, by the Arab states and by the rest of the world.

The Arabs left inside the Jewish state were to be second-class citizens facing institutionalised discrimination.

In the wake of their defeat, Arab regimes began to tumble. In particular the monarchy in Egypt was overthrown by a military coup in 1952, and a new form of Arab nationalism developed. Personified by the Egyptian president Abdul Nasser, radical Arab nationalism began to define its role as 'anti-imperialist' and 'anti-Zionist'.

When Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal in 1956, the young Israeli state demonstrated clearly where it stood in relation to the old colonial powers and rising Arab nationalism: it joined with Britain and France to go to war with Egypt.

But the Anglo-French-Israeli attack failed, at least in part due to American displeasure. Nasser received a tremendous boost in popularity, and "Nasserism" swept the Arab world. Opposition to the 'Zionist entity' and a refusal to countenance its survival on 'Arab land' were amongst its ideological hallmarks; and eventually — unwillingly, in fact — Nasser found himself in an escalating move to war with Israel.

The 'Six Day War' of June 1967 was a disaster for Nasser and the other Arab regimes (including the

radical nationalist government in Syria). Israel scored an enormous and breathtakingly rapid victory, and as a result occupied large new areas of land — the Egyptian Sinai peninsula, the Syrian Golan heights, and two Palestinian areas — the West Bank (annexed by Jordan shortly after the 1948 war) and the Gaza strip (beforehand effectively under Egyptian control).

Israeli military occupation was and is precisely that. The Arabs in the occupied territories have continually found repression of varying degrees of intensity. In addition, a new generation of refugees was created.

The Arab regimes had been humiliated, and as a result there was a mushrooming of various radical Palestinian guerrilla organisations, the most important of which, Fatah, was led by Yasser Arafat. Fatah and other groups (including both more radical would-be Marxist organisations and straightforward stooges for different Arab governments) took over the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO), which before had been a tool of the Arab League (i.e. Egypt) and had been led by an anti-Jewish demagogue.

So a distinct Palestinian movement appeared, with radical ideas influenced by other national liberation armed struggles. The PLO established itself as the political movement looked to by the overwhelming majority of Palestinian Arabs.

But the zenith of the radical guerrillas' strength was brief. A civil war in Jordan — two-thirds of whose population is Palestinian — culminated in 'Black September' 1970, when the Jordanian regime massacred Palestinian guerrillas. The guerrillas' main base thereafter was Lebanon — and this was to be one of the causes of the agonising cycle of violence that Lebanon has been since 1974-5.

In October 1973 there was another Arab-Israeli war. The Arabs failed to win back lost territory, but at least recovered from some of the humiliation of 1967. For the PLO this meant a new political context: armed struggle was coupled with diplomatic efforts to encourage international peace conferences and find a solution to the conflict.

The first round of the Lebanese civil war ended in defeat for the Palestinians and their Lebanese allies, this time at the hands of Syria in 1976. By now the 'Palestine question' was largely focused on Lebanon. Israel's clear objective was to destroy the PLO in Lebanon, thereby decapitating the political leadership of the Palestinian movement in the occupied territories — who from the mid-seventies had been pro-PLO to one degree or another.

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 was its most brutal war yet. PLO fighters in the Lebanese capital Beirut were forced to evacuate it. Thousands of Palestinians and Lebanese were killed.

It was a mixed blessing for Israel, whose army became embroiled in a bloody occupation of southern Lebanon that was both costly in lives and politically damaging — internationally and internally.

The capitalist Arab regimes had been in increasing disarray since their relative success in 1973. Faced with a growing social and political crisis at home, President Sadat of Egypt outraged Arab public opinion by visiting Israel in 1977, and the following year reached an accord — the 'Camp David' agreement — that led to the signing of a peace treaty.

In 1982 the Arab regimes were able to do nothing to prevent the Israeli onslaught on Lebanon.

Division within the PLO also deepened after 1982. Disagreements and conflicts had always existed between different groups — a 'rejectionist' wing had opposed Arafat's diplomatic emphasis since the mid-'70s. But in 1983 a 'civil war' broke out within Fatah itself as factions

fought it out in Lebanon — the anti-Arafat group backed by Syria.

Rapprochement between the different Palestinian groups in the summer of 1987 helped pave the way for the intifada that began in December that year and has continued ever since.

The intifada has drastically altered the Palestinian equation. Forcing Israel onto the defensive to an unprecedented extent, the people of Gaza and the West Bank — increasingly supported by the 'Israeli' Arabs — created the conditions for a new diplomatic offensive by the PLO. Palestine was declared 'independent' in November 1988; and the state of Israel was recognised.

A socialist strategy goes way beyond Yasser Arafat's diplomacy. But the creation of a Palestinian state seems more likely now than ever before, even if there is a long way yet to go.

National minorities

The Palestinians are not the only oppressed people in the Middle East. Fifteen million Kurds face brutal national oppression at the hands of Turkey, Iraq and Iran. In Turkey, for example, the word 'Kurd' is illegal: they are officially called 'mountain Turks'.

All these states have systematically deprived the Kurds of their rights — yet the Kurds have survived and struggled for self-determination.

The Arab countries of the Middle East also include a number of other national and religious minorities — Armenians, Nubian (in Egypt), Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, Druze, Alawites, Christians.

Recognise the PLO!

The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has the support of the clear majority of Palestinian Arabs. It has survived Israeli attempts to destroy it via various methods — from the setting-up of stooge 'village leagues' through to military extermination.

The PLO should be recognised by Israel as the chosen representative of the Palestinians. All attempts to exclude it from the 'peace process' — or destroy it — are anti-democratic and should be resisted forcefully.

Arabs, Jews and socialism

The debate on Palestine. Zionism and anti-semitism (including "Trotsky and Zionism")

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Why the PLO went for 'two states'

Clive Bradley looks at the developments behind the PLO's declaration of an independent Palestinian state.

In November 1988 the Palestine Liberation Organisation and its leader Yasser Arafat came out clearly for two states in Palestine — a Palestinian Arab state alongside Israel.

This shift came after a year of the *intifada*. This uprising in the West Bank and Gaza (the Arab territories under Israeli military occupation) has been the most powerful mobilisation by the Palestinians since 1948, indeed since the late '30s.

A movement had been developing in the occupied territories since the mid-1970s. By the end of 1987, the movement was strong enough to undertake an uprising. The initiative came within the occupied territories, where PLO groups forged an alliance with a young Islamicist movement. But immediately co-ordination began with the external leadership.

The *intifada* put Israel on the defensive — both politically and diplomatically. Politically, the Israeli army found itself plunged into a repressive policing operation that broad layers of Israeli society could not approve of. Internationally, Israel was seen as a South African-style repressive state.

The PLO would have been fantastically ultimatic and ultra-left if it had not seized on the opportunities this situation presented by declaring a Palestinian state. This entailed recognising Israel but the question for the PLO leadership was not whether they should recognise Israel, but whether they could persuade harder-line nationalists to go along with it. They succeeded in doing so, with a compromise in which a government-in-exile was not formally proclaimed.

In Israel, the *intifada* is a nightmare come to life. Israel was always supposed to be the Middle East's democratic trail-blazer, founded on democratic and even socialist principles. Israel was supposed to have an army that fought only defensive wars, and only killed anyone if it really had to. And here Israel was, bashing children's skulls.

The effect this has had within Israeli society, provoking a moral as well as a political debate, should not be underestimated. Indeed much of Israeli opposition to repression remains, for now, on moral grounds, and on the sentiment that this sort of behaviour is bad for Israel's soul.

Israeli brutality is not in reality new. But this is the first time Israelis have acted so brutally so close to home for such an extended period — and in such international view. The Israeli army itself believes the *intifada* will not die down for years to come. And so the moral and political dilemmas will only become sharper.

There is a profound move to the right in Israel — which is not to say it is irreversible. There is an element of political logic to it — getting rid of the Arabs is a logical way to maintain Israel's Jewishness. There is the deepening social and political (and economic) crisis — which typically produces a growth of right-wing forces out of desperation. And there is social change.

Israel is a peculiarly stratified society. The old establishment is European Jewish Labour Zionist; 'Oriental Jews' were always at the bottom of the social pile (although above the Arabs), and excluded from the centres of power. Thus they gravitated to the oppositional right who knew how to appeal demagogically to them. Oriental Jews nowadays outnumber Europeans. Likud has incorporated Orientals far more than Labour has (one of Likud's most fearsome leaders and



Yasser Arafat

likely successor to Shamir is an Oriental), has adopted social programmes designed to help them and so on. When Labour lost the 1977 election to Begin it was partly due to ignoring this demographic, as well as political, shift.

It is more complex than that, of course, and Orientals should not be regarded as 'naturally' with the right. But the big problem for the Israeli left is how to win the Orientals — that is, largely working class — Jews. Plainly a social programme is necessary; and traditional left Zionism, which is very kibbutz based, is totally unable to develop such a programme.

The left remains based on sections of the European middle class, and the Israeli Arabs. The Communist Party, which is thoroughly Stalinist, remains by far the strongest section of the left, also drawing its support largely from Arab voters.

Social change also underlies developments among the Palestinians. The old pro-Jordanian rural notables who dominated Palestinian society into the 1970s have literally died out, although

Jordan's recent 'disengagement' from the West Bank is still an economic shock.

Many of the militants in the occupied territories were not even born when the resistance was at its most self-assured in the late 1960s. Even older ones will barely remember, for example the 1973 war. Social contact with refugees outside the territories is minimal.

Both the West Bank and Gaza have been incorporated into the Israeli economy to a high degree, particularly as suppliers of cheap migrant labour (although unlike in South Africa this labour force constitutes a minority sub-proletariat in Israel). Ultimately and in theory this process of incorporation could lead to the demand for independence being rendered obsolete; Israel could evolve into a new South Africa. So far this has not happened: rather, the process has led to a sharpening of the demand for a state in the West Bank and Gaza. This is partly because a big element in the conflict is over land. Jewish settlement, which has grown enormously since the late '70s

focusses nationalist anger — both against the seizure of land and the imperialistic arrogance of the settlers.

The essential aim of the *intifada* has been to demonstrate the impossibility of continued Israeli rule. An entire population is in revolt. Deeply-rooted political structures have been formed, which potentially at least have a greater weight than the exile leadership.

All Israel's attempts to form quislings to 'negotiate' with have flopped; and now there is obviously little point in trying again. If Israel wants 'legitimate' leaders to negotiate with, they are there — and in open support of the PLO.

So how will the crisis resolve itself? The rise of the Israeli right is unsustainable in the long term without Israel ceasing to be a democracy (which it is, for Jews). Voices favouring a settlement are growing louder all the time.

So far an explicitly working class voice has yet to be heard. But Palestine's turmoil can and must increase the openings for such a voice.

Unravelling the issues

Sean Matgamna takes a look at some of the issues

Israel and South Africa

It is a very popular idea on the left that Israel is the same sort of state as South Africa. Israel and South Africa are said to be similar 'settler states', and a common political programme is advocated for both: smash the settler state.

But even if the 'settler state' tag fits both South Africa and Israel, these societies are so vastly different that the tag alone is inadequately concrete to base any political conclusions on. What differentiates Israel and South Africa is more important than the common name-tag.

In Israel there is not a ruling Jewish caste exploiting Arab helots. There is a comprehensive Jewish society organised in a Jewish nation state. This is not the same sort of society as South Africa.

'Smash the settler state' in South Africa or colonial Algeria means: abolish the monopoly of power and the caste privileges of the white minority: let the majority rule.

But what does 'smash the settler state' mean for Israel? It is a state which is extremely democratic for its Jewish majority. Its army is pretty close to being a citizen army. For an external force to 'smash the state' is not a matter of destroying a repressive apparatus, or defeating it in war, but of overrunning Israel and forcibly destroying the Jewish nation. It could *only* be done by slaughter, expropriation and terror — and pretty much for certain, the driving out of large parts of the population.

Put starkly, the far left's programme for Palestine is that 'Israel must be destroyed'.

Now this is a *unique* programme: the destruction of a state and the radical alteration of the population of that state's core area. From this everything else follows.

The programme is made to appear not unique by identifying Israel with South Africa. But that is an utterly false comparison of an organic society made up of all classes and not essentially dependent on exploiting a submerged population on one side, and on the other a society in which the white population are an exploiting caste dependent for what they have on the submergence and helotry of a numerically much bigger black population.

Whatever similarity in political-military techniques there may be between South Africa and Israel,

they are radically different societies. Israel was given its character by the Zionists' resolute refusal to exploit Arab labour and their drive instead to replace it.

Whatever one thinks of the left Zionist colonists' 'Jewish labour only' policy, it was the opposite of that mass exploitation on which modern South Africa was built. The exploitation of Arab labour from the occupied territories since 1967 has not fundamentally altered the character of Israel in this respect.

The Israeli workers

A quarter of a million Israelis — in British population terms, it would be *six million* people — demonstrated in protest at the massacre carried out by Lebanese Christians in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila, in an area under Israeli army control.

Within Israel, there is a strong peace movement pushing for compromise with the Arabs and opposing any Israeli expansion. There is now a big campaign in Israel to oppose the Jewish racist Meir Kehane and his followers.

Despite all this, many on the left refuse to see any good in any Israelis. Israeli socialists and Israeli workers are good only if they first agree that Israel should dissolve itself. The only good Israeli Jew is the one prepared to become an honorary Arab, or willing to emigrate.

At the root of the inability to see any good in any Israeli is the refusal to recognise that the Israeli nation is a legitimate nation and that it has national rights. If you don't recognise the right of the nation to exist in the area, you can hardly see any role for its working class.

Why a Palestinian Arab state?

The Palestinian Arabs are a defeated people who have suffered the consequences of the Jewish-Arab war of 1948. The root problem of the Palestinian Arabs is their dispossession by the Israeli Jews, but the condition of the Palestinian Arabs today is not just Israeli's responsibility.

The fact that they continue as refugees is also to be explained by intra-Arab politics, and by the desire of various Arab states to have them as a living indictment of Israel.

Arab states have discriminated against Palestinians and often slaughtered them. The remnant of Palestine allotted to the Arabs by the UN in 1947 was not unilaterally taken over by Israel, but divided by agreement between Jordan and Israel.

Today the Palestinian Arabs are a nation without a homeland. The nearest thing they have to a homeland — the West Bank, where they are the great majority — is occupied by Israel.

About 600,000 Palestinians live in Israel; about 800,000 in the West Bank, and 500,000 in the Gaza Strip; over a million in Jordan; almost half a million in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf; and more than a million scattered round Lebanon, Syria, other Arab states, and the rest of the world.

Everywhere they are insecure and second-class citizens.

The Palestinians desperately need to establish their own state. For practical purposes the PLO has given up the notion of replacing Israel with an Arab-controlled 'secular democratic state'. Its aim is an independent Palestinian state in the territories occupied by Israel.

That is the only path to a solution. Israel will not easily agree to it. But while the secular democratic state is *impossible*, an independent Palestinian state can be won by struggle. Those who want to help the Palestinians should argue for it.

Is socialism the answer?

Yes, socialism is the answer. But this phrase is sometimes used to evade the issues.

Socialism can only be made by the working class. And the working class can make socialism only if the workers of different nations can find an answer to national conflicts. Socialism will not dissolve national conflicts.

The Russian revolutionaries in 1917 had a policy for resolving the national conflicts that rent the Russian Empire: self-determination. Wherever a people or a fragment of a people was oppressed or feared oppression, the socialist policy was for the workers of all nations concerned to unite on the basis of the right of all peoples and fragments of peoples to join whatever neighbouring state they liked or have their own state.

Such a policy is needed, as well as the direct socialist programme, in the Middle East. We propose a free socialist federation of the Middle East with national rights for all non-Arab minorities, including the Jews.

How was Israel created?

The myth is that there was some sort of international conspiracy by rich and powerful Jews and US imperialism.

The fact is that the Jewish settlers were first Zionist enthusiasts, many of them socialists, and then, in the '30s and '40s, survivors and refugees from fascism. The left-wing Zionists were the core of the early Zionist settlements. In the '20s and '30s reactionaries commonly denounced the left-wing Zionists as allies of Bolshevism.

In fact, of course, they were Jewish nationalists, determined to develop a Jewish nation in Palestine. They used the protection of British imperialism — which rul-

ed Palestine from 1917 to 1947 — but they clashed with Britain too.

Within the Zionist camp there were many strands of thought about how to relate to the Arabs. There were advocates of a joint Jewish-Arab state as well as advocates of a brutal 'realpolitik' acceptance of the inevitability of all-out bloody conflict with the Arabs.

The Jews alone did not determine relations between themselves and the Palestinian Arabs. As the Jewish colony grew, so also the Arab peasants were increasingly driven off the land and pauperised. Mostly they were driven off the land by Arab landlords, not by Jewish settlers. But the landlords successfully directed the peasants' anger at the Jews.

From 1919 onwards there were regular clashes between Jews and Arabs. The Arabs attacked for a mixture of reasons — resentment, fear, bigotry. In the 1930s the Palestinian Arab leaders looked to the Nazis to help them drive out British imperialism and the Jewish colonists. Hadj Amin al-Husseini proposed to form a Muslim army to fight for Germany. The Zionists, vastly strengthened by refugees from Nazism, allied uneasily with Britain against the Arabs.

Under Arab pressure, Britain imposed severe limits on Jewish immigration at the end of the '30s, just as the great slaughter of European Jews by the Nazis was about to begin. Conflict between Britain and Jews followed, and exploded at the end of World War 2.

Britain wanted to get out. In 1947 it asked the United Nations for a decision on the future of Palestine. The UN proposed partition. Britain began to withdraw. Palestinian Arabs began guerilla war against the Jews. This simmering war gave way to all-out war when the British-officered armies of the Arab states invaded.

The Jews might have been defeated in 1948. There was nothing inevitable about their victory. Israel depended for arms on the goodwill of the USSR and its puppet Czechoslovakia. Stalin thought he saw a chance to strike a blow against the British empire. Soon Israel and the USSR would fall out.

Backs to the wall, with nowhere to go but maybe the displaced persons' camps of Europe, the Israeli Jews outfought the mercenary Arab armies and consolidated the Israeli state. The Palestinian Arabs were the main losers. It might have been the Jews.

Nazi-Zionist collaboration

For decades the memory of the Nazi slaughter of six million Jews acted as a bulwark against anti-semitism. Anti-semitism became something to be ashamed of.

Today that bulwark is under attack from two directions. Right-wingers and fascists deny that the

Continued on p.6



Palestinian refugees cross the Jordan



Why 'two states'?

By John O'Mahony

The idea of solving the terrible national conflict by simply enfoldng, intermeshing and merging as equal citizens, the hostile nations who compete for the disputed Palestinian territory, is an attractive one — and all the more so because there is no other solution that appears to do justice to both sides.

But it is nonsense. The idea that you could integrate any other two nations — say France and Germany — in the territory occupied by one of them would be dismissed as ludicrous, even given the fading in the last decades of much of their old animosity.

In Palestine the proposal for a secular democratic state amounts to a proposal to so enfold two nations who have related to each other with the most bitter and merciless war for half a century and more. It is a utopian absurdity. National identities and conflicts will not be overcome or superseded historically in anything like that way.

More than that. It is inconceivable that the Jews would agree to dismantle their state in return for a promise of equal citizenship. So the road to the 'secular democratic state' lies inescapably through war and full-scale conquest of the Jews. And after that what will happen? The victorious armies (of Iraq, Syria, Iran?) will gallantly establish and protect the

"The idea of a secular democratic state is simply a delusion"

democratic rights of the Jews as individuals (rights their own citizens do not now have) in a Palestinian Arab state?

In reality such a conquest would be resisted to the death by the Jews, and the idea of such a conquest is in practice inseparable from a proposal to drive out the Jews or massacre them.

The secular democratic state is far more attractive and internationally 'saleable' than the programme of 'driving the Jews into the sea' that Yasser Arafat's predecessor Ahmed Shukhairy used to advocate in the 1960s. For many people the 'secular democratic state' slogan also represents a different intention and aspiration. But in practice it comes down to the same thing, because it cannot be done by agreement. It differs essentially in being a more useful propaganda tool.

So the 'secular democratic state' is in fact a proposal to destroy the existing Jewish nation and at best to grant equal citizenship rights to those Jews who survived being conquered and wanted to remain in an Arab state.

But this is a-historical moralism: moreover it takes as its premise, as something to be taken for granted and beyond discussion, a stark denial of any national rights for the Jews in Palestine. It demands of them that they do what no other nation has ever done, and what no people extant will ever do — submit to the

forced dissolution of their own national community and surrender the protection of their own state.

For the Jews this would involve additionally putting themselves into the hands of those they have been fighting for 40 years and more — people in whose own states minorities like the Kurds (or Palestinian Arabs) are habitually repressed and routinely butchered.

The reasoning one finds on much of the 'Marxist' left is a series of moralistic demands cut loose from any consideration of how the world works, and addressed as an unique ultimatum to the Palestinian Jews — a series of demands that it would be impossible for serious people to make without the prior unquestionable assumption that the Jewish nation does not have the right to exist, still less the right to defend itself.

In short, in its superficially attractive 'up-front' version the idea of a secular democratic state is simply a delusion. The slogan could not ever help deliver the solution it seems to promise — conciliation and equality of Jews and Arabs in a common state.

It could not unless the way politics and the relationships between peoples 'work' everywhere else in the world could somehow be replaced in Palestine — 40 years after the Israeli war of independence — by a different set of ways of functioning.

The 'secular democratic state' is either disingenuous or it is absurd. And it is worse.

If you take it at its face value the 'secular democratic state' idea is an attractive utopian proposal. But we have seen that it cannot be taken at its face value. It is a political ultimatum behind which is posed a fearsome 'or else'. Immediately it is refused by Israel and the 'Zionists' it translates into a moralistic-political denunciation of those who refuse. They are 'exposed'. That 'exposure' and denunciation then become a warrant for the military destruction of the Israeli state, the subjugation and if necessary killing of the citizens of Israel, and the forcible removal from them of national rights.

What happens if the Israeli Jews don't accept the 'secular democratic state' formula and fight? Conquer them and remove from them all power of resistance, or of self-defence.

What if they don't trust a promise that the conqueror will give them equal personal citizenship and absolve and protect them from the charge of being or having been agents or spies for the 'Great Satan' US imperialism or of 'Zionist imperialism'? That's proof beyond dispute that they are unreasonable in rejecting 'secular democratic state' citizenship and deserve what they get.

What they would get would be expulsion or the right to emigrate. It is to be 1948 again, and worse — only this time the 'right' people do the uprooting and expelling.

The raising of the 'utopian' secular democratic state demand as the opening political/ideological gambit produces a political and moral opiate for the left about what must inevitably follow from and is implied in the proposal to destroy the Jewish state and deprive the Palestinian Jews of national rights.

Under the influence of this opiate, the most horrendous things are then proposed to be done to the Jews of Palestine — things no socialist would advocate or tolerate for any comparable grouping.

Unravelling the issues

From page 4

Nazis killed Jews. That is to be expected. But the other attack is from the left.

Some left-wingers argue that although the Jews were killed, they died because their leaders 'collaborated'. Where Jewish leaders whose communities were under the complete physical control of the Nazis tried desperately to make whatever deals they could, this is cited as evidence of Zionist-Nazi collaboration.

The deliberate implication is that Israel is thereby tainted with some sort of responsibility for the Nazi slaughter of the Jews. See for example Lenni Brenner's book 'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators', and Jim Allen's play 'Perdition'.

This is to blame the victims for their own slaughter, and to smear the survivors of the communities slated for annihilation by the Nazis with the responsibility for those who died.

This obscenity is nothing less than a 'left-wing' equivalent of the ancient Christian anti-semitic 'blood libel', which alleged that Jews used the blood of Christian children in religious ceremonies.

But the whole contrived argument is a double-edged weapon. For it was not the Zionists who voluntarily collaborated with the Nazis, but the leaders of the Palestinian Arabs.

Those old links of the Palestinians' reactionary leaders with the Nazis can have no weight with socialists and democrats in relation to the rights of the Palestinians today. But they show up the shoddiness of those who would try to bolster their case for the destruction of the Israeli Jewish nation with allegations about Jewish leaders 'collaborating' with Hitler.

Anti-Zionism and anti-semitism

There have been many anti-semitisms in history. The root anti-semitism in our society is that of Christianity. It is embedded in the Bible, with its myth about the Jews killing Christ.

Later the Jews became the universal scapegoat within capitalist society. Later still, the zoological mumbo-jumbo of 19th century racism targeted the Jews as an inferior species.

The left, too, has indulged in anti-semitism — not Christian anti-semitism, nor racist anti-semitism, but that 'socialism of idiots' which denounced 'rich Jews' in an attempt to cash in on popular anti-semitism. Stalinism also developed a virulent form of disguised anti-semitism during its 'anti-Zionist' campaigns of the '40s and '50s.

Today there is a powerful stream of left-wing anti-semitism. The demand that the Jewish state should cease to exist, and that the Jewish nation should instead dissolve into an Arab state, is inescapably anti-semitic. It implies hostility to the Israeli Jews, and hostility to all those Jews worldwide — 'Zionists' — who instinctively identify with the Israeli Jews.

It is not necessarily a matter of being personally prejudiced against individual Jews, or of being a racist. But, whatever their good intentions, the proposal to destroy the Israeli Jewish nation inevitably leads many left-wingers into a comprehensive hostility to all pro-Israeli Jews — that is, almost all Jews.

Where does the left's Zionophobia come from?

Left Zionist groups remained legal

in the USSR until 1927 — six years after all opposition parties were banned. There was a Zionist unit in the Red Army. Left-wing Zionists were represented at the Second Congress of the Communist International. In the '20s and '30s, reactionaries bracketed the left Zionists with the communists. The Labour left was particularly friendly to Zionism until well into the '70s.

How, then, did Zionophobia come to dominate the left? Much of the Labour left's affection for Zionism was based on the false premise that Israel is socialist. That delusion long ago became hard to sustain.

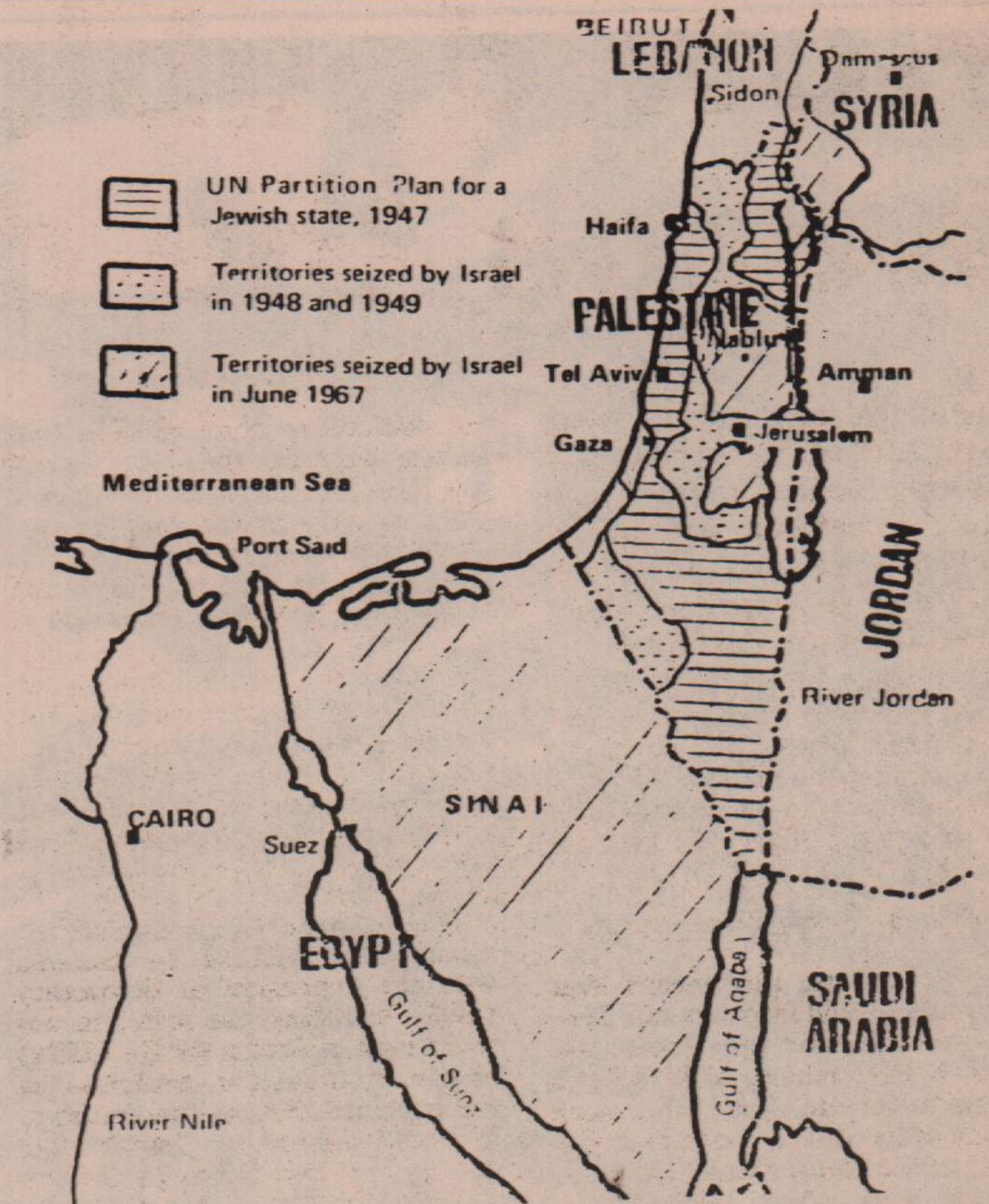
More importantly, the colonial regime that Israel has run in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967 has progressively alienated left-wing sympathy. In a world where the 'new' left was formed in response to events such as the Vietnamese war, Israel seemed very unattractive.

But that is only part of the story. There has been a powerful source of anti-Zionism in the left quite independent of these events and considerations — the Stalinist movement, and the USSR and East European Stalinist states.

From 1949 onwards, Stalin, the Russian dictator, turned against Israel. In 1948 he launched a full-scale purge of 'Zionists' — especially in the East European Communist Parties which Stalin's army had placed in power.

Leading Jewish CPers, like Rudolph Slansky in Czechoslovakia, were given the main parts in a series of spectacular show trials. They were charged, among other things, with being Zionists. It was a thinly disguised purge of Jews.

The 'anti-Zionist' crusade spread throughout the CPs of the world. There were good Jews still. But 'the Zionists' were bad Jews, and by now that meant that most Jews were bad Jews. Over the years there was a slow exodus of Jewish CP



members.

In 1953 Stalin was set to stage a show trial of the Kremlin's own doctors, most of them Jews, in what would very likely have been the prelude to a large-scale anti-Jewish purge in the Soviet Union. Stalin died before the scheduled trial, and his successors called it off.

Stalin's 'anti-Zionist' campaign had merged with existing currents of anti-semitism in the USSR. Anti-semitism had been very powerful in the later Tsarist Empire. As early as the '20s Stalin had used anti-semitism against the Trotskyist Left Opposition. In the 1930s Trotsky had pointed to the unmistakable evidence of rampant anti-semitism in Stalin's Russia.

Anti-semitism is still a force in the Stalinist states. In 1968-9 there was a full-scale purge of the pitiful remnants of Poland's Jewish community, especially those who were members of the ruling party.

Stalinism is the prime source of

Zionophobia — a Zionophobia in which traditional East European and Russian anti-semitism mingled with the anti-Israeli and pro-Arab foreign policy considerations of the USSR.

Against this background it was easy enough for the left that took shape in the '60s in solidarity with Third World struggles to line up solidly with the left-talking and vociferously 'anti-imperialist' Arab bourgeois regimes which saw Israel as the main enemy.

Instead of independent working class politics, the left adopted the politics of demonologising Israel and identifying Arab nationalism as the revolutionary force in the area. The left thus broke with the basic ideas of Lenin: where there is national conflict, socialists advocate working class unity as the first principle, and conciliation of the national conflicts as the means to promote working class unity across the national divisions.

Jews and Israel

The Israeli state for many years maintained the unity of world Jewry behind its actions. 'Real politik' — doing what was necessary to protect the state — dragged Israeli politicians and their supporters to the right. To a certain extent the Israeli invasion of Lebanon cracked that unity. But it needs to crack more.

Belligerence is no long-term guarantee of the Israeli nation's security. The survival of the Israeli Jews will depend ultimately upon their integration into the Middle East — and therefore their acceptance of democratic rights for the Palestinians.

Israeli Jews and especially Jewish workers, need to break with national chauvinism — to fight their own ruling class and link up with Arab workers in a joint struggle for peace.

In Britain we need to give support to the anti-chauvinist left in Israel.

Israel and the US

The United States has given enormous diplomatic support to Israel — for example in the United Nations. And military and economic aid is huge — although precise

levels are unknown.

Public figures are astounding. From 1978 to 1982 Israel received 48% of all US military aid and 35% of US economic aid.

In Financial Year 1983, the US Administration requested \$2.5 billion for Israel out of a total aid budget of \$8.1 billion. \$500 million was outright grants.

In turn, one third of Israeli manufactured exports are arms — for example to South American dictatorships.

Refugees

When Israel was formed in 1947-9, up to 750,000 of the then 1½ million Palestinian Arabs became refugees. There were about 740,000 Arabs in the area that became Israel, of whom 160,000 remained after the war, making 580,000 refugees, but there were also people displaced within Israel and refugees from areas outside Israel.

After the 1967 war, another 350,000 or so became refugees. Many were made refugees again by Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Almost a million Palestinians live as refugees today. Over a million live in the occupied territories — the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — and around 600,000 live in pre-1967 Israel.

Many Israeli Jews were refugees, too. Of the 650,000 Jews in Israel before the 1947-8 war, many were refugees from Europe. Between 1948 and the late '50s they were

joined by some 370,000 more Jews from Europe and about 400,000 Jews from Arab countries.

The long-established and sizeable Jewish communities in the Arab countries were driven out. There were full-scale pogroms in Morocco and Libya after 1948.

The Arab states and Palestine

The Palestinians have not only faced murderous oppression at Israeli hands. Various Arab governments and political movements have been just as murderous.

30,000 Palestinians were killed by the Jordanian regime in the civil war in 1970.

In Lebanon, thousands of Palestinians have died at the hands of Israeli-backed Christian Maronite forces or of various Syrian-backed groups. Over the past three years, it has been Shi'ite fundamentalist militias (the Amal), backed by Syria, who have imposed horrendous sieges on refugee camps in Lebanon.

Syrian troops, allied to the rebel PLO fighters, drove Arafat out of Lebanon in 1983.

The PLO's policy of 'non-interference' in Arab states has not been repaid in kind.

Palestinian refugee camps are, on the whole, poverty-stricken slums. Terrible social conditions have helped guarantee support



Begin

for the different guerilla organisations.

But Arab 'host' states have done next to nothing to improve those social conditions.

The Palestinians have been treated as a political football by the capitalist Arab states, and the camps are often seen as a dangerous 'fifth column' to be crushed.

Arabs in Israel

About 600,000 Arabs live within pre-1967 Israel, where they face institutionalised discrimination. Old (British) emergency regulations are

used to control their activities.

Arab history and language is ignored in education. Arab villages and towns are starved of funding for economic and social development, while nearby Jewish kibbutzim might be highly prosperous. Rights that are only due to those who have undergone military service are denied to Arabs who obviously won't join the Israeli Army.

Pro-PLO political parties are illegal. Arab political newspapers face frequent censorship and banning.

The West Bank

Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the Six Day War in 1967. Since then, the Arabs living there have faced military occupation. Far-right Jewish settlers have built up armed colonies, often on the ruins of Arab villages, backed up by Israeli governments. Arabs face compulsory purchase orders on their land and military force if they refuse to move. Arab homes are demolished as political punishments. Universities are regularly closed.

In addition, large numbers of Palestinians go daily across the 'green line' into Israel to work as cheap labour — without even rights of residence.

The West Bank and Gaza are like Israeli colonies and should be given self-determination.

How doublespeak warps the debate

One of the most striking things on the left today is the way good left-wing slogans and key concepts are abused and turned back-to-front and inside-out when used in discussions about the Middle East and Israel.

The denial of the right of the Jewish state to exist warps and twists those ideas. The result is an ideological construction of self-deception and double-think which George Orwell might well have invented.

Self-determination

For Marxists, this means that every people and fragment of a people should have the democratic right of determining what state it should adhere to, some other state or one of its own. It is one practical result of the application of the basic Marxist idea which Lenin called 'consistent democracy'.

'Self-determination' can be a way of demanding that the Palestinian Arabs too have a right to their own state, side by side with Israel. But it is frequently used by those who deny the right of the Israeli Jews to have any state.

It thus becomes a way of advocating, not the democratic right of all peoples to self-determination, but that the Palestinian Arabs should have the sole right to determine what happens in all of pre-1948 Palestine — including what happens to the Jews. It is turned into its opposite — from a profoundly democratic demand to a demand that one people should determine what happens to another, and an assertion that one of the two nations in conflict has no rights at all.

Internationalism

means that the working class has no fatherland, and that workers in every country have more in common with each other than with their own capitalists and landlords.

It is the opposite of chauvinism and national exclusiveness. It is used on the left to condemn Jewish chauvinism.

Marxists should indeed condemn all chauvinism, Jewish and Arab alike. But here a condemnation of Jewish chauvinism is used as one argument for denying the right of the Jewish national organism to exist at all. No such conclusion is drawn about Arab chauvinism, which is merely condemned as a bad set of ideas. So internationalism is being used as a weapon in support of one of the competing nationalisms or chauvinisms — for the Arabs and against the Jewish nation.

The very idea of the Jews wanting their own nation-state is condemned on the grounds that we should not be concerned with national identities. Yet the Palestinian Arabs' desire for a state is applauded on the grounds of the right of nations to self-determination.

Internationalism is turned into the servant of Arab chauvinism and used to justify the Arab revanchist project of destroying the existing Jewish state and subjugating the Jewish nation, leaving its survivors at best the possibility of existing as a religious minority in an Arab Palestine.

'Smash the state'

means for socialists in a country like Britain: destroy the ruling-class means of violence, disband the ar-

my and police force and the civil service hierarchy that serve the ruling class, and substitute for them a working-class militia and day-to-day democratic self-rule.

The slogan 'smash the Israeli state' is bandied about on the left as if it means the same sort of thing. But who is to smash the Israeli state? Not, in this version, the Jewish working class, who are consigned to the outer darkness as an irreformable part of an illegitimate nation. It is the surrounding Arab states who will 'smash' Israel, if anyone does.

The result of such 'smashing' would have nothing in common with the expansion of democracy which 'smashing the state' means when used in Britain (or the USSR) as a programme for revolution by the exploited class in that country. It would replace the Jewish state not by an expression of Jewish working-class democracy, but by the suppression of the Jewish nation by states which are right now a great deal more tyrannical against their own people than the Israeli state has ever been against its own.

The destruction of Israel is said to be necessary in the cause of defeating imperialism in the Middle East. But Israel is an independent nation state. Surrounded by a sea of Arab hostility, it has since 1967 developed close links with the USA. But the state existed before those links existed, and an Israeli-Jewish state could continue to exist after those links were broken.

Destroying Israel would not eliminate foreign capitalist involvement in the area. On the contrary, it would probably make it easier for the Arab bourgeoisies to strengthen their links with the big powers. Already many of the Arab bourgeoisies have close links with the USA, and others with the USSR.

To identify Israel as the arch-imperialist, or as the prime tool of imperialism, in the area, is to be an apologist for the Arab bourgeoisies. Throughout the area, the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois exploiters of Arab workers and peasants use denunciation of Israel and 'Zionism' to divert class struggle. The only authentic anti-imperialism in the area is the fight for working-class socialist democracy.

Fighting racism

The fight to destroy Israel is said to be the fight against racism. Israel is racism incarnate.

Now there are laws and practices in Israel which deserve to be called racist and opposed as racist. But it is wrong to equate Israeli nationalism — the desire of the Jews to have and protect their own compact Jewish population within a Jewish state — with racism.

Otherwise every people on earth has to be called racist. No good can come, and certainly no political clarity, from such a blanket equation of nationalism with racism.

And if the Arab states should destroy Israel, that would not be 'anti-racist'. It would lead to comprehensive ill-treatment of all those Jews in the conquered territory who refused to stop being 'Zionist', or what their conquerors chose to define as 'Zionist'.

The democratic secular state

slogan is discussed at length elsewhere in this supplement. This

too is an attractive idea which turns into its opposite when used to deny the rights of the Israeli Jews.

A democratic secular state embracing both Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews could only come about by agreement, otherwise it would not be democratic. Agreement would only be possible if the Jews could be persuaded to do what no other people have ever done, disband their own state and put themselves at the mercy of those they have fought at least four major wars against.

At the best, the democratic secular state is something that might emerge after — long after — the national conflict between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs had been solved by some other means.

The right to return

Condemnation of the Israeli law under which Jews throughout the world have the right to come and claim citizenship in Israel is an article of faith among most anti-Zionists. It is outrageous, they say, that people with no direct connection with Palestine should have the right to come to Israel while the Palestinian Arabs do not.

The same anti-Zionists advocate the right of the Palestinian Arabs to 'return' and claim that this return, rather than some agreed division of the disputed territory, is the only solution.

Yet think what's involved here. In 1948, about 580,000 Palestinian Arabs fled or were driven out of what became Israel. Today there are over four million Palestinian Arabs, scattered across the world. Most of them were not born in Israel. Many of their parents weren't. Only a small proportion of them could 'return'. The others have never been there.

On the other side, the majority of the Jews of Israel were born there.

So the proposal for the Arab 'right of return' is a proposal for people who never lived to repossess Israel from people born there. The absurdity of nationalist revenge-seeking and score-settling could not be more neatly encapsulated.

In Britain, support for the 'right' of four million Palestinian Arabs to 'return' is presented as if it is the same sort of question as our opposition to the racist immigration laws we have in Britain, laws which discriminate with a relentless racist viciousness against black and brown people. Examples of Israeli racism are cited to back up this equation.

But the real equivalent would be if 55 million people were across the Channel and claiming the right to come to Britain. In such a situation, whether you supported their right to come in or not, only an idiot would pretend that it was the same sort of thing as the entry of some tens of thousands, or even millions, of immigrants from India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh.

The national conflict between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs cannot be solved by pretending that it is a question of individual rights. If the Palestinians win the right to have their own state, any socialist would favour the free movement of individuals between that state and Israel. But that is a different matter from a 'right of return' of four million Palestinians en masse. Mass Palestinian Arab 'return' to Israel would mean the surrender by the Jewish nation of



Aftermath of an Arab/Jewish clash in Hebron 1929

its desire to be a nation, a compact mass of people with a common identity.

Here, as elsewhere, the hidden assumption is that the Jewish nation is an illegitimate nation, and therefore does not have the rights of other nations.

What these paradoxes show plainly is that the left which so misuses the ideas and slogans discussed above views the world through distorting spectacles. The starting point is that the Israeli Jewish state does not have the right to exist, even in a modified form; and that assumption distorts and mis-shapes everything, so that the discourse of much of the left has a

nightmarish and unreal quality.

Angry and outraged at the treatment by Israel of the West Bank; concerned for the fate of the defeated of the 1948 war; indignant at Israeli's rulers conscienceless alliance with South Africa and other vile regimes, and with the US, many leftists end up supporting policies which would lead to the subjugation, massacre and uprooting of a nation of four million people.

Instead of advocating compromise and conciliation, not to speak of Jewish-Arab working-class unity, the 'anti-imperialist' left sinks to the level of vicarious Arab nationalism and Arab chauvinism.

How Trotsky came to favour a Jewish state

By John O'Mahony

Trotsky was a Ukrainian Jew whose life (he was born in October 1879) happened almost exactly to span the period from the beginning of systematic pogroms in Russia — 1881 — to the very eve of the Holocaust, whose preparations he witnessed and — in part — understood.

He had seen the migration of millions of Jews, stirred up by the Russian pogroms after 1881, to Western Europe and to the USA. He had seen the growth of Jewish self-awareness in Europe in the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

He had taken part as an international socialist in the debates among left-wing Jews in the Tsarist Empire between Zionists and assimilationists. He attended Zionist Congresses as a journalistic observer.

He was always an opponent of the Zionist movement that created Israel. Close to the very end of his life he warned that Palestine could turn out to be a giant ghetto in which the Jews who had fled there might be trapped and massacred.

Yet it is plain from the writings in a small collection published by Pathfinder Press, 'Leon Trotsky and the Jewish Question' that the experience of anti-semitism in the 20th century, not only in Nazi Germany and Poland but also in the USSR under Stalin, had radically changed Trotsky's views.

At the end of his life he believed that the persecution of the Jews and the effect of that persecution on the consciousness of the Jewish people had made the creation of some sort of Jewish state an inescapable necessity. He did not support the Palestine programme of the Zionists, or anyway not as conceived by them. But — his train of thought is clear — he was for a Jewish state nonetheless.

In a January 1937 interview Trotsky explained: "During my youth I rather leaned toward the prognosis that the Jews of different countries would be assimilated and that the Jewish question would thus disappear in a quasi-automatic fashion.

The historical development of the last quarter of a century has not confirmed this perspective. Decaying capitalism has everywhere swung over to and exacerbated nationalism one part of which is anti-semitism. The Jewish question has loomed largest in the most highly developed capitalist country of Europe, in Germany.

On the other hand the Jews of different countries have created their press and developed the Yiddish language as an instrument adapted to modern culture. One must therefore reckon with the fact that the Jewish nation will maintain itself for an entire epoch to come.

Now the nation cannot normally exist without a common territory. Zionism springs from this very idea. But the facts of every passing day demonstrate to us that Zionism is incapable of resolving the Jewish question. The conflict between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine acquires a more and more tragic and more and more menacing character.

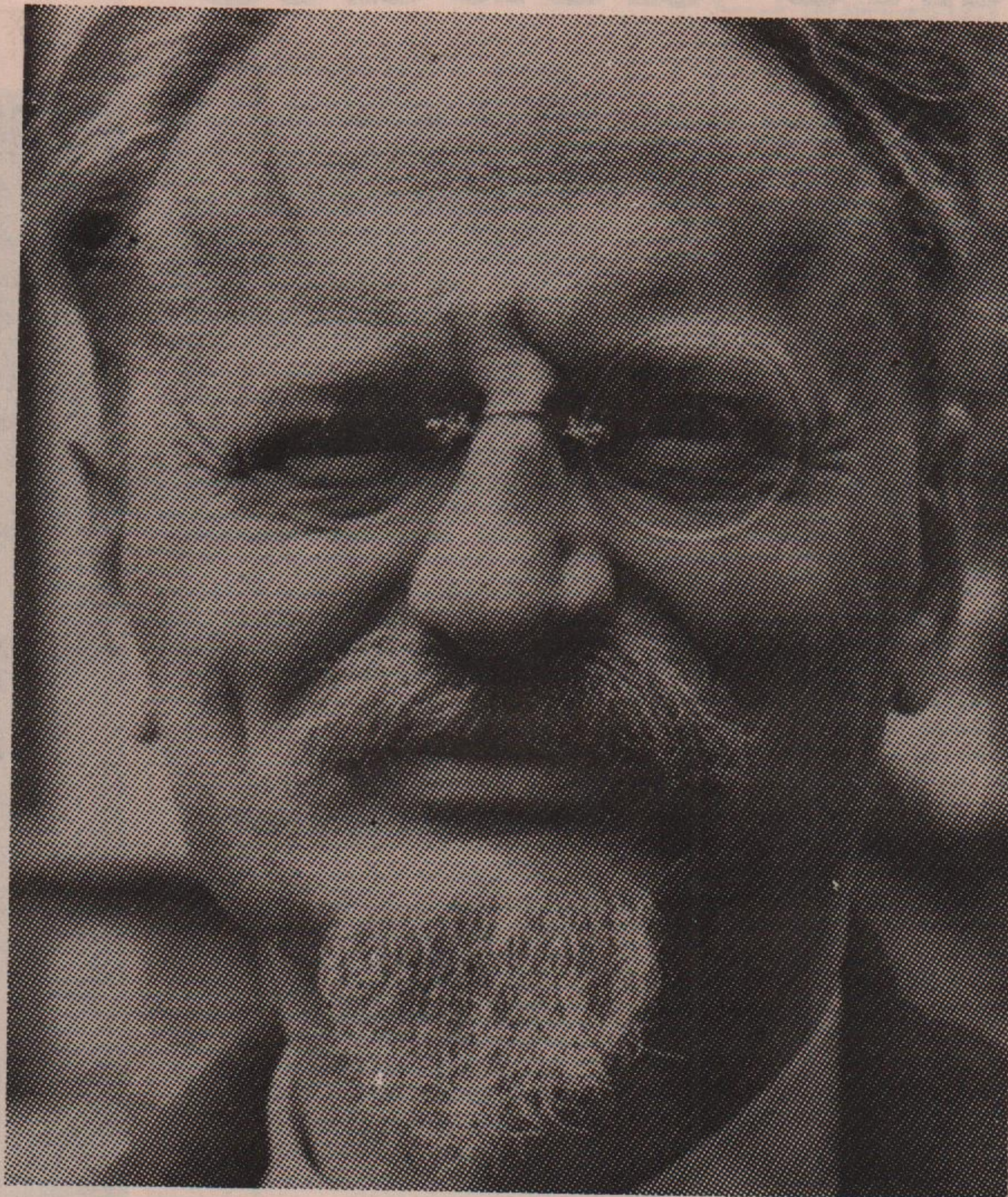
I do not at all believe that the Jewish question can be resolved within the framework of rotting capitalism and under the control of British imperialism.

And how, you ask me, can socialism solve this question? On this point I can but offer hypotheses.

Once socialism has become master of our planet or at least of its most important sections, it will have unimaginable resources in all domains. Human history has witnessed the epoch of great migrations on the basis of barbarism. Socialism will open the possibility of great migrations on the basis of the most developed technique and culture.

It goes without saying that what is here involved is not compulsory displacements, that is, the creation of new ghettos for certain nationalities, but displacements freely consented to, or rather demanded by certain nationalities or parts of nationalities.

The dispersed Jews who would want to



be reassembled in the same community will find a sufficiently extensive and rich spot under the sun. The same possibility will be opened for the Arabs, as for all other scattered nations.

National topography will become a part of the planned economy. This is the grand historical perspective that I envisage. To work for international socialism, means also to work for the solution of the Jewish question."

Four years earlier, in 1932-33, Trotsky had discussed the 'Jewish problem' with 'Class Struggle' an American publication. He was asked:

"What is your attitude to Palestine as a possible Jewish 'homeland' and about a land for the Jews generally? Don't you believe that the anti-semitism of German fascism compels a different approach to the Jewish question on the part of Communists?"

Trotsky replied:

"I do not know whether Jewry will be built up again as a nation. However there can be no doubt that the material conditions for the existence of Jewry as an independent nation could be brought about only by the proletarian revolution. There is no such thing on our planet as the idea that one has more claim to land than another.

The establishment of a territorial base for Jewry in Palestine or any other country is conceivable only with the migrations of large human masses. Only a triumphant socialism can take upon itself such tasks. It can be foreseen that it may take place either on the basis of a mutual understanding, or with the aid of a kind of international proletarian tribunal which should take up this question and solve it.

The tragic conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine would not be adjudicated by a proletarian tribunal but by the United Nations set up by the victors of World War 2 — those who had not gone out of their way to save the Jews, who had refused all but a trickle of Jews the right to enter (the USA) or ran anti-semitic regimes (the USSR) — who were, above all, concerned to secure their own interests in Palestine.

In an article on anti-semitism in Stalin's USSR (22 February 1937) Trotsky developed his reappraisal of the Jewish question in the light of early 20th century experience. He speaks of a future socialist version of the Zionist "methods of solving the Jewish question", methods

"which under decaying capitalism have a utopian and reactionary character".

"Are we not correct in saying that a world socialist federation would have to make possible the creation of a 'Birobidjan' [an equivalent of the — in fact token — autonomous Jewish republic within the USSR] for those Jews who wish to have their own autonomous republic as the arena for their own culture?"

It may be presumed that a socialist democracy will not resort to compulsory assimilation. It may very well be that within two or three generations the boundaries of an independent Jewish republic, as of many other national regions, will be erased. I have neither time nor desire to meditate on this. Our descendants will know better than we what to do.

I have in mind a transitional historical period when the Jewish question as such, is still acute and demands adequate measures from a world federation of workers states. The very same methods of solving the Jewish question which under decaying capitalism have a utopian and reactionary character (Zionism) will under a regime of a socialist federation, take on a real and salutary meaning."

Trotsky was against the Zionist project which elsewhere he refers to as a 'tragic mirage'.

Of course it is impossible to know in detail what Trotsky would have said once the Jewish state was established in 1948. It is plain however that there would have been no place in his thought for the anti-Zionist demonology and the international conspiracy theories that dominate the left today.

Trotsky recognises the breadth and scope of the historical forces activating and threatening the Jews. He recognises that the reasonable expectation he and others had had about the assimilation of the Jewish people, and the programme on the question that they had adopted and fought for, had already been defeated by the developments of history.

He seems to assert — speaking very loosely according to the strict Leninist/Marxist definition of a nation — that a Jewish nation of sorts had been created since his youth, on the one hand by the blows of anti-semitism and on the other by the striving of a minority of Jews to realise their nationhood like other nations, on a national territory.

Trotsky's very loose use of the term nation to describe the Jews of the world may perhaps be explained as an unconscious by-

product of his acceptance of the need for a territorial solution to the problem of the people 'without a land' — the very idea he had scoffed at and fought against for most of his life as a reactionary utopia.

He still says it is a reactionary utopia and a mirage in its bourgeois Zionist form. But now he counterposes to it not assimilation but a socialist version of the Zionist territorial state-creating solution.

What for Trotsky makes the Zionist project utopian and reactionary? The methods which flow inescapably from doing it under capitalism and British rule in Palestine. The unpostponable international task is the overthrow of capitalism not the utopian project of ingathering and nation-building.

Trotsky insists that only socialist revolution can save the Jews from annihilation. The Zionist project cannot.

But after the international socialist revolution? An international socialist federation "would have to make possible the creation of a Birobidjan' for those Jews who wish to have their own autonomous republic as the arena for their own culture. It may be assumed that socialist democracy will not resort to compulsory assimilation...I have in mind a transitional historical period when the Jewish question, as such, is still acute and demands adequate measures from a world federation of workers' states."

The Jewish people need and are entitled to such a measure because it is no longer reasonable to look to assimilation as the solution, or to have anything other than a supportive sympathy for Jews who cannot believe in assimilation. Trotsky finishes that article:

"How could any Marxist, or even any consistent democrat, object to that?"

Trotsky was right that the pressure from reaction and from the anti-semites was too great to allow Zionism to be any solution to the mortal threat facing the Jews in the 1930s. The Zionist project did not and could not save the nearly six million Jews who were slaughtered in Nazi-controlled Europe. If the Nazis had got to Palestine — either temporarily or as outright victors — Palestine would have been a second, smaller-scale Poland for the Jews. Only the socialist revolution could have averted the Holocaust.

But the revolutionary workers were defeated time after time throughout the 1930s — in Germany, Austria, France, Spain. The socialist revolution did not happen — not in time to save Europe's massacred Jews, or to save the 20 million people who died in the USSR, or to prevent Germany being pulverised and partitioned and having 10 million of its people driven out of East Prussia. Not in time to stop the atom-bombing of Japan, or the expansion of Stalinist totalitarianism into an area of Eastern Europe with a population of 90 million.

And history did not stop. The Zionists continued with their project and carved out the state of Israel in tragic conflict with the Palestinian Arabs.

The 'reactionary utopian' solution to the Jewish question received an immense boost from the events of the world war. The need which Trotsky reluctantly came to realise for a Jewish national territory as part of the solution to the Jewish question was now felt by the overwhelming majority of Jews. And it was made reality not in a benign socialist world after a world workers' revolution, but in a world dominated by imperialism and Stalinism, by way of bitter communal and national conflict and within the framework of a Zionist-Kremlin, and then Zionist-imperialist alliance.

The Jewish state was established in a world where it was still dog eat dog. It was not the Palestinian Jews alone who declared that in 1948 if they had not prevailed they would have gone under. The territory allotted to the Jews by the United Nations was attacked by the armies of the surrounding Arab states, armies under the control of officers of the British imperialist army. If the Jews had lost, they would have been massacred or driven out. The Jews won, and three quarters of a million Palestinian Arabs fled or were driven out.

That is how things work in a world dominated by capitalism and Stalinism.