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For socialist renewal!

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SOCIALIST

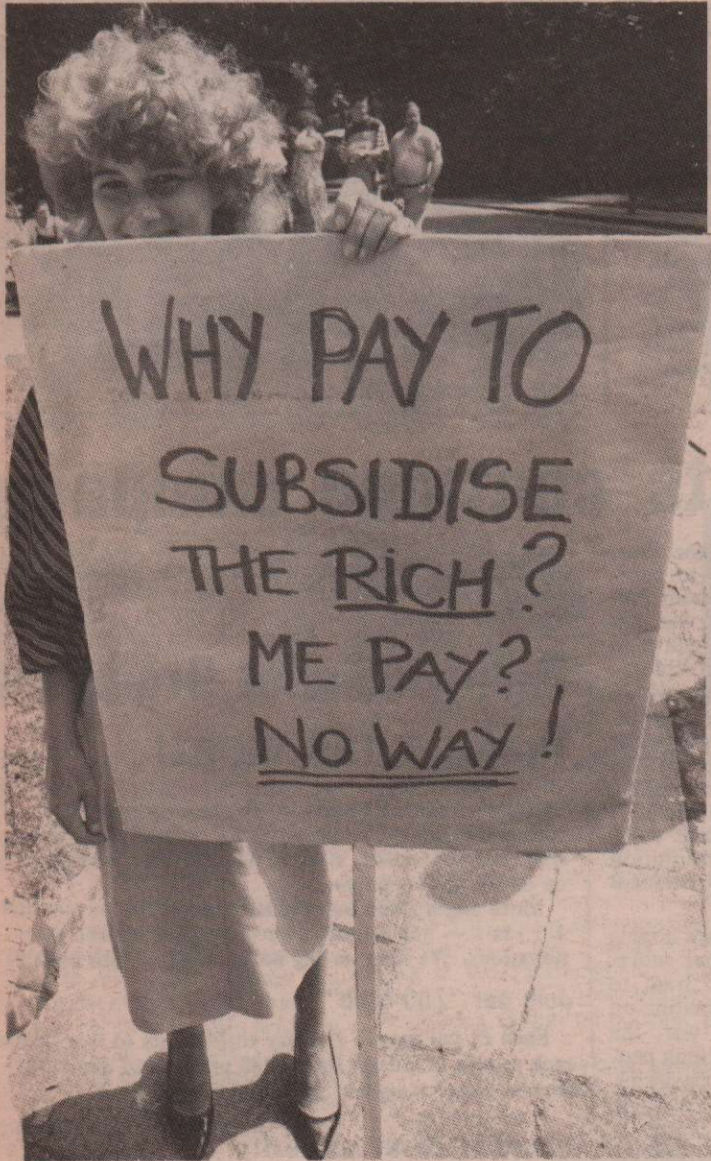
ORGANISER

March:

No poll tax!

Saturday 23 March.
Assemble 12 noon,
Embankment, London.

Called by the All-Britain Anti-Poll-Tax
Federation.



Drive out the Tories!

By Cate Murphy

Ribble Valley surely heralds the death of the poll tax. Nobody disputes that it was the poll tax, and the poll tax alone, that caused one of the most spectacular by-election defeats ever for the Tories.

The problem the Tories now face is: what to replace it with? Only the most diehard Thatcherites are in favour of

keeping the tax. Every other brand of Tory realises that if it doesn't go, they will.

But, after more than three months' deliberation, the Cabinet committee charged with reviewing the tax is no nearer a solution. Ministers are deeply divided over alternatives: perhaps a "bedroom" tax; or should they go for the Liberals' favourite, a local income tax; or maybe, double torture, a head tax (that's poll

tax to you and me) coupled with some sort of property tax?

The Tories all agree that something must be done about the poll tax. What it is, they can't quite decide. They want John Major to make up their minds for them and to pick an option — and quickly — which will save them from a rout in the May local elections.

As John Major dithers, the crisis worsens for the Tories.

A recent confidential survey suggests that at least 15 per cent of the tax, or £1.6 billion, will remain uncollected. If Scotland is anything to go by, that figure will be higher again next year. Compensation for non-payment will push 1992-3 bills through the roof.

Even assuming that the Tories do decide to go for abolition, and announce an alternative method of financing local government shortly,

no scheme would be in place before 1993 at the very earliest. Despite Heseltine's bid for an extra £4.5 billion next year to cushion the blow, and exemption for students and some on low incomes, it could still be too little too late to save the Tories.

In an effort to avoid capping, councils are introducing ever more drastic cuts, with education one of the worst hit

Turn to page 2

End the poll tax! Stop the cuts!

The lie machine

STAR Traitor in our midst

THE British Moslem leader who prayed that someone would kill John Major must face the full might of his country's justice. Sadly, as he was born in Britain, we cannot simply boot him out and say good riddance.

This morning the Director of Public Prosecutions will have a file on his desk following pleas from MPs that Omar Bakri Mohammed should be charged with incitement to murder.

His treacherous and cold-blooded remark came at the height of the Gulf War. We respect his right to follow his own religion in our Christian country.

We have a right to DEMAND that he behaves like a True Brit and abides by the laws of this land... especially in time of war.

To call for the assassination of the Prime Minister is nothing less than an act of TREASON.

Mr. Mohammed deserves the most severe punishment the present law allows.

For "treason" Britain still retains the death penalty. If the Star thinks Mr Mohammed "deserves the most severe punishment the present law allows", then it believes the "traitor" should be hanged!



The doctor in this case was reprimanded by the British Medical Association, but not struck off the register. The scum who put out the News of the World can neither be reprimanded, "struck off", nor shamed...

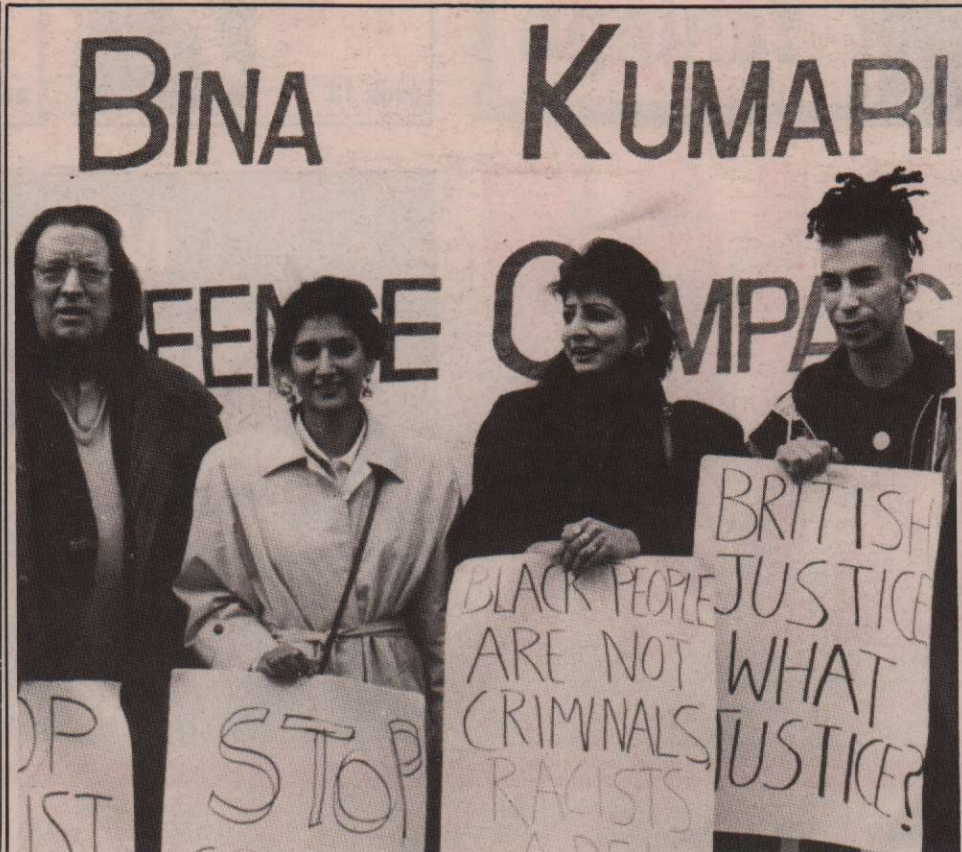


This is from a paper which spent months before and during the war in a frenzy of blood lust! Catchy pic, though!



Fergie's dad is all heart. Thirty years some of these workers were with him, and he "had to let them go". Thus does Britain's only Labour paper deal with rocketing unemployment!

Prepare for a general election!



Court snubs victim of racism

In a bizarre court case, a Birmingham Asian woman has been bound over to keep the peace even though she has faced months of racial harassment.

Ever since moving into 24 Wandle Grove a year ago, Mrs Bina Kumari has been the target of a campaign of vicious racial harassment. Matters came to a head last July when a crowd of about twenty neighbours (in the

presence of police) attacked Bina and her younger brother. Clapping and chanting racial abuse such as "get these stupid black bastards out of here" they kicked and beat them to the ground.

The police response to this outrage was to arrest Bina. Even more outrageous was the apparent refusal of the prosecution to present a case and in-

stead call upon the judge to use special powers to enforce a bind over on Mrs Kumari without evidence being heard. Local community anti-racists who have worked hard to clear Bina's name expressed great dissatisfaction at the result.

For more information contact: Bina Kumari Defence Campaign, 339 Dudley Road, Winson Green, Birmingham B18 4HB.

Labour's anti-war activists continue campaign

By Cate Murphy, secretary, Labour Against the War

The US, Britain, and their allies have stopped fighting, but the crisis in the Gulf is far from over.

"Liberated" Kuwait is under martial law, and the Emir shows no signs of listening to demands for a more democratic form of government. Lynch mobs roam the streets seeking to avenge Kuwaiti dead. Palestinians and Sudanese, in particular, are subject to summary kill-

ings. Iraq slides into civil war. The US, evidently deciding that a weak Iraq ruled by "the new Hitler" is better than a more democratic Iraq which might be stronger, is giving free passage to Saddam's army as it tries to restore control over the country.

The aftermath of the war raises profound questions for the Labour Party. Will our foreign policy be dictated by Washington, as it was in the run-up to and during the war? Or will Labour stand up for peace, internationalism, and the rights of all oppressed peoples?

Labour Against the War, which was set up to coordinate and voice Labour Party opposition to the war, has decided to remain active to take up these urgent issues.

We will campaign within the Party to promote an independent Labour policy for a democratic peace in the Middle East. We are asking CLPs and affiliated bodies — including trade unions — to pass a model resolution and send it to the National Executive.

In addition, we are hoping to organise a labour movement delegation to Iraq, to get first-hand information on the effects of the war, the plight of Iraq's working people, and what Iraq's working people have to say to Western socialists. We also hope, if possible, to talk to Kurdish activists.

A report back from this delegation could be included in a pamphlet we are collating on the war and its aftermath, for which we are seeking contributions from anti-war Labour MPs and from Middle East socialists and campaigners for national liberation.

We hope that the pamphlet will be a guide for Party members on a range of issues, from the arms trade and the environment through the economics of oil to Palestine and the Kurds.

To enable the delegation to go, and the pamphlet to be produced, and to keep in touch with CLPs, we need money. Please get your CLP, branch, or trade union to affiliate to Labour Against the War, and to sponsor and

By John O'Mahony

This week the Tories came close to a major split on the European Community.

That makes a June election more rather than less likely, despite the crushing Tory defeat in the Ribble Valley by-election.

The Tory split over Europe that seemed to be averted by the coup the Tory MPs pulled to get rid of Mrs Thatcher has now reappeared, with the Tory anti-Europeans in oppositions where before they controlled the Government.

The right-wing Tory opponents of European integration are bitterly angry that John Major, who this week went to Germany to cuddle up to Chancellor Kohl, has ditched Thatcher's resistance to European integration. Mrs Thatcher has already fired off a warning broadside.

Major is set to continue to move towards Europe and away from Thatcher's keep-

your-distance policies. The Tories can only get more divided, not less, in the period ahead. Divisions won't help them in a general election.

The worsening economic situation, which will not repair itself quickly, also points to a June election, before things get even worse.

But Labour has no reason to be pleased with Ribble Valley. Despite all Kinnock's effort to make himself, and Labour, indistinguishable from the Liberal Democrats, Labour did wretchedly in the by-election.

The left should prepare itself for a June election — one in which, despite Kinnock, we will have to try where we can and as best we can, while fighting for a Labour victory, to raise socialist policies as an alternative to both the Tories and the Kinnockite Labour Party.

The way things are going, Kinnock and his friends could lose us our fourth general election!

Euro-basher Maggie's back to haunt Major
BEWARE OF THOSE HUNS!

Daily Star bangs the little-England drum

make a donation towards the cost of the delegation and the pamphlet. Invite a speaker to your next meeting. Contact us: LAW, c/o Basement Office, 92 Ladbroke Grove, London W11 2HE. Phone: 071-277 7217.

Help Socialist Organiser make ends meet!

Socialist Organiser responded to the Labour Party National Executive's ban on us by expanding to 16 pages from last September, starting new features, and printing on better quality paper.

More pages mean more bills. A price rise — our first for 4½ years — has helped cover them. But we also need donations. We have no big advertisers, no rich backers.

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Drive the Tories out!

From page 1

services. Thousands of teaching jobs are to be cut: 400 in Derbyshire and 200 in West Kirklees, for example. Adult education, nursery provision, school meals, and subjects such as music or sports face the axe in many local authorities.

But the councils are meeting resistance. Teaching union leaders have threatened industrial action over job losses. Already some local

government unions (including teaching unions) have staged one day strikes in protest — in Liverpool, Hackney and Haringey for example.

The community-based non-payment campaign is stepping up the fight, cheered on by growing evidence of its success. Links between the non-payment campaign and its labour movement complement, the anti-cuts campaign, must be strengthened to ensure the burial of this hated tax.



Orgreave, June 1984. Mounted policeman prepares to attack picket. Inset press photographer gives aid to the same miner after the attack. How many policemen went to jail for picket line violence during the great strike?
Photo: John Harris

When the law is the lawbreaker

There is a famous Orson Welles film, *Touch of Evil*, in which he plays a half-mad sheriff in a small US southern border town.

This man has a great reputation as a law enforcer. For many years he has had an amazingly complete success in solving local crimes and bringing the criminals to book.

But as the story unfolds it is seen that during all those years he has been largely just framing innocent victims, sending them to jail or the death house for things they didn't do.

At the heart of the local law en-

forcement he has developed a crazy system that has nothing to do with law or justice. The machinery of law has itself become the greatest law-breaker, the source of a greater evil than any of the evils it supposedly exists to prevent or punish.

The story that is emerging during the Appeal Court hearing of the case of the "Birmingham Six" is also the story of a great evil at the heart of a system of policing and justice.

It is now universally accepted that these six Irishmen are innocent of the crimes for which they have spent 16 years in jail; that they were tortured into confessing all those years ago; that the police forensic scientists whose word was taken in their trial as the voice of certain knowledge were grossly incompetent or irresponsible; that the judge at the trial behaved towards the irregularities in the case like the gullible and inexperienced amateur he most certainly was not; and that later, over the years, a whole series of appeal judges behaved worse, ignoring, for example, the mounting evidence that the men were beaten up in custody and refusing even to consider what that might imply about their guilt or innocence.

As many as 25 Birmingham policemen — going as high as the rank of Superintendent — were involved in the conspiracy against the Birmingham Six.

A number of other cases involving Irish people have, in recent years, also been exposed as police

Lessons of the Birmingham 6 frame-up

conspiracies to frame and jail innocent women and men (and, in the case of the Maguire 7, innocent children). Nor are cases of police frame-ups confined to political or "Irish" cases.

Police frame-ups are a routine part of the British system of "justice". Even when those charged are guilty, it is common for the police to make sure of conviction by "strengthening" or manipulating the evidence.

Whatever about the theory of it, in action much of the "procedure" in British criminal courts consists of the police inventing, fiddling, or planting evidence, or faking confessions, and the judges believing them implicitly. In reality, the police frequently act as jury and judge and concoct evidence to get what they want. A lot of the court paraphernalia and procedures are a sham, a fiction, a charade.

What the Birmingham Six and the other much publicised "Irish" cases bring starkly to our attention is a system of "justice" manipulated and shaped by the credibility with the judges and juries of the police. That the police do not deserve, and should not

have, that credibility, is also proven by those cases.

Yet the Establishment has fought, and continues to fight, every inch of the way. The Birmingham Six are about to be released, more than a decade after it came out plainly in open court, if the judges had been willing to see it, that they were innocent.

And, when they are released, what is going to happen to those policemen who conspired to torture them and subjected them to wrongful imprisonment for 16 years? What will happen to the judges who colluded with and covered for the police?

On all past experience, little or nothing. Policemen who are found out manipulating or fiddling evidence — that is, conspiring to do very grievous harm to innocent citizens — are routinely not even dismissed. "Seriously" offending policemen are frequently allowed to retire — with pensions. Criminal prosecutions of policemen for such things are rare.

Yet those policemen have done very great harm — much greater harm than many crimes which carry stiff prison sentences.

Those cops are treated so leniently because the whole system is rotten and corrupt, right up to the judges. Not all of those gentlemen are as candid as old Denning, who has said that it would have been better "for the British system of justice" if the innocent Birmingham Six had been hanged and

got out of the way! But Denning's is their dominant philosophy, give or take a little hypocrisy, given or take the honest judge or the honest policeman.

Is all this not gross exaggeration? If the Birmingham Six case was just an aberration, then everybody responsible, policemen and maybe some of the judges, would go to jail, and for a very long time.

Will they? What do you think?

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"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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Meanwhile, Back at the Branch

The Somnolent One dreamt that he was addressing a branch meeting of RMT (né National Union of Railworkers) on the subject of the Gulf War. He awoke to find that it was true.

About twenty five members were present — all male, predominately white and mostly the wrong side of middle age.

The chair was a Member of the British Empire (an honour he proudly displayed on the branch's notepaper) and the secretary a magistrate. Labour voters to a man.

If we'd taken a straight vote on "for or against the war?" I'd have lost hands down. Fortunately, we didn't. The balance of forces wasn't difficult to suss and I quickly decided on a Cannonite approach: express sympathy with some of the motives of those who genuinely supported the war as a struggle against Saddam's tyranny; concentrate on the hypocrisy and double standards of the "allies"; urge maximum debate and freedom of dissent amongst the rank and file.

These weren't caricature *Sun*-readers: there was no jingoism and no triumphalism, even though the meeting was taking place some days after "victory" had been achieved. One man, a life-long rank and file activist, said that he'd started out opposing the war but had changed his mind once he'd read believable reports (by Robert Fisk in the *Independent*) of Saddam's atrocities in Kuwait. The Member of the British Empire agreed, but added that the "war aims" shouldn't include occupying Iraq or overthrowing Saddam Hussein — that task, he said, should be left to the Iraqis and Kurds.

We all agreed about the hypocrisy of Bush and Major and about the war crime on the road to Basra. And yet, and yet...

I reckoned we'd lose a vote on affiliating to the Campaign Against War in the Gulf (the original purpose of my visit) so, instead, I pushed for support for the Trade Unionists Against the War conference, where all the issues we'd touched upon in the discussion could be hammered out. We won that. Even the pro-war people voted in favour.

Why am I boring you with this mundane stuff? Maybe because those of us who spend our time studying the intrigue and horse-trading of the bureaucracy, sometimes forget what *real* trade unionism is all about.

Maybe because we tend to under-estimate the sophistication and thoughtfulness of the stalwarts who turn up on a wet Friday evening for their branch meeting. Maybe because the level of debate that took place was considerably higher than that of my local anti-war group, a couple of days before.

A few points in conclusion:

1. Even the pro-war people at the meeting agreed that the role of Kinnock, Willis and Knapp had been craven. They agreed that the membership should have been consulted on an issue of this importance.

2. Everyone agreed that racism was a major issue and that the union must make a priority of defending Muslim and other Asian members.

3. The only two organised lefties in the branch were a Maoist from the Indian Workers' Association and a member of an "anti-imperialist" kitsch-Trot outfit. Both would have denounced me for unforgivable "rightism" if I'd come out with that speech anywhere outside of their branch: both went along with it and seemed please with the outcome.



the only formal policy statements that most T&G members will see before their branch nominates.

George Wright, the Welsh Regional Secretary who also stood against Ron Todd in 1984/5, has produced a document of 7 paragraphs, totalling 14 printed lines. These include such classics as:

* "I would attack the Union's current crisis with experienced management...replacing the deficit with a surplus in funds as soon as possible".

* "I would not accept Arthur Scargill...into our Union with any merger between ourselves and the NUM".

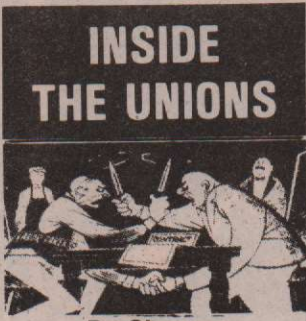
* "...I would ensure that no opportunity for ballot rigging ever occurs again in our Union".

He might have added that he stands for good against evil, as well.

Bill Morris' statement is over twice as long. Of course, length isn't everything. But Morris' document at least addresses such issues as "improving pay, job security and quality of life", "lay membership democracy", the need for "a strong independent union" and "opportunity for all our members".

But then, maybe Wright doesn't think union members can be bothered to read more than 7 paragraphs of "policy". And anyway, he's got most of the Union's Regional secretaries lined up behind him.

T&G members who believe in rank and file control can draw their own conclusions...



By Sleeper



The football team in training

The victim at the centre of the Mandela trial:

A stompie of a life

This article, taken from the South African *Weekly Mail*, describes the life of Stompie Mokhetsi, the young activist apparently murdered by Winnie Mandela's bodyguards. Mrs Mandela is now on trial in South Africa.

Perhaps one day someone, in Britain, where there are buildings named after Winnie Mandela, will name a building after Stompie Mokhetsi.

In October 1987, at the age of 13 and the height of less than four feet, Stompie Mokhetsi didn't think he would live much longer. "They can come and get me at any time," he remarked impassively to Peter Godwin, a British journalist who had tracked him down in Tumahole township. "I'm likely to die in the struggle," he said. "But the struggle will go on."

Stompie's short life was extraordinary. At the time of the interview in Tumahole, the miniscule activist was arguably the best-known figure in the township. He was the "little general" to an "Under-14" army of some 1,500 ghetto children. He had just resumed his "command" after spending a year on remand in prison and being acquitted on public violence charges.

The Under-14s, he explained, were formed in 1985 — when he was ten — because "the other groups were all

talk and no action. We formed an army to protect the people from harassment." His youngest foot-soldier was eight. "We're braver than the adults," he said.

The child army fought physical battles with the municipal police — "Green Beans" — and right-wing vigilantes called the "A-Team".

When the Tumahole town hall was burnt down in 1987 it was rumoured to have been torched by the Under-14s in protest against the town councillors' refusal to allow the hall to be used by the local civic association.

Many of his comrades affectionately called him Tompana, a Zulu/Xhosa diminutive for the Afrikaans diminutive, Stompie. He'd inherited the nickname "Stompie" because of the apparent contradiction between his slight physique and overpowering presence. A stompie, in this sense, is a hard, unyielding thing.

Friends — most of whom doubled as admirers, if not disciples — tell of him forever discussing politics. "What is the *direction*, comrade" was said to be his catchphrase.

His personality touched many people beyond his immediate comrades. Professor Mervin Shear, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Witwatersrand, recalls being so struck by Stompie that he invited him to lunch.

The pocket-sized activist addressed a mass meeting at Wits in 1987: he entered the hall and mounted the stage carrying a businesslike black briefcase. Some felt he was emulating the Rev. Allan Boesak, whom he admired. Shear said after the meeting he saw Stompie "enthralled" a large group of students who gathered round to hear his oratory. Students stood around with their mouths wide open "as the boy recited chunks of the Freedom Charter."

It was "one of those sensitive days" on campus, said Shear, and he was concerned that some people who were not "well-disposed towards Stompie" would take advantage of his presence. The vice-chancellor therefore invited Stompie to lunch, along with Tiego Mosenke, ex-president of the Azanian Students Organisation, who translated between them when communication

faltered.

Shear told the *Weekly Mail* he was amazed by the young character who related his experiences in detention. Shear was "very saddened to see Stompie's picture in newspapers once he had disappeared."

He had been living in the Orlando Methodist Church sanctuary, set up for children whose home environments were devastated by the prolonged State of Emergency and widespread repression and violence in the townships.

At the age of 11 he'd been the youngest State of Emergency detainee in the country. His twelfth birthday was celebrated in a cell. After his release, it was rumoured Stompie had gone into hiding in Johannesburg. He'd already been expelled from school in Tumahole — his headmistress called the police when he tried to be readmitted.

"Asked what he wanted more than anything else his answer was... 'A BMX bike, some new clothes that fit and something to eat.'"

While speaking to the London *Sunday Times* in 1987, he said he was worried about his education, and borrowed books from other children when he had a break from politicking.

Those who knew him while he lived in Johannesburg said he told them that while in detention he was driven to agree to spy for the police. Yet, they say, he was later reunited with his "comrades" and was accepted back.

An ex-colleague in Johannesburg said the youngster would not only recite the Freedom Charter by heart, but also chunks of writing by Karl Marx. "He was a genius. For someone of his age he was very advanced. He

had such an amazing understanding of the political situation in South Africa. We used to have political discussions. But it is not only the discussions I remember. No-one did the *toyitoi* (Zulu dance) like Stompie did."

Stompie is said to have hated watching television and preferred discussion with his companions. Activists remember his sense of humour. He was considered a master at political jokes. "He could make a grim situation look like a picnic," said one.

One Christmas Eve last year, members of the Federation of Transvaal Women took food to the children at the Methodist Sanctuary and saw Stompie. One asked him whether he would go home to Tumahole for Christmas. Stompie declined: he feared "the system would harass him if he went home."

His mother told the *Weekly Mail* Stompie had been an active campaigner against the 1988 October municipal elections. Before his death he faced various charges under the Emergency Regulations in the Parys Magistrates' Court.

He had visited his home, according to his mother, on December 1 last year. She told the *Weekly Mail* that he had given her the only money he had at the time, a R5 note and some cents. He had also told his mother he was "happy at the home".

Stompie was a close friend of another child who died in the turmoil of the 1980s — Sicelo Dhlomo. According to Dhlomo's mother, the boys had a special salute they used to greet each other. They slapped each other's wrists and fists whenever they met. "They would sit in the kitchen and discuss political issues all day," she said. She has a wistful phrase for the tragedy that, like her own son, befell Stompie. "He had a stompie of a life," she said.

The British reporter who spent time with Stompie in 1987 said there was "more to his personality than politics." He recalls his last memory of Stompie: "Sitting reading the newspapers at the table of the township cafe, his feet not long enough to reach the floor, the child in him suddenly re-emerged. Asked what he wanted more than anything right now, his answer was... 'a BMX bike, some new clothes that fit and something to eat.'"



Stompie

Labour Students in disarray

A letter to a NOLS member

By Alison Roche

On Monday 11 March the National Union of Students Elections Committee finally and formally rejected the appeal of the NOLS (National Organisation of Labour Students) candidates that they should be allowed to stand in this Easter's NUS National Executive elections.

NOLS's NEC members, together with NOLS's (now ex-)NUS Officer Etienne De Burgh, failed to get their nomination papers in on time. And even if the forms had been handed in to the Elections Committee before the deadline of 5pm on the relevant day, it appears that they would still have been disbarred because they had been filled out incorrectly.

This is a disaster. It is not just a traumatic experience for the NOLS Office at Walworth Road, or a problem in the developing careers of a handful of uninspiring NOLS hacks in NUS. No, it is a disaster for us all — for all Labour Party and NOLS members. It is not just Etienne De Burgh who looks an idiot. We all do. The fiasco reflects badly on the Labour Party and NOLS as a whole. How can anyone take NOLS seriously?

Because *Militant* made exactly the same blunder, Left Unity supporters are now the only Labour candidates in these elections. The Liberals reckon they can make major gains in NUS.

All the while NOLS's own independent vote is dwindling. In 1985 they could count on 200 solid votes at NUS conferences, and now they have around 60. Left Unity as twice as many. Last Easter NOLS got one of their candidates for the NUS Executive elected only by doing a deal with the Socialist Workers' Party.

The NOLS leaders are now the major force for *doing nothing* in NUS. For instance:

- There used to be a big argument in NUS every year about when to have demonstrations. The left advocated a national demonstration near the start of the first term of the academic year, to get students involved in NUS activity right away. NOLS used to argue that the time



to hold the first demonstration was in term two.

Now the argument has changed. Now it is: should we organise a demonstration *at all*? There has been *no national demonstration* this year.

- NUS runs *no* real campaigns which *draw students into activity*. NOLS *opposes* such campaigns.

- This year NOLS have voted down:

- A student anti-Gulf demonstration;

- National demonstrations against education and tuition fees.

- NOLS leadership in NUS have failed to organise:

- A disabilities conference and awareness day.

- A lesbian and gay conference.

- A sexual politics conference. All were their responsibility. They organise an anti-racist lobby of Parliament without telling the black people on the NUS NEC.

They organised a national lobby of Parliament in opposition to the Gulf war with *three people on it!*

- And NOLS on the NEC do not only ignore mandates from the NEC they do the same to mandates from Conference (eg loans, and poll tax).

It is hardly surprising the National Union's membership is cynical: there is no campaigning, no victories in defence of students rights and no accountability to the membership or respect for its views.

- Finally, when NOLS leaders cannot get away with destroying good initiatives openly, they do so covertly.

For instance they will oppose opening up NUS to Sixth Form student unions. This plan was passed at the last NUS conference having been proposed by the Left Unity supporter and Vice President Further Education, Steve Mitchell. Lots of Sixth Forms are queuing up to join NUS, and will do so, if NUS Conference accepts their right to join for a second time at next Easter's conference.

Nevertheless, NOLS want to stop these affiliations — perhaps they cannot guarantee the votes of Sixth Form delegates?

Who knows, we do not, and they are not telling anyone else — openly.

Last week's NOLS conference marked a new low. 70 conference delegates represented

only 2,000 members. This is down from 238 delegates and 10,000 members in 1984.

What is worse is that many of the 2,000 members are inactive. The Labour Clubs are badly serviced from Labour HQ. There is no systematic attempt at political education from the Labour Party (speaking tours, education packs etc for Labour Clubs). *There has been no drive to recruit NOLS members to the Labour Party.*

This is a sorry state of affairs, particularly in the run up to a General Election. NOLS should be in a good state to fight for the student vote. How did it come to this?

Firstly, NOLS is seen and used as a gravy train for trainee labour movement bureaucrats.

Secondly, in order to keep NOLS secure for Kinnock and safe for careerists, NOLS is incredibly corrupt. There has been a left majority in NOLS for years. This has not been allowed to take the leadership of NOLS.

The current Walworth Road ruling faction keep control by the following methods:

- Not allowing new, potentially left-wing clubs, to become official NOLS clubs.

- Not allowing left clubs to have votes at NOLS conference proportionate to their size (this is done by refusing to send out the official NOLS cards to left clubs).

- Discriminating against FE students (working class students) to ensure they are effectively stopped from participating in NOLS.

- The most blatant rigging of conferences.

Thirdly then, NOLS is tiny. And

after 12 years of the Tories!

Finally, we come to the little matter of socialism. There is no possible definition of socialism which describes Neil Kinnock's stance on the Gulf war.

Neil Kinnock agreed — essentially — with Major. Ted Heath was more critical of the government than Kinnock was, over the Gulf.

NOLS needs a high-profile campaigning image around issues and campaigns that *matter* to students. This is the way to build NOLS and this is the way to fight for socialism.

If the events of the last few weeks have not made you and your club re-examine the role of NOLS nationally, we do not know what will. The criticisms we have made above are simply made for debate among NOLS members and are suggested as a preliminary to turn NOLS around — for the Labour Party and for socialism.

Left Unity AGM

This weekend (16 March), the major left grouping in the National Union of Students, Left Unity, holds its Annual General Meeting in Manchester.

If you want more information about the AGM, details of transport from your area, or copies of the AGM documents, contact Paul or Jill on 071-639 7967.



Will she respond to the calls for strikes against Gorbachev?

Why fear is rising in the USSR

By Anatoly Voronov
(Socialist Party, Moscow)

There is now a lot of fear that the Soviet Union is slipping back towards authoritarianism.

This will not necessarily take the form of a military coup, because Gorbachev is already using his massive powers against the opposition.

Gorbachev has gathered most of the media into his hands and has launched a great propaganda campaign against Yeltsin. The "Democratic Russia" bloc, which organised the demonstration last weekend, has far fewer resources with which to get over its message.

Although the Socialist Party is politically opposed to Yeltsin and

the Moscow Soviet's leadership, we stand for democratic rights. We must all stand up for democracy against the threat of authoritarianism.

The underlying situation here is defined by the coming referendum on the future of the Soviet Union.

The Communist Party and Mr Gorbachev are demanding that the Soviet Union be maintained as now.

Yeltsin and the other leaders of the Russian Federation have added a second question to Gorbachev's ingeniously worded referendum. The first question says: Are you in favour of a renewed Soviet Union as a federation of independent sovereign republics where everyone will be guaranteed freedom? The second, added, question reads: Are you in favour of the election of the President by the whole people? "Democratic Russia" says vote

no to the first, yes to the second. Most probably Gorbachev will win a yes vote for the first question, there is such a big campaign here for a yes vote.

The strikes are developing. Currently about 30 per cent of the pits are on strike, although in general it is true that the strikes are not very strong.

The miners' demands differ to some extent from region to region. But the main issue is wages. The main demand in Donbass is for a 200 per cent or 250 per cent wage rise.

There have been terrible price rises here. An average miner earns 400 roubles per month, and it has been calculated they must spend 384 roubles just to eat properly.

In Vorkhuta the miners are also demanding the resignation of Gorbachev.

Victor Serge Centenary Conference

Saturday 16 March 1991
University of London
Union

International speakers,
discussion groups,
exhibitions and bookstalls
Free creche, tea and coffee
Entrance fee £10 in advance
(£5 unwaged). Lunch also
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Further details from: Victor Serge
Centenary Group, 120 Amhurst Road,
London E8 2AG

For details of Tuesday 19th March
Serge Conference in Glasgow
contact: 0555 840242

Socialist Organiser Dayschool A New World Order: Ours or Theirs?

Sunday 17 March,
Manchester Polytechnic
Students' Union, Oxford
Road, Manchester.

11 to 11.30: Registration
11.30 to 12: Opening Plenary
— Tom Rigby (Socialist
Organiser Editorial Board) and
Jill Mountford (Socialist
Organiser Editorial Board)

12.30-1.15: Lunch

1.15-2.15: 1. Capitalism,
Socialism and War

2. The Case for Socialist
Feminism

3. Israel: Right or Wrong?

2.30-3.30: 1. Why We Orient
To the Labour Movement

2. Is there such a thing as
working class culture?

3. The USSR: Spiralling into
Chaos?

3.30-4.30: 1. Imperialism East
and West

2. What do we mean by
working class democracy

3. The IRA: Terrorists or
Freedom Fighters?

4.30 to 5: Closing Plenary —
Mark Osborn (Campaign for
Solidarity with Workers in the
Eastern Bloc and SO Editorial
Board)

Creche and Saturday night
accommodation available. Queries:
phone 071-639 7965.

GRAFFITI



July 1990: SO picket Labour's NEC to protest about our witch-hunt. Now it seems the Labour leadership want to do the same to 'Briefing'

Will Briefing be next?

GRAFFITI

As one of the speakers in the Labour Party Conference debate last October was arguing against the National Executive's ban on *Socialist Organiser* he heard a Party official below the rostrum mutter: "We know what paper you support, and you'll be next!"

The speaker was a supporter of *Labour Briefing* and it looks like the threat is coming true. The ex-left, now ultra-witch-hunting, Labour Coordinating Committee has circulated a scurrilous newsletter denouncing Lambeth's Labour council and claiming that "at the heart of what happens in Lambeth is a hard left organisation, around Briefing, which in its sectarianism and willingness to turn a blind eye to intimidation is coming to resemble Militant in Liverpool".

Notice the nice line in smearing there: *Briefing* supporters are not directly accused of intimidating anyone, or of anything more drastic than 'sectarianism', but are supposed to be somehow "at the heart" of everything bad.

According to *Tribune* (8 March), "One NEC member told *Tribune* that 'the investigation [into Lambeth] is likely to lead to a closer look at Briefing'."

The National Executive has ordered an investigation into Lambeth, without even bothering to check out the charges beforehand with the local Labour leadership or even to inform them. CLPs should sent motions to the National Executive opposing any extension of this investigation into a witch-hunt against *Briefing*.

Another convert from 'new politics' to old politics: Jonathon Porritt, a leader of the Greens, has taken a top job with Sainsburys and, according to the *Observer* (10 March), will soon join the Liberal Democrats.

It is a common pattern. Brice Lalonde was the presidential candidate of France's Greens before he became Environment Minister in France's not-very-green Socialist party government.

It's also a logical pattern. If your political strategy calls on the populace in general to take more care of the environment, then why not focus your efforts on the ruling class, who have more power? Since the working class will probably be unresponsive to politics which elevate the environment as an issue above the class struggle, isn't it realistic to make do with lobbying the powers that be?

At least 40 low-income countries are now facing the equivalent of a natural disaster" after the Gulf

War, according to the *Independent* (11 March).

The blow comes not from the ecological effects of the war — those are yet to be counted — but from migrant workers fleeing or being forced out from the Gulf. Their home countries lose the money the workers used to send home — a big part of the national budget in some cases — and have to deal with tens or hundreds of thousands of penniless, jobless people.

Yemen is worst hit: 800,000 Yemenis were forced out of Saudi Arabia because their government leaned towards Iraq.

Some 200,000 Indians, 100,000 Sri Lankans, 100,000 Bangladeshis, 35,000 Sudanese, and large numbers of Egyptians and Palestinians have fled the Gulf.

Bangladeshis are already queuing at the Kuwaiti embassy in Dhaka to find jobs again, but Kuwait's rulers say they want to make do with much less migrant labour in future.

"Iraqi troops fled Kuwait leaving clear evidence of the atrocities they had committed. They had behaved like allarmies of occupation. They targeted groups they thought might oppose their rule and used random terror to cow the population".

Thus *Socialist Worker* (9 March). *SW* does not explain why it never called for the Iraqi army of occupation to get out of Kuwait, or why indeed it declared that if Iraq should manage to keep hold of Kuwait that would be a splendid victory against imperialism.

Was it an 'anti-imperialist' army of occupation, 'anti-imperialist' random terror, 'anti-imperialist' imperialism, in contrast to the imperialist variety?

'Liberation' comes in strange forms when it is under the rule of the Emir of Kuwait and the US military.

A member of Kuwait's ruling family explained matter-of-factly to Channel 4 TV news last week that of course restoration of the Emir's palace was now the top priority. After that would come other, less important, facilities, like hospitals.



Rich Kuwaiti citizens taking a pride in their elite status

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Spare a thought if you will, for poor Roy Greenslade. After just 14 months as editor of the *Daily Mirror*, he's 'departed by mutual consent'.

Phooey! He's been sacked — the second Maxwell editor in a month to be knifed by the Cap'n (Ian Watson of the *European* being the other).

Ex-Maoist-turned-Wapping scab Greenslade is keeping shtumm because of a mutual damage limitation deal with his ex-employer. But his old Wapping chum Brian MacArthur spilled the beans in the *Sunday Times*.

"Greenslade was fighting for the editor's right to edit, against... a flagrant abuse of proprietorial power... Maxwell agrees the subjects of and vets every leader

before it is published and his papers often carry 'puffs' of his achievements, a derided form of vanity publishing. No reporter or columnist can be hired without Maxwell's signature".

Britain's only consistently pro-Labour daily is now under the temporary stewardship of former *Times* editor (and right wing Tory) Charlie Wilson. But worse may be to come: Andrew Neil has apparently fallen out with the Digger (over the *Sunday Times*' support for Heseltine against Thatcher) and has been 'approached' by the Cap'n to take over the *Mirror*.

Neil, of course, is a Tory. But he's also very unprincipled and very greedy. The Maxwell deal means 'serious money' in the form of a slice of the Cap'n's highly profitable empire.

Meanwhile, Murdoch's financial position has become highly precarious and Neil's share options in News Corporation no longer look as attractive as they once did.

Could two such posterous egotists as Neil and Maxwell really work together? How would Brillo's vanity cope with the Cap'n's megalomania? Money can work miracles...

Women must control their own fertility!

WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

Dame Jill Knight is in a state this week, not because a woman is being helped to have an abortion, but because she is being helped to have a baby. The woman in question is receiving artificial insemination (AID) from the British Pregnancy Advisory Service.

What outrages Jill Knight is that the woman is not a heterosexual relationship.

This means that the baby will be born without a father, which 'Life' (the anti-abortionists) and Jill Knight do not find acceptable. These are the same people who would force other single



Top, 'The Sun' and left, 'Today' expose the 'scandal' of shy, virgin mums-to-be.

women to continue with unwanted, unplanned pregnancies. Presumably the resulting babies would be snatched at birth and placed with heterosexual couples.

That the anti-abortionists are against AID being given

to single women is not surprising really. Such people are against women having control of their own fertility and would prefer wombs to be public property, to be filled or not according to their ideas.

What is alarming is the idea of public regulation of who is and is not entitled to access to AID. If a single woman is not an acceptable prospective parent, what about a lesbian, or a poor woman, or a black woman?

And if access to AID is to be restricted what about access to sex? If single women are not proper parents shouldn't they be stopped from having casual sex, or going and finding a man to father a child outside a relationship? Perhaps all baby girls could be sterilised until they are in an acceptable relationship.

The press are having great fun with their pathetic stories of 'Virgin Births', but there is a serious issue at stake. That issue is women's fertility and who controls it.

The best person to decide whether and how to get pregnant is the woman who's life will change with the birth of a baby. Society has a responsibility to get involved in the decision only by providing her with information and help if she needs it. Society should give women choices about their fertility, making those choices real by making necessary technology available to all women, regardless of who they are.

Plans for "Liberation 91"

"Liberation 91" — on Saturday 13 April in Manchester — will be a demonstration of the pride, dignity, and hopes of lesbians and gay men alongside opposition to the government's homophobia in Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill and Paragraph 16 of the Department of Health's guidelines on fostering (Children Act 1989).

The event will call for the repeal of all sections of the Sexual Offences Acts 1956 and 1957 which criminalise consenting homosexual acts between men aged 16 and over.

Also highlighted will be Operation Spanner, in which 15 men were convicted for consenting sado-masochistic



sex, and the criminalisation of homosexuality in the Armed Forces through Queens Regulations.

"Liberation 91" will commence with a mardi-gras carnival parade, starting from Whitworth Park, Oxford Road at 1pm. Aiming for Albert Square, the procession of floats,

musicians and demonstrators will parade through city centre Manchester.

Starting at 3pm, Albert Square will be the venue of the biggest lesbian and gay disco in Britain.

For further information contact Jane Marshall, 061-274 3814, Simon Wood 061-736 3636, or Chris Payne, 061-953 4045.



The break up of the USSR part 3

Georgia's rights and minority rights

Stan Crooke concludes his series on the break-up of the Soviet Union

In terms of its population mix and level of national hostilities, the Soviet republic of Georgia (which no longer regards itself as a "Soviet Socialist Republic") is in many ways typical of the USSR as a whole.

Its population is a mixture of Georgians, Armenians, Abkhazians, Russians, Azeris and Ossetians. Within the republic's borders lie the Abkhazian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the Adzhar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and the South Ossetian Autonomous Region.

Georgia was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1921 at Stalin's initiative. (It was one of the earliest examples of Stalin's Great-Russian chauvinist attitude towards the national question). Since Gorbachev came to power, Georgia has been to the fore amongst the republics pressing for independence.

In June 1990 the Georgian government declared all state structures which had been set up, and all treaties which had been signed after February 1921 (the date of its annexation) to be devoid of any legal standing. The Georgian Communist has backed this decision, condemning as "illegal" the occupation and annexation of 1921.

In October last year a National Congress was created in Georgia in defiance of Soviet law, and in January 1991 the Georgian parliament voted to establish its own army and to lease all loss-making collective and state farms to private farmers.

But Georgia's re-assertion of its former statehood has been accompanied by an increasingly intolerant attitude towards national minorities. As the Soviet socialist Boris Kagarlitsky writes in his most recent book, *Farewell Perestroika*: "The Georgian opposition (now the

Georgian government), while striving for sovereignty and even autonomy for itself, and decisively and uncompromisingly in favour of democratic rights for its own people, could find nothing good to be said for the national minorities either living now or formerly in the republic, and, on this question, had no desire to make the slightest concession."

One example of this was the attitude of the Georgian nationalists towards the Meskhetian Turks who suffered a bout of pogroms in Uzbekistan in 1989. The Meskhetian Turks had been forcibly uprooted from Georgia by Stalin at the close of the last war and "re-settled" in Uzbekistan. Many wanted to return to Georgia, especially in order to avoid the danger of further pogroms. But the Georgian political leaders refused to countenance the idea of their return.

Another example is the current debate on who should be recognised as a Georgian citizen and be granted full voting rights. According to members of the Georgian government, only those who can prove that their ancestors lived in Georgia prior to 1921 (ironically, the same "cut-off date" which applied to citizenship rights in Kuwait under the Emir) should be recognised as Georgian citizens. Such a decision would obviously disenfranchise a substantial proportion of the population.

Whilst Georgia has moved along the road towards independence from Moscow, it has not been prepared to accord to national minorities within its borders the rights which it demands for itself.

In summer 1989 fighting erupted between Georgians and Abkhazians who were demanding their own national rights. Weapons were seized from police stations and armed militia formed by both sides. The armed forces involved in the conflict numbered several hundred people on either side.

More recently, and more violent, have been the clashes between the Georgian authorities and the South Ossetians. In September last year

the South Ossetian Soviet Republic was proclaimed, and elections for the parliament of the new republic were held three months later in December 1990.

The Georgian Procurator Office warned the election organisers of "criminal liability" should the elections go ahead. The Georgian Supreme Soviet not only refused to recognise the declaration of the South Ossetian Soviet Republic, but also declared the abolition of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region (which existed under the Soviet constitution) after the

"Whilst Georgia has moved along the road towards independence from Moscow, it has not been prepared to accord to national minorities within its borders the rights which it demands for itself"

December elections.

Fighting erupted in the same month, especially in the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali, where the centre of the town was in the hands of the Georgian militia whilst the rest of the town was controlled by South Ossetians. Despite (or because of) the imposition of a state of emergency by the Georgian authorities, armed clashes continued throughout the month of January.

According to Zviad Gamsakhurdia, chair of the Georgian Supreme Soviet, "Ossetian separatists are trying to sever the heart, the historic centre of material and spiritual

culture, from Georgia. Using the right to self-determination as a pretext, they are creating the so-called South Ossetian Soviet Republic."

His argument was that only a "nation or a people who have lived in their own land throughout their history" had the right to self-determination. The South Ossetians did not fulfil this criterion and could therefore only claim "the status of a narrow and specific administrative-territorial entity".

Moreover, the re-establishment of Georgian independence involved "the liquidation of the results of annexation, primarily the restoration of the integrity of Georgian territory". A separate South Ossetia would cut across this territorial integrity, and could therefore not be tolerated. In other words: national rights for Georgia meant no national rights for anyone else.

But the nationalist unrest in South Ossetia is also being used to put pressure on the Georgian government and its moves towards independence. According to Torez Kulumbegov, chair of the South Ossetian Soviet of People's Deputies, South Ossetia wants to remain in the Soviet Union, and is willing to remain a part of Georgia — if Georgia is willing to remain a part of the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev's response to the unrest in South Ossetia has been to demand that the South Ossetians take back their declaration of a South Ossetian Soviet Republic, and that the Georgians take back their declaration of the dissolution of the South Ossetian Autonomous Region. This would mean that the South Ossetians moved back to square one, but that the Georgians would have to make a major climb-down.

Moreover, the draft union treaty currently being discussed in the Soviet Union would allow small territories such as South Ossetia to remain part of the Soviet Union even if the republic of which they are currently a part resolved to break away from the Soviet Union. In effect, such a measure would make it more difficult for republics to break

away from the Soviet Union as they might fragment if they attempted to do so.

Thus, as is the case elsewhere in the USSR, a republic is in the process of breaking away from the centre, whilst national minorities in that republic are in the process of breaking away from the republic. At the same time, the demands of the minorities are being exploited by the centre in order to prevent the republic itself breaking away.

However complicated this may sound, it is a measure of the chaos into which the Soviet Union is sinking as the economy continues to haemorrhage and the structure of the state continues to fracture along national lines.



More on the crisis of Stalinism

Available for £1.20 plus 32 pence postage from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA

Why the "soft left"

From support for sanctions to support for slaughter

In this excerpt Leon Trotsky describes how the "soft left" of his day, the middle-class pacifists, collapsed in World War 1.

Trotsky's arguments shed light on why the "soft left" today so unanimously slid away from their pacifist and liberal principles into support for George Bush's bloody Gulf war.

Then as now, the war had been preceded by a long period of "armed peace" between the big powers. Then as now, the "soft left" placed its faith in disarmament conferences, international law, and a league of nations (today, the United Nations) to make that "armed peace" everlasting.

Then as now, the capitalist powers were not in the least

"Sanctions were not an alternative to war. They were the start of the drive to war, they were the preparation for war".

hindered in their military build-up by all the well-wishing blueprints for peace. Then as now, the attachment of the "soft left" to pressure on, and pleas to, the powers that be, left them helplessly trailing behind those powers when they decided to go to war.

The "soft left" of 1914 were for peace — until their governments joined the war.

Likewise, today's "soft left" were for staying with economic sanctions and diplomacy — until war started. Then — more "practically", more "realistically" than opposing war — they conducted a "struggle", consisting mostly of humble words in Neil Kinnock's ear, for the war's objectives to be limited to the recapture of Kuwait.

They were against the blitzing of Iraq, the destruction by bombing of

all the basics of twentieth-century life there — until it started.

They were against the US-led armies going beyond Kuwait, and crossing the border into Iraq — until they crossed.

They supported Gorbachev's initiative for peace. They promised that they would insist on it being taken seriously, not just rubbish. They wanted to see the war end "as soon as possible".

Saddam accepted Gorbachev's plan, and indeed a stricter version of it, committing Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait within 21 days. The "soft left" supported Gorbachev's plan — until the US trashed it and went in to massacre Iraq's fleeing soldiers.

If the conflict were really about Kuwait, and if any serious conflict between capitalist governments can ever be solved by diplomacy, then the Gulf crisis could have been resolved by diplomacy on the basis of the Moscow plan. But the US's aim was, and has been ever since last August, to crush Iraq and restore stable US domination in the region — and that aim could never be reached by negotiations.

The US-led intervention was always about crushing Iraq. The land invasion of Iraq was merely one further stage in a process already well underway.

Sanctions were not an alternative to the drive to war. They were the start of the drive to war, they were the preparation for war.

When the "soft left" first committed themselves to a policy of gentle words in Neil Kinnock's ear — who in turn had a policy of gentle words in John Major's ear — then they committed themselves to war. All their reasoning, their careful blueprints, had no weight at all against the hard material interests driving for war.

To want the US to act as a policeman — but a bit more patiently, gently, and peacefully — was always stupid wishful thinking. Either you support the bloody imperialist conquest of Iraq, or you oppose imperialism. There is no third choice.

Now as in World War 1, the lesson is: to fight the roots of war we must fight capitalism, not just preach the abstract rules of peace.



Leon Trotsky on pacifism and war

Peace is impossible

Pacifism springs from the same historical roots as democracy. The bourgeoisie made a gigantic effort to rationalise human relations, that is, to supplant a blind and stupid tradition by a system of critical reason.

The guild restrictions on industry, class privileges, monarchic autocracy — these were the traditional heritage of the Middle Ages. Bourgeois democracy demanded legal equality, free competition and parliamentary methods in the conduct of public affairs.

Naturally, its rationalistic criteria were applied also in the field of international relations. Here it hit upon war, which appeared to it as a method of solving questions that was a complete denial of all "reason".

So bourgeois democracy began to point out to the nations — with the tongues of poesy, moral philosophy and certified accounting — that they would profit more by the establishment of a condition of eternal peace.

Such were the logical roots of bourgeois pacifism.

From the time of its birth pacifism was afflicted, however, with a fundamental defect, one which is characteristic of bourgeois democracy; its pointed criticisms addressed themselves to the surface of political phenomena, not daring to penetrate to their economic causes.

At the hands of capitalist reality the idea of eternal peace, on the basis of a "reasonable" agreement, has fared even more badly than the idea of liberty, equality and



Leon Trotsky

fraternity. For capitalism, when it rationalised industrial conditions, did not rationalise the social organisation of ownership, and thus prepared instruments of destruction such as even the "barbarous" Middle Ages never dreamed of.

The constant embitterment of international relations and the ceaseless growth of militarism completely undermined the basis of reality under the feet of pacifism. Yet it was from these very things that pacifism took a new lease of life, a life which differed from its earlier phase as the blood and purple sunset differs from the rosy-fingered dawn.

The decades preceding the present war have been well designated as a period of armed peace. During this whole period progress and battles were being fought, but they were—in the

colonies alone.

Proceeding, as they did, in the territories of backward and powerless peoples, these wars led to a division of Africa, Polynesia and Asia, and prepared the way for the present world war. As, however, there were no wars in Europe after 1871 — in spite of a long series of sharp conflicts — the general opinion in the petty bourgeois circles began gradually to behold in the growth of armies a guarantee of peace, which was destined ultimately to be established by international law with every institutional sanction.

Capitalist governments and munition kings naturally had no objections to this "pacifist" interpretation of militarism. But the causes of world conflicts were accumulating and the present cataclysm was getting under way.

France is the classic Fland of finance capital, which leans for its support on the petty bourgeoisie of the cities and the towns; the most conservative class of the kind in the world, and numerically very strong.

Thanks to foreign loans, to the colonies, to the alliance of France with Russia and England, the financial upper crust of the Third Republic found itself involved in all the interests and conflicts of world politics.

And yet, the French petty bourgeois is an out-and-out provincial. He has always shown an instinctive aversion to geography and all his life has feared war as the very devil — if only for the reason that he has, in most cases, but one son who is to inherit his business, together with his chattels.

This petty bourgeois sends to Parliament a radical who has pro-



No comment

warmongers'

Left" backed war



'Reluctant warmongers'. Left to right: Clare Short, Martin O'Neil, Harriet Harman, Robin Cook

under capitalism

mised him to preserve peace — on the one hand, by means of a league of nations and compulsory international arbitration, and on the other, with the cooperation of the Russian Cossacks, who are to hold the German Kaiser in check.

This radical deputy, drawn from the provincial lawyer class, goes to Paris not only with the best intentions but also without the slightest conception of the location of the Persian Gulf, and of the use, and to whom, of the Baghdad railway. This radical 'pacifist' bloc of deputies gives birth to a radical ministry, which at once finds itself bound hand and foot by all the diplomatic and military obligations and financial interests of the French bourse in Russia, Africa and Asia.

Never ceasing to pronounce the proper pacifist sentences, the ministry and the parliament automatically continue to carry on a world policy which involves France in war.

English and American pacifism, in spite of the differences in social and ideological forms (or in the absence of such, as in America), is carrying on, at bottom, the same task.

It offers to the petty and the middle bourgeoisie an expression for their fears of world cataclysms in which they may lose their last remnants of independence. Their pacifism chloroforms their consciences — by means of impotent ideas of disarmament, international law and world courts — only to deliver them up body and soul, at the decisive moment, to imperialism, which now mobilises everything for its own purposes: industry, the church, art, bourgeois pacifism and patriotic 'socialism'.

"We have always been opposed

to war: our representatives, our ministry have been opposed to

"The decades preceding the war have been well designated as a period of armed peace. During this whole period campaigns were in uninterrupted progress and battles were being fought, but they were in the colonies alone"

war," says the French citizen, "therefore the war must have been forced upon us, and in the name of

our pacifist ideals we must fight it to the finish." And the leader of the French pacifists, Baron d'Estournelles de Constant, endorses this pacifist philosophy of an imperialist war with a pompous *juste au bout*.

The English Stock Exchange, in its prosecution of the war, has need first of all of pacifists of the Asquith (Liberal) and Lloyd George (radical demagogue) type. "If these people go in for war," say the English masses, "right must be on our side." Thus a responsible function is allocated to pacifism in the economy of warfare, by the side of suffocating gases and inflated government loans.

More evident still is the subordinate role played by petty bourgeois pacifism with regard to imperialism in the United States. The actual policy is there more prominently dictated by banks and trusts than anywhere else. Even before the war the United States, owing to the gigantic development of its industry and its foreign com-

merce, was being systematically driven in the direction of world interests and world policies.

The European war imparted to this imperialistic development a speed that was positively feverish.

At a time when many well-meaning persons were hoping that the horrors of the European slaughter might inspire the American bourgeoisie with a hatred of militarism, the actual influence of European events was bearing on American policy not in psychological channels but in material ones, and was having precisely the opposite effect.

The exports of the United States, which in 1913 amounted to \$2,466 million, rose in 1916 to \$5,481 million! Of course, the lion's share of this export fell to the lot of the war industries.

The sudden breaking off of exports to the Allied nations after the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare meant not only the stoppage of a flow of monstrous

profits, but threatened with an unprecedented crisis the whole of American industry, which had been organised on a war footing.

It was impossible for this thing to go on without some resistance from the masses of the people. To overcome their unorganised dissatisfaction and to turn it into channels of patriotic cooperation with the government was therefore the first great task of the international diplomacy of the United States during the first quarter of the war. And it is the irony of history that official 'pacifism', as well as 'oppositional pacifism', should be the chief instrument for the accomplishment of this task: the education of the masses to military ideals.

Bryan rashly and noisily expressed the natural aversion of the farmers and of the 'small man' generally to all such things as world-policy, military service and higher taxes. Yet, at the same time that he was sending wagon-loads of petitions, as well as deputations, to his pacifist colleagues at the head of the government, Bryan did everything in his power to break the revolutionary edge of the whole movement.

"If war should come," Bryan telegraphed on the occasion of an anti-war meeting in Chicago last February, "we will all support the government of course; yet at this moment it is our sacred duty to do all in our power to preserve the nation from the horrors of war."

These few words contain the entire programme of petty bourgeois pacifism: "to do everything in our power against the war" means to afford the voice of popular indignation an outlet in the form of harmless demonstration, after having previously given the government a guarantee that it will meet with no serious opposition, in the case of war, from the pacifist faction.

Official pacifism could have desired nothing better. It could now give satisfactory assurance to imperialist 'preparedness'. After Bryan's own declaration, only one thing was necessary to dispose of his noisy opposition to war, and that was, simply, to declare war. And Bryan rolled right over into the government camp.

And not only the petty bourgeoisie, but also the broad masses of workers, said to themselves: "If our government, with such an outspoken pacifist as Wilson at the head, declares war, and if even Bryan supports the government in the war, it must be an unavoidable and righteous war..." It is now evident why the sanctimonious, Quaker-like pacifism of the bourgeois demagogues is in such higher favour in financial and war industry circles.

Notes

□ Guild restrictions, etc: In the Middle Ages (around 1100 to 1500) European economies and societies were dominated by landlords who claimed economic, legal, and political power over the peasants on their land (and a part of the produce) as their hereditary right. By "class privilege" Trotsky here means such hereditary claims. "Monarchic autocracy" means the king's claim to unchecked power. In the cities, the craft workers and merchants were restricted by traditional regulations through the "guild" or association of each trade. Many of these traditional privileges

and restrictions, "the heritage of the Middle Ages", survived in many countries until the 18th or 19th centuries.

□ Bourgeois democracy: formal or parliamentary democracy, limited by a capitalist social and economic system of inequality.

□ The present war: Trotsky is writing about the First World War (1914-18).

□ Petty bourgeoisie: small shopkeepers, craft workers, business people, professional people, farmers, etc., self-employed or employing only one or two workers, maybe members of their family — a class different both from the wage-working class and the capitalist class or bourgeoisie

proper.

□ Third Republic: the political system in France from 1870 to 1940.

□ Baghdad railway: in 1899 a German company signed a contract with the Turkish Empire, which then ruled most of the Middle East, to build a railway from Istanbul to Baghdad. This Turkish-German link-up caused alarm to Britain and France, who hoped to grab bits of the rotting Turkish Empire for themselves, and did so after World War I; it was a cause of international friction right through to 1914. The railway was never built.

□ French bourse: stock exchange.

□ Jusqu'au bout: to the end.

□ Trusts: groups of companies dominating various lines of industry.

□ Bryan: William Jennings Bryan, leader of the radical wing of the American Democratic Party, and Secretary of State to President Woodrow Wilson until June 1915.

□ Wilson: Woodrow Wilson, Democratic President of the US from 1912 to 1920. He won the 1916 election on the slogan "He kept us out of war", and then took the US into the World War in April 1917.

□ World-policy: used as a synonym at the time for imperialism, meaning the search by big powers for military and diplomatic sway, spheres of influence, semi-colonies, and colonies.

The violence of the oppressor and the violence of the oppressed

The invention of terrorism

THE POLITICAL FRONT

Pat Murphy



The Prevention of Terrorism Act was debated and renewed again by Parliament last week.

Labour put up some opposition. They quite rightly pointed to the huge number of Irish people detained under the Act and contrasted it with the tiny number charged and the even smaller number found guilty of any offence.

Labour's central argument, however, was that the Act should not be renewed because it did not prevent "terrorism". It doesn't, of course. Even a prominent Tory MP, arguing for the Act, claimed that its importance was proved by the increase in "terrorist" incidents since 1974, when the Act was introduced.

Yet Roy Hattersley's main argument against the Act — that it *strengthens* "terrorism" — was an exercise in ducking the issues and running scared from the Tory accusation that opposition to the Act means support for "terrorism".

What is this "terrorism"? The IRA is "terrorist" because it commits acts apparently designed to terrorise people. Iraq had to be dealt with severely because it was a "terrorist state". The USA and Britain, which carpet-bombed Iraq and blitzed Baghdad for weeks, were, however, the forces of international law and order. Israel, a state which murdered thousands of civilians in Beirut in 1982 and daily terrorises the Palestinians in the occupied territories, is a faithful ally.

The use of the term "terrorist" is blatantly hypocritical. But it has very wide credence indeed. It is taken as common sense in the liberal press and the Labour Party that there is a huge moral gulf between the state of Israel, say, and the IRA.

The term "terrorist" has, or had, a definite meaning in Marxist politics.

The Russian Marxists applied it to non-Marxist radicals in Russia who believed that assassinations of Tsars, ministers and generals were the way to disrupt the ruling class and "electrify" the masses into action. The term "terrorism" did not in that context convey moral disgust: on the contrary, the full description was "individual terrorism", with the disapproval concentrated on the



Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it Black Friday

'Unity is strength' is a very old trade union watchword. But it is nonetheless true.

In the period of working class militancy that followed the First World War and the Russian revolution Britain's transport, rail and mining unions vowed to stand together and fight together. This arrangement became known as the Triple Alliance.

In the summer of 1919 the prospect of action by the rest of the Triple Alliance in support of striking railworkers was enough to force the government to back down. Similarly, in October 1920 the government was forced to postpone a battle with the miners

for fear of involving the whole Triple Alliance.

But confrontation was only postponed.

Six months later and with 2½ million on the dole, the employers came for the miners again.

The coal owners demanded a wage cut and this being rejected, locked-out the miners. It was now class against class.

Amidst tremendous support for the miners in the working class, the Triple Alliance was involved, a sympathetic strike being called for April 16, 1921.

The Tory-Liberal government was now on a civil war footing. The Emergency Powers Act was used, reservists were mobilised and troops were posted to industrial areas. The union leaderships surrendered at once.

Perhaps not surprisingly, Thomas of the NUR and Williams of the Transport Workers backed out and left the miners to fight alone. Betrayed and deserted, the miners fought on for two months and were forced to concede defeat.

This monumental betrayal went down in working class history as 'Black Friday'. It was a colossal demonstration of the cowardice of the leaders of the labour movement. Moreover, it demoralised whole sections of the working class.

Section by section, the employers dealt with the unions in the wake of 'Black Friday'. Defeat followed defeat.

The picture shows a miners' union speaker urging his workmates to stand firm.

word *individual*. The Marxists favoured *mass* terror against the old order and criticised the non-Marxists for *substituting* the action of individuals or small conspiratorial groups for mass action.

The modern tabloid use of the word "terrorism" has almost nothing in common with that Marxist use.

There are activities and groups labelled "terrorist" by the tabloids for which socialists can have little sympathy. Groups like the Red Brigades in Italy, the Red Army Faction in Germany, and the Angry Brigade in Britain were tiny self-selecting bands, representing no-one but presuming the *right* to act "on behalf of" the masses. Unlike the Russian terrorists, the Red Brigades and the Red Army Faction often attacked ordinary people as well as ruling-class figures.

The term "terrorist" is most frequently used today, however, to describe movements which do genuinely represent desperately oppressed people and which use violence among other tactics.

The use of violence may be inept and

counterproductive. It is rarely the most useful way of mobilising a political struggle or breaking down divisions within the working class. A long experience — including that of the Russian Bolsheviks after the 1905 Revolution — shows that guerrilla warfare tactics, even when justifiable, carry with them an acute danger of degenerating into gangsterism. In situations of national or communal conflict they can also degenerate into dead-end revenge-seeking communal slaughter.

All that said, the violence of the movements of oppressed peoples is *not* morally lower than the violence of those in power, even if it is less "regular" and less neatly uniformed, and even if those in power have been elected by someone.

The African National Congress clearly represents a large section of the black people in South Africa. The PLO has been consistently proved to be the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab nation: if the violence of the *intifada* forced Israel out of the occupied territories, that

would be a tremendous step forward. The IRA is supported, actively or passively, by a sizeable part, though by no means a majority, of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland.

None of this automatically legitimates particular acts of violence or the choice of "armed struggle" in any particular situation, but a couple of conclusions do follow. The violence of such movements is a *political* question, not one of individual criminal acts to be dealt with by "law and order". And, all other things being equal, the violence of such movements is *more* understandable, *more* justifiable than the violence of mighty states which wield massive economic, political, diplomatic and military power. "Riots", said Martin Luther King, "are the voice of the unheard".

Our rulers use the term "terrorist" most often to justify savage acts of repression by governments which claim liberal credentials.

The Israelis helped tear Lebanon apart, bombed West Beirut into terrified surrender, and then chaperoned the Christian Phalange militias into the Sabra and Chatila refugee camps in September 1982, where they massacred thousands of innocent Palestinians. It was a war crime with huge repercussions, including in Israeli public opinion.

The justification was that they were flushing out "terrorists". It was a ludicrous argument, and not only because the PLO had been withdrawn wholesale only weeks earlier. The British introduced mass internment without trial, strip-searching, and psychological torture in Northern Ireland to deal with "terrorism". The US supported the barbarous Contras against Nicaragua with the excuse that the Sandinistas were supporting "terrorists" in El Salvador, yet the Contras were conducting a campaign of terror against the people.

By and large, we simply should not use the term "terrorist", and we should question what it means wherever we see it. It has lost whatever meaning it had, and it does nothing to clear up the complicated issue of our attitude to political violence.

The journalist Robert Fisk concluded after years in Lebanon that "the use of the word terrorism is akin to carrying a gun. Unless the word is used about *all* acts of terrorism — and it is not — then its employment turns the reporter into a participant in the war".

Violence must be judged by what and who it genuinely represents. That is a complicated matter, but there is nothing more futile than searching for the violence that does not produce "terror". There is no such thing as "friendly fire".

Capitalism drives you crazy!

AGAINST THE TIDE

Sean Matgamna



During the Gulf war it was hard to avoid the impression that Britain was a country in the grip of a mass psychosis.

From the grey dull little Thatcher-made Prime Minister, with his robotic voice and the grey metallic glint round the eyes, by way of no-guts Neil Kinnock translating Major's pronouncements into a better class of sub-Churchillian rhetoric, all the way down into the sewers of the tabloid press, official society was caught up in a fierce fantasy about fighting a glorious war for freedom and liberty against great odds.

It was nothing of the sort, but not many seemed to notice. The TV pictures of Iraqi cities being flattened might have been inconsequential play with a computer game, for all the rational human reaction there was from Britain's rulers and legislators.

Awareness of what was really going on, and a proper response to the systematic aerial destruction of Iraqi society, was confined in Parliament to a few MPs like Tony Benn.

And when, at the end, the war turned into a savage "turkey shoot" (as one American pilot put it), or something "like shooting fish in a barrel", and many thousands of fleeing demoralised Iraqi soldiers were slaughtered on the road out of Kuwait City, the British Establishment did not turn a hair.

Now we have the triumphant homecomings. And what do the soldiers come home to, in the country whose fantasies they embody?

To a tremendous outcry in the press about "virgin birth"! This outcry, by churchmen, politicians and the press, against the idea that a woman who is not heterosexually active can be allowed to have a baby by artificial insemination, is as mad as anything we saw during the war.

It is also mysterious. Artificial insemination is decades old, and now very commonplace. Vast numbers of single women have babies. So why are so many people alarmed at the idea of "virgin birth"?

Can it be that this is just another — hysterical — expression of the long-standing Tory government campaign against single

mothers?

Christians have made such a fuss about the one which allegedly occurred 2000 years at Bethlehem that you can understand them being upset at the idea that "virgin birth" might soon become commonplace. But Christians aren't all that influential any more, and lots of them don't believe in Christ's virgin birth.

Yet listen to the *Daily Express*, an up-market tabloid which tries to be a newspaper:

"News that doctors are helping prepare for a virgin birth has aroused immediate outrage. That is a great relief in itself, since the absence of outrage would suggest that our society, indeed our civilisation, is in an even worse way than many already believe."

To arrange a virgin birth — that really is to play God. At least this blasphemy has aroused church leaders to speak clearly on a matter that is properly their concern."

You would not guess from this that the *Express*, like the others, had been glorying in the way the generals used modern technology to "play God", "precision-bombing" the cities and towns of Iraq. They "precision-bombed" a bunker containing hundreds of civilians, many of them women and children: but playing the God of war and destruction is fine and glorious; playing God to help a woman create life is blasphemy!

Black is white, death is life, pigs can fly — and we are living in a sane capitalist society!

Thrashing out the disputes in the anti-war movement

"Your witch-hunting has destroyed what little credibility you had"

By Anni Marjoram, Secretary, Labour Women's Action Committee

Last year I was contacted as the secretary of the Labour Women's Action Committee about your campaign to stop the witch-hunt against you.

LWAC has always taken a strong line against witch-hunts, and as an organisation we of course supported the campaign.

As well as support from LWAC, I also gave permission for my name, as an individual, to appear on leaflets in support of your campaign which were then distributed at Annual Conference.

I did this because, although I found your positions on issues such

as pornography quite ridiculous and distasteful, I am willing to defend your right to be in the Party.

It is against this background that I write to you about your disgraceful public witch-hunting of members of other groups on the Left. However one disagrees, organisational defeat of the politics should be the outcome, not the setting up of individual members.

You have been defeated within

the Committee to Stop the War in the Gulf, and then you go away and start witch-hunting people you consider to be your opponents. This has destroyed what little credibility you had with major left campaigns within the Party.

People like myself will always take a principled stand against anyone being witch-hunted out of the Party, but please don't expect to be taken too seriously again.



The offending article

A thin shield for madhouse politicians

By John O'Mahony

Anni Marjoram's letter raises some important questions.

An article by Martin Thomas in SO 477 looked at the small group round *Socialist Action*, which despite its general insignificance played a central role in the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf. It explored the contrast between SA's "official" line, published in its magazine ("victory to Iraq!"), and its actual politics in the anti-war movement, where it supported sanctions, opposed troops out, and helped or tried to exclude those who did campaign for troops out; and it told a little of SA's long history.

And because of that Anni Marjoram accuses us of "witch-hunting" SA. That the article provoked cries of "witch-hunt" does not surprise me, in the sense that I expected it. Nor will it surprise readers grown used to hearing cries of "witch-hunt" used as small change in polemic on the left. We have heard it before, from *Militant* and from the WRP for example.

The cry of "witch-hunt" is one of the most potent cries on the left. If, as the old saying has it, "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel", accusations of witch-hunting are the last refuge of those on the left who don't have any better answer to what is said about them.

Yet it should surprise us — in the sense of "startle" — that an article which deals truthfully with part of the political history of *Socialist Action* (Anni Marjoram does not question that it is truthful) should for that reason be accused of "witch-hunting".

Why? Why should the fact that the Ross group — while publishing an "open" revolutionary magazine — chooses to operate by worming around in various disguises with labour movement and peace movement bodies impose on us absolute silence about who they are and what, politically, they have been? Why should their "deep entry" allow such a group to shed their history (and even the politics they

currently publish in their magazine) and impose on us — if we don't want to be "witch-hunters" — the obligation to be silent about that history and those politics?

Rationally, witch-hunting here means doing things to get people expelled from the Labour Party (or, I suppose, repressed by the state). Of that there is no question. As Anni Marjoram uses it, "witch-hunting" means "exposing" to the left people who operate in disguise within the broader left, even though they will not therefore be expelled or persecuted.

The article could not have helped the witch-hunters. The Labour Party bureaucracy has within itself, or scampering at its feet looking for jobs, generations of specialists in "anti-Trotskyism", trained in the faction fights within the student movement. For a certainty they know what *Socialist Action* is, who is who within its operations, and where it comes from. Our article told no likely witch-hunters anything they did not already know. It did not provide them with additional "proof"; nor could its publication possibly have triggered the Labour Party machine into action against SA it would not otherwise take. *Tribune*, for example, had repeatedly identified *Socialist Action* as "Trotskyist" and "revolutionary defeatist" long before the article appeared.

What was specific to SO's comment on SA was not the "tagging" and "identifying" — that was common property for anybody with any knowledge of the left — but that we filled in the real political history behind the name-tag. That is, we tried to educate the left about *Socialist Action*.

But suppose all that did help people in the Labour Party, or in the anti-war movement, who might want to expel or exclude *Socialist Action*?

Then a real dilemma would arise: where to draw the line between unwillingly "helping" the expellers and "witch-hunters" and depriving anti-war activists of the light that knowledge of the political anatomy of SA would shed on the conflicts in the anti-war movement.

If the conflicts in the anti-war movement were important — and surely they were — then who had a right to lay aside the weapon that knowledge of SA would provide to those fighting the neo-Stalinist and professional-peacenik gang with which SA allied and which for months created chaos at the centre of the anti-war movement? And why should we want to protect SA, which helped organise a disruptive witch-hunt against people holding its own political opinions, and thereby helped reduce the centre of the anti-war movement during the war to the politics of the madhouse?

Why would it not be a positively good thing if their witch-hunting colleagues in the anti-war movement turned on them — if the witch-hunters turned on each other?

SO would oppose the expulsion of *Socialist Action* for general reasons, and get on with trying to clear SA out of all places of influence and respect



Photo John Harris

— that is, go on fighting their politics. Whether Anni Marjoram means it so or not, the cry of "witch-hunt" here is a cry against *Socialist Action* being exposed politically, a convenient shield, a bit of demagoguery to divert attention and muddy the issues.

And indeed, very often, the cry against "witch-hunting" is an expression of political and intellectual corruption in and around the would-be Trotskyist movement. It is used as a tool to suppress and inhibit discussion of facts, issues and histories, and the

"Opposition to a narrow witch-hunting regime in the Labour Party should not mean the revolutionary left making ourselves always move round in the dark"

effect is to make it needlessly difficult for young people, especially, to form an overview of the movement they are interested in.

It is common for the exposure of anything discreditable about a group to be tagged as "witch-hunting", because the discreditable facts could be used by the labour bureaucracy or the state. But many things that might be so used are of such importance to the labour movement that they should nevertheless be brought out into the open.

Opposition to a narrow witch-hunting regime in the Labour Party should not mean the revolutionary left

making ourselves always move around in the dark, fearing always to light a torch because it might show up something discreditable which "could be used..."

The clearest example in recent history is the old Workers' Revolutionary Party.

The WRP of Gerry Healy was for years a bought-and-paid-for spying and propaganda agency for Arab governments, including, until 1980 or about then, Iraq. (It even helped get some members of the Iraqi CP shot by Saddam Hussein's government.)

That was all quite clear from its press (including a lavish pamphlet glorifying Saddam Hussein). It was also an utterly crazy sect.

Then in 1981 it moved into the Labour Left. It "reclaimed" the political souls of former long-time members like Ted Knight, then leader of Lambeth Council. Some of them became secret members. They launched *Labour Herald*, supposedly edited by Knight, Ken Livingstone, and Lambeth councillor Matthew Warburton, but actually put together by WRP member Steven Miller, and, to use a libel-avoiding formula, printed on very favourable terms by the WRP press. (It also had local government advertising revenue.)

Labour Herald was a WRP "operation" — passed off as "Labour Left" and entwined with a central part of the local government left. It had WRP politics — on the Middle East for example — and meshed into other WRP "operations".

The *Herald* was quickly accepted as part of the mainstream left (which,

given its politics, tells you a lot about the mainstream left). Lots of people were taken in. You got strange ironies. In late 1983 the WRP pulled a stunt at the time of the TUC Congress, "exposing" Arthur Scargill's attitude to Solidarnosc. Scargill's scandalous politics on Stalinism should by then have been news to no-one. But there was a big tabloid press outcry, flowing from the WRP exposure. There are grounds to suspect that the WRP acted in collusion with Fleet Street — possibly for money.

It was part of the softening-up bombardment in the build-up to the miners' strike that the Tories were preparing. Yet Arthur Scargill continued to write for the WRP-linked paper *Labour Herald*.

The *Herald* was an effective and successful "operation". It continued until the WRP exploded in 1985, and then — eloquently — died. Ken Livingstone recently was still very bitter about this collapse, attributing it to M15.

To tell the truth to the labour movement about *Labour Herald* was also, inescapably, to help possible witch-hunters who wanted to move against those foolish enough to associate with the *Herald*. When SO did tell the truth, we were denounced as witch-hunters. The supporters of the *Herald* could and did appeal to the "anti-witch-hunt" left culture.

Yet, plainly, telling the labour movement the truth about *Labour Herald* overrode the many issues that were raised demagogically under the catch-all cry "witch-hunt".

At any given moment there is a balance to be drawn between helping the enemies of the left by exposing things discreditable to sections of the left, and making possible the necessary political debate within, and circulation of information in and around, the left.

The idea that always and everywhere the cardinal principle, overriding everything else, is to avoid anything that might help the witch-hunters, is a crippling absurdity. For the left to develop, it must rid itself of what is discreditable; and to do that, it must know about it and discuss it openly!

And in any case, to repeat: in terms of its likely objective effect, there was nothing in our article which amounted to witch-hunting, "fingering", or "setting up" *Socialist Action*. The article was aimed at telling the left who and what this group was which had helped reduce the centre of the anti-war movement to the politics of the madhouse. And that needed to be done.

Finally, three footnotes. No, we are not in favour of pornography; we are in favour of free speech and against censorship.

We were not "defeated within the Committee to Stop War in the Gulf", but — like a wide range of other groups — refused affiliation. We did not "go away", but continued to campaign for a united anti-war movement, and to help launch united initiatives where we could, like *Labour Against the War* and *Trade Unionists Against the War*.

While Anni Marjoram did indeed support the campaign against the ban on SO, *Socialist Action* did not. They did everything they could to hinder it short of directly voting against it.

Why didn't Anni Marjoram write to *Socialist Action* complaining about their real witch-hunt against us and many others in the anti-war movement, or their lack of opposition to the real witch-hunt against us in the Labour Party?

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When "left wing" was what Stalin said and did

Books

Jack Cleary reviews "About Turn: The British Communist Party and the Second World War", edited by Francis King and George Matthews (Lawrence and Wishart, £34.95)

In Andrew Boyle's book *The Climate of Treason* there is a report of a conversation in Cambridge in the summer of 1933 between young supporters of Stalin's "Communist International", among them the future Stalinist spy Kim Philby.

Hitler had been in power six months. The powerful German Communist Party (and the strong German Social Democracy) had let the Nazis take power legally and peacefully, and had then suffered a tremendous rout as the terroristic Nazis turned the power of the state against them.

"Surely", says one of the young men, daringly, "Stalin made great mistakes in Germany. Many of the things Trotsky said were right". Philby turned on him indignantly. "Why", he said, "what Stalin does is left".

Stalin couldn't be wrong. Outside Stalin and what he did there was no left. "L'Etat, c'est moi" — the State, it is I — said France's absolute monarch Louis XIV. The left, it is the USSR and Stalin, said many left-wingers then.

Philby's comment was a statement of the essential truth about a whole epoch of working-class history. What Stalin — and for decades after Stalin was no more, the Russian or Chinese state — did was what was "left". Much that still passes for left — and even Trotskyist — politics originates as principles read off from the practice of the bureaucratic ruling state-parties.

This book, which shows the leadership of the Stalinist British Communist Party turning itself inside out and upside down at the start of World War 2 to keep in step with what Stalin had done, illustrates the point.

From about a year after Hitler came to power until September 1939 the CPs subordinated everything to "anti-fascism" (which often became anti-Germanism: in their anti-German ardour, the French CP were to offer publicly to unite with patriotic French fascists!) They advocated working-class alliance with Liberals and even Tories to "stop fascism". The Stalinist police and the representatives of the bourgeoisie suppressed the working class in Republican Spain during the Civil War of 1936-9, and thereby made the ultimate victory of Franco's fascists certain.

Then, suddenly, in August 1939, the USSR and Germany signed a non-aggression pact. It freed Hitler's hands to start World War 2. On 1 September Hitler invaded Poland. On 3 September Britain and France declared war on Germany. On 17 September Stalin's army moved into Poland by prior agreement with Hitler. The fascist and Stalinist armies met in the middle of the Polish state and partitioned the country. Stalin backed the "appeal for peace now that Poland is no more" then launched by Hitler.

Hitler and Stalin were firmly locked together. Soon Stalin would act according to secret agreements with Hitler and attack Finland; a little later, in 1940, he would annex the three Baltic states. Indeed, at one moment just before the Nazi invasion of Norway and Denmark, it seemed that British troops would land in Finland, and Stalin would be in the world war on Hitler's side.

What did all this mean for the super-anti-fascist parties of the Communist International, parties which had grown substantially and redesigned themselves in the five years of anti-fascist Popular Front politics?

The "Molotov-Ribbentrop pact" of



Soviet foreign minister Molotov (gesticulating) with Hitler at cocktail party 1940.

August 1939 sent a tremendous shock through the West European and US Stalinist world. But it could be explained. The imperialist democracies did not want to ally with the USSR, and the USSR had a right to look after itself. What the Russian state did need not affect the policies of the CPs. They were still anti-fascist, they could still support the British-French war "against fascism" of which they had long been the outspoken champions.

Or so they thought. They continued to think that for the first two weeks of the World War, and acted accordingly. The General Secretary of the CP, Harry Pollitt — who had some standing in the broader working-class movement — immediately issued a pamphlet ardently supporting the war, entitled *How To Win The War*. The French CP General Secretary, Maurice Thorez, went one better than Pollitt: he joined the French army! (Within weeks he was to desert and flee to Moscow.)

'In German-occupied France — on the eve of the Nazi occupation of the USSR — the CP had been negotiating with the Nazis for the right legally to publish 'L'Humanité', its daily paper banned by the French government in 1939. Now it swung into organising the resistance.'

The penny began to drop with the Russian invasion of Poland and Stalin's support for Hitler's "peace programme". Soon the CPs did a fantastic somersault. Not only did they discover that Britain and France were, after all, waging an imperialist war which should be opposed, but that Hitler was the injured party!

The latter discovery was made for them by the all-wise Joseph Stalin when he supported Hitler's case against Britain and France and his peace programme. Suddenly, the CPs in belligerent France and Britain, which had been built over the last five years as anti-fascist movements, became not only defeatist but open pro-German propagandists, agitating on behalf of Hitler's grievances against imperialist opponents!

The looser sympathisers of the CPs ran for their lives, and for their sanity, in a great stampede. The working-class hard core stayed: many of them may have found the snuggling up to Tories and Liberals and French Radicals hard to take, and the pseudo-revolutionary posturing of the CPs against their own imperialism more convincing. The working-class would-be communists stood up to the repression that followed: the French party was banned, in Britain the party daily, the *Daily Worker*, was eventually pro-

scribed.

About Turn is about the discussion that took place in the leadership of the British CP after the outbreak of war when it became necessary for them either to break with Stalin and the USSR or to stand on their heads politically. It is a verbatim record of the Central Committee proceedings. It may, as the editors claim, be the only verbatim record of such a discussion in the leadership of a CP anywhere.

It is a record of how serious and dedicated people who wanted to be communists and revolutionaries, most of them with brave histories of a long struggle in working-class causes, convinced themselves in a matter of days to turn inside out most of what they had been saying for five or six years. It is a record of how the implications of the fact, for them overweening, of what Stalin had done and was saying, was worked through and rationalised from.

At the start most of the leadership seemed to be against any change of line. In little over a week all but three — Pollitt, J R Campbell, and the party's only MP, Willie Gallacher — had changed outright. But the outcome was predictable. The choice was stark — to go along with Stalin, or to break away from what they saw as the great world-wide army of working-class revolution.

That choice, faced again and again from the mid-'20s, inched millions of people who started out as communists bit by bit away from socialist politics, and destroyed the Communist International as a working-class revolutionary force. But by 1939 these people had made the choice often enough — on issues like the Moscow Trials — for the outcome now to be certain for most of them, despite the strain.

Real political discussion didn't really come into it. All of that was a matter of after-thoughts, rationalisations, and doing your best to convince yourself of Stalin's point of view. He was, after all, the very embodiment of Marxism and world revolution, and, according to the "Philby principle", he was in a position to define what was left-wing.

What I find remarkable in the book is how much of a semblance of a real discussion they managed to put up for their own benefit.

Since there was a strong socialist case against the policy of 1934-9, genuine splinters and shards of socialist politics and revolutionary or working-class feeling could be utilised to dress up the new line dictated from Russia. Their submission to the Pope in the Kremlin could be posed as a question of loyalty to the workers' state and the revolution: that was rationalisation on a basis of faith and discipline and mind-annihilating prostration more akin to the religious discipline of the Jesuit Order in its great days 400 years earlier than to the proper mode of operation of a self-liberating and self-empowering working class.

The words of the *Internationale* must have stuck in their craws: *No saviour from on high deliver! No faith have we in prince or peer! Our own right hand the chains must sever!*

Chains of hatred, greed and fear.

The decision "for the line of the Communist International" was carried with three votes against.

Within a few weeks the three had confessed their sins and "criticised their errors". Pollitt retired as General Secretary, and, since the Party didn't have a secret police to jail or shoot him, lived to come back as Secretary when everything was stood on its head once again after Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, and to remain in the post until 1956.

Now the CP could be super-patriotic again — giving all-out uncritical support to the Tory-Labour coalition government, strike-breaking, witch-hunting strikers and Trotskyists, and advocating a "Second Front", that is, a British-US invasion of Hitler-occupied Europe.

In German-occupied France, on the eve of the Nazi invasion of the USSR the CP in Paris had been negotiating with the Nazis for the right legally to publish *L'Humanité*, its daily paper banned by the French government in 1939. Now it swung into organising the Resistance.

Poor Thorez had it harder than Pollitt. He didn't get back to France until 1944, when he was allowed in under licence from the bourgeois "Free French" leader, General Charles de Gaulle. "Thorez", said de Gaulle, "is a useful man to have around".

So he was: the French CP joined the government and helped to disarm the French working class and rebuild the French bourgeois state before it was kicked away into opposition once more in 1947.

About Turn is edited from the viewpoint of the ex-Stalinist "God knows what we are" people around *Marxism Today*.

The introduction, by Monty Johnstone, is party hack work, evading many questions and issues, giving the Party the best case he can. You would not know from Johnstone about the pro-German propaganda of the party — but there it is, in, for example, the editorials by R P Dutt in *Labour Monthly* of November 1939 and later.

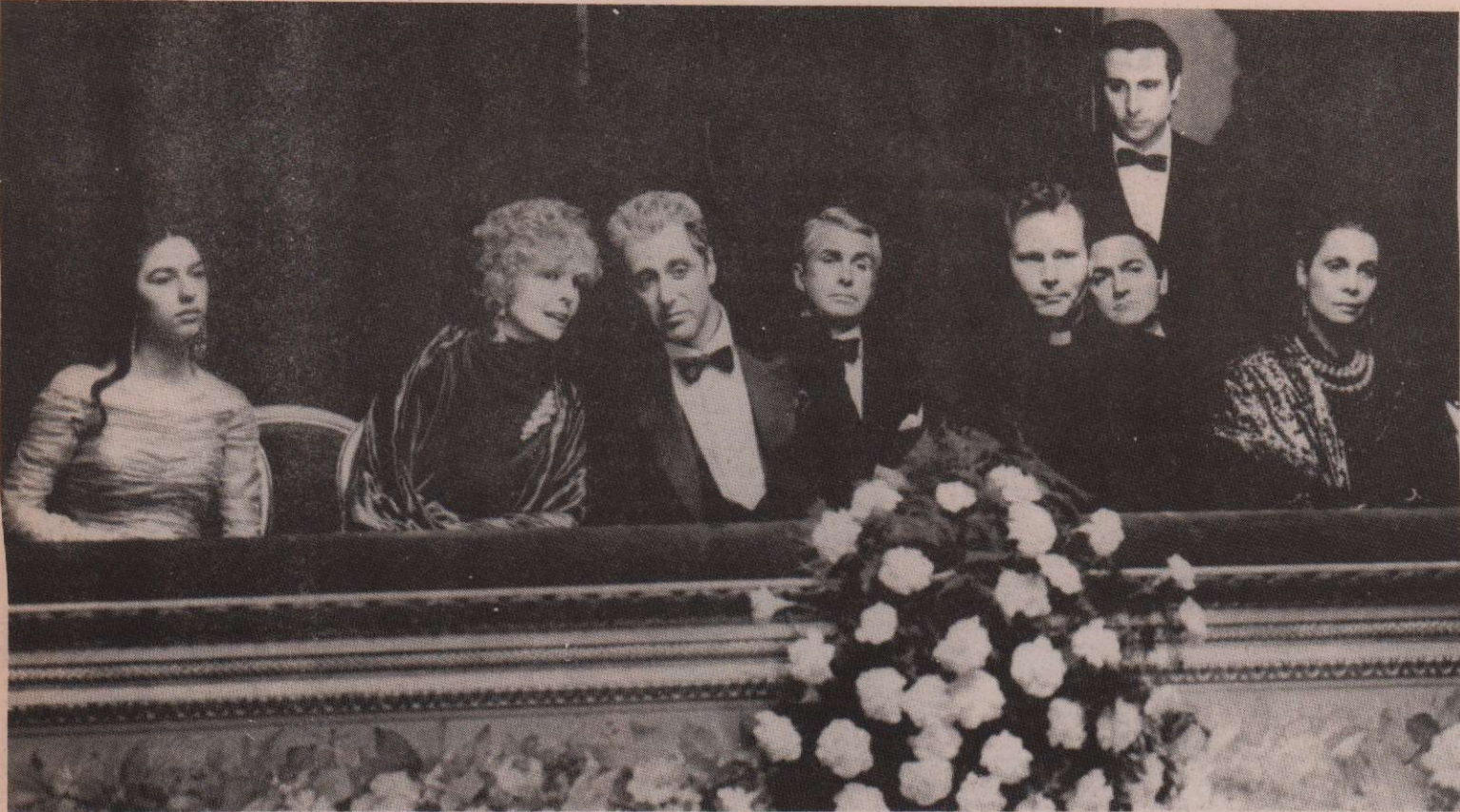
Johnstone, who was for many years the Party specialist on "Trotskyism", and who was himself briefly a Trotskyist in the later '40s, deliberately endorses misleading statements about Trotskyist attitudes to the war. You would think the Trotskyists in Britain were indifferent to the prospects of a Nazi victory and made no distinction between Nazism and British bourgeois democracy.

In fact the Trotskyists advocated the "proletarian military policy", which was as near to "revolutionary defencism" as you could get short of announcing it. There is a tremendous amount of confusing theology encrusted like decades of coral growth around the questions of "defeatism" and "defencism". But it seems to me that the policy of the Trotskyist Workers' International League was right. Both sides in the war were imperialist, and they denounced Britain's imperialist war aims. But there was a great difference between British bourgeois democracy and Nazism, so they linked the call for working-class revolution to the need for an effective fight against the Nazis. They said that the working class could not trust the British bourgeoisie to fight fascism.

That was not, as you might think from the book, anything like the policy the book tells you the CP promoted in 1939-41. Even less was it anything like the actual pro-German policy the CP pursued.

The modern CP still retains the most charming traits of Stalinism even while they are knocking at the door of the Liberal Democrats and the Kinnock faction of the Labour Party!

Pollitt is the hero of Johnstone's account. But I can't believe that even the utterly misguided Harry Pollitt of 1941-7 would recognise the *Marxism Today* crew as his children. Yet they are — and Stalin's children too.



The Corleone family and friends spend a civilised night at the opera

Crime at the top

Film

Belinda Weaver reviews "The Godfather, part 3"

"The Godfather, part 3" leaps twenty years to 1979 from where it ended in part 2. The Corleone family has pulled out of the gambling business and gone legitimate.

In the lavish ceremony that opens the film, Michael, 'the Godfather' (Al Pacino), is endowed with a papal decoration for his charitable work.

It seems the family has finally pulled itself out of criminality into the mainstream of American capitalist success.

But this is misleading. Within moments, we're back in a darkened room, Michael is behind a desk with

his bodyguard beside him, and he's intervening yet again in the kind of dispute he had hoped to leave behind him.

To make matters worse, one of the men quarrelling is his nephew, Vincent (Andy Garcia), the illegitimate son of his murdered brother Sonny. Vincent has inherited all his father's foolhardiness and brash manner, and he's trigger-happy. When in doubt, shoot first, seems to be his motto.

Vincent looks, and is, trouble. All the same, this is the man Michael must tame, to groom him for the succession. Michael's own son has repudiated the family business, just as Michael himself once did. An alternative must be found. Only Vincent fits the bill.

The Michael Corleone of "Godfather 3" is a very different man from "Godfather 2", and it shows in his face, which is dry and stiff, as if the juices have been sucked out of him. He seems tired, ready to lay

down his burden, a husk of the man he was. Only his eyes, which burn intermittently, seem alive.

He's a disappointed man, caught cruelly in the ironies of his life. He tried to detach himself from criminality to save his family, but finds that the higher he climbs, the more crooked things get. The businessmen at the top are just as greedy, just as venal, as those grubbing out a living below, and they're more dangerous, because they have more to lose if they fall.

Michael makes much of his efforts to protect his family, yet it was his gangsterism that endangered them in the first place. The bloodiness of his methods drove away his wife, and alienated his children, leaving him alone and isolated.

All the bitterness of his life seems to be concentrated in Michael's face, in the heavy lines, in the brooding eyes. This is a man who gained the world, but lost his soul. He's haunted by the blood on his hands, by remorse. He has lost his taste for killing. And that makes him vulnerable.

This is a sumptuous epic, but the sumptuousness lies mainly in the settings and the soundtrack rather than in the story.

As in the two previous *Godfather* films, there are plenty of scenes of family gatherings in American and Sicily, and we get grand opera and the Vatican thrown in as well. But the story is uninvolved.

It takes in the Corleones' attempt to buy into respectability via the Vatican Bank and a European conglomerate, Immobiliare, and it weaves into the plot the deaths of Pope John Paul I and the banker Calvi at Blackfriars Bridge.

But for once, and mistakenly, the family's enemies are barely identified. Much is made of the gangster Joey Zasa, who confronts Michael and Vincent, but he turns out to be a pawn of people higher up. We're left unsure for a long time who the real puppet master is, and when he's unmasked, there's no "Aha!" We barely recognise him.

For all its convoluted plot, the story is thin and meandering, with loose ends, such as the family's future in Europe, left hanging at the end. Coppola seems uninterested in the plot, as if the growing family problems absorbed him more.

There are no shortage of those. Vincent, the hothead, is romancing Michael's young daughter, Mary,

against Michael's wishes. Connie, Michael's sister, has grown into a Lady Macbeth figure, always egging people on to greater violence.

It's evidence of Mafia sexism that Connie is never considered for the role of Godfather. Like Vincent, she's as hard as nails, ordering deaths as if they were dinners.

The greatest disappointment for me was Vincent, though whether the fault is Andy Garcia's or the script's is hard to tell. The role is certainly underwritten. We never get inside Vincent for a moment.

One moment, he's no more than a violent thug, the next he's a smooth, calculating Don receiving homage from his men. There's no reason for the change, we don't see him develop. We can't guess at his motives or his feelings.

Perhaps he's meant to represent the third stage of the degeneration of the Mafia code. Brando's Don Corleone (Michael's father) was ruthless, but he had family loyalty and a code of honour, twisted though it was. Michael, in murdering his brother Fredo, betrayed the code, and Vincent seems to have no code at all. He's simply a mass of seething ambition, and at the end we're left unsure whether he betrayed Michael or not.

Though Pacino always played Michael as implacably self-controlled, we could usually tell what he felt. Even in his silence, he signalled his self-disgust and his alienation. Vincent signals nothing.

Taken together, the three Godfather films are an epic covering the rise to wealth and power in America of an Italian immigrant family.

The Corleone family methods were simply capitalism taken to bloody extremes, competition run rampant. Unlike capitalists, though, the Mafia families prided themselves on their code.

Women and children were protected, 'civilian' members of the families were not targeted.

With the coming of drugs, the competition for ever greater profits hotted up, and the code broke down.

With *Godfather 3*, Coppola seems to be saying there is no code any more, that international capitalism is ruthless and implacable, that corruption reaches right to the top, and that the toughness and amorality of a Vincent are what it takes to succeed.

Under our very eyes

TV

By Jean Lane

The *Late Show* debated whether it was right for the *Observer* newspaper to publish its horrifying picture of an Iraqi soldier burned to death in his vehicle as he fled from Kuwait, a picture which *SO* reproduced last week.

The *Observer's* picture editor defended it by saying that war is disgusting. All that we in Britain had seen of it until then was bomb damage to buildings and vehicles. We saw no-one killed. But over 100,000 people had died out there.

The *Times'* picture editor pointed to the photo the *Times* had used instead, showing a road full of bombed-out vehicles, and said that if readers used their imaginations they would know that there were people in those vehicles.

The *Free For All* programme (Saturday morning, Channel 4) was used by the mother of a member of the Ulster Defence Regiment convicted, wrongly it seems, along with three others, of a sectarian murder. They have been in prison for seven years and all their appeals have failed. A campaign is being built for a retrial.

The supporters of the four men have found that evidence was almost certainly tampered with, that false witnesses were used, and that confessions were forced out of the accused. But the wives and mothers trying to get some justice believe that they have learned something from seven years of suffering.

"Now we have a better understanding of what happens on the other side of the divide", says one. "I pity anyone going into Castlereagh, whoever they are". "I didn't pay much attention to what was happening to the nationalist community. You don't until it hits your own door".

Ignorance is the fuel of hatred and sectarianism. During the miners' strike a great veil of ignorance was lifted from the eyes and minds of many who were getting battered by the police, misrepresented by the media, denied work by the bosses.

Is this how they have treated black people? they asked. I saw it but took no notice. Is this what they did to the Greenham women? Until now I never listened.

And there's the answer to the *Times* picture editor. If people used their imaginations they would know that Catholics in Northern Ireland have been beaten under interrogation, tried without juries in Diplock courts, and locked up for years despite being innocent.

But it doesn't always work like that. Terrible things can be happening on your doorstep, in front of your own eyes, but only when they happen to you is the veil of ignorance lifted. Only then do all the things you saw on TV, all the words you read — and all the lies you were told — fit into context.

The miners' strike showed that the best school is struggle. Against a background of jingoism, of Arab people being imprisoned or deported without trial, and lies or lack of coverage about what really happened in the Gulf war, the *Observer's* picture may not have its full impact.

But, as the *Observer* man explained, "It's necessary to show it because everyone is sitting back at home and saying 'what a wonderful war'." The time will come when many people look back at that picture and say: "Is that what they did in my name? It's barbaric!"

A precocious Thatcherite

Books

Mick Ackersley reviews 'Memoirs', by Kingsley Amis (Hutchinson, £16.99)

People who claim to know about these things say that good humorists tend to be reactionaries.

It is something to do with having the vision imparted by a hard-edged "savage indignation" about the human condition, unleavened by sentimentality or hope of improvement. Kingsley Amis, at any rate, is a reactionary, and a pop-eyed spluttering sort of reactionary at that.

Strange to recall, Amis was once a man of the left, and his early books, like *Lucky Jim*, were radically critical of the Establishment. He was part of the brood of so-called "Angry Young Men" of the '50s and early '60s who were the darlings of the Tribune left. All of them, from Amis, through John Braine (*Room at the Top*), who moved from the Labour Party to semi-fascism, to the most talented of them, John Osborne, quickly turned into nasty and spiteful little petty bourgeois reactionaries.

They had about them a real, vicious, Poujadist hostility to the left and the labour movement. The hatred to the crusted old Establishment they expressed early on was that of the



Kingsley Amis: a "pop-eyed, spluttering, reactionary."

envious aspirant. It was the outlook of people from lower middle class or working-class backgrounds who hated those entrenched "above" them in society, and hated those "below" them even more.

They felt threatened by the militant labour movement of the '60s, and took to reactionary snarling before it was fashionable. Precocious Thatcherites, in fact.

In his memoirs Amis is gossipy and nasty about his cronies and enemies, all of them part of the gypsy encampment at the crossroad where literature, politics and media scratch each others' backs, genitals, and eyes.

Don't buy the book, read the Sunday paper extracts instead!

Pills to increase IQ — or to boost profits?

By Rebecca van Homan

Since BBC1 showed the follow-up study on the link between vitamin consumption and IQ last Wednesday (7th), chemists' shops all over the country have emptied.

The investigation was carried out by, among others, Professor Hans Eysenck — a psychologist who, in his book *Race, Gender and Intelligence* "proved" that genetically women and blacks are less intelligent than white men.

The study was of 615 children aged 12-16 years in California. They were divided into four groups. One took the full recommended daily amount of vitamins, one twice the amount, one half the amount, and the other quarter took placebos (pills with no active ingredient at all).

IQ improved an average of 3.7 points among those taking the full recommended amount of vitamins.

There are lots of methodological problems. The groups were not matched for age, sex or initial IQ. A third were never given an initial IQ test, so could not be compared. It could have been a sample biased towards younger children, and the results could just be from a "growth spurt". The results for the other three groups were never explained.

And, apart from all that, the programme never questioned the class issues in health and education.

Many children's diets do lack vitamins. Working-class kids often get poor diets — little fresh fruit and vegetables lovingly prepared, no fresh orange juice instead of fizzy pop.

And they live in poorer housing. They have less access to schooling and educational materials. They have less time and space to study, often sharing a bedroom with brothers and sisters. Parents are too tired to help them with homework, and cannot give them the personal computer or the private lessons afforded to middle class kids.

The only decent meal some kids get is the "free school meal", which many councils are slashing to stop getting poll-tax-capped. Free milk has long gone.

It is interesting to see who funds big research projects like these. Booker, the Nutritional Products manufacturer, has now launched two types of vitamin pill, one for children aged 7 to 10 years, another for older children, even though no studies have been carried out on under-11s.

Robert Maxwell was one of the three backers behind the research, and sure enough on Thursday Vitachieve's special offer was given a large advertisement in the *Daily Mirror*. This apparently was the last straw which led to the resignation of *Mirror* editor Roy Greenslade.

The study reminded me of one done after the Second World War, when the Government was encouraging women back into the home, which stressed the importance of the mother in child-bonding and later psychological well-being.

It looks like another example of big business's attempt to boost profits, with another promise of eternal youth or higher IQ.

Israel: outrage is not enough

Sorry, Jon Anderson, but you're wrong about Israel, about the Palestinians, and about SO too (Letters, SO 478).

Firstly, you confuse the Israeli government with the Israeli nation. Yes, Israel has a hawkish, aggressive government, but does that necessarily mean the nation of Israel should have no right to exist? On that criterion, every state in the world should be closed down. (I would like to see all states disappear under socialism, but that's another issue).

Most Israelis now in Israel were born there; they have, for better or worse, formed a nation, and have the right to exist behind secure borders. Yes, they seized the land from the Palestinians, but most modern states were

formed by conquest.

The only difference between Israel and a country like the US is that Israel seized land recently. To be consistent, you should be telling Americans to get out of American, Australians to get out of Australia, but you're not. Why not, if you believe that Israel should get out?

You don't say where they should go. You have no answer beyond saying Israelis and Palestinians should live together in one state. But that is no answer. You can't remove deeply-felt antagonisms by wish or by decree. Neither Israel nor the Palestinians want your solution.

What the Palestinians want is their own state, not a state shared with someone else, and unlike you, they recognise the right of Israel to



"The Palestinians want their own state"

exist. They may not like it any more than you do, but at least they are living in the real world.

It's not enough to have feelings of outrage. Solutions must be found. SO's position — a two-states position — is the position of the PLO, so your jibe that we have ignored them is silly. You are the one out of step.

Your position is the one the PLO has thrown overboard, perhaps realising at last that it doesn't mean two nations living side by side in harmony within one state, but merely the conquest of the Israelis.

Maybe that would satisfy some primitive urge for blood revenge, but it would not be a lasting solution.

The answer to the Israel/Palestinian question is not a perpetual seesaw, with each nation coming successively out on top. The only answer is a division of the cake, with each side having uncontested control over its own piece.

Belinda Weaver, Islington.

The SWP tooth fairy or Leon Trotsky

When I read Martin Thomas's article on the left press and the Gulf War (SO 478), I was momentarily unsure about whether to laugh or cry, until I remembered Lenin's advice that the point was to do neither but to understand instead.

Whether Thomas agrees with *Socialist Worker's* "line" on the war or not, even he has to agree that its

core message was to oppose it, which, as far as I can see, was *Socialist Organiser's* as well. No doubt Thomas saw the letter from SWP National Organiser Chris Bambery in *Tribune* which argued, correctly I think, that the minority who opposed the war did not much care whether anti-war demos were led by the tooth fairy or Leon Trotsky.

Bambery did not tell us which of the two he thought

he was, but by arguing for an end to the war and for British and US troops to get out of the Gulf the left did succeed in building a creditable opposition to it.

The fact that the opposition was not bigger is not due

to whether or not *Socialist Worker* got its line 100% correct but to Neil Kinnock's 100% support for the position of American imperialism. I find it extremely strange that Thomas does not dwell on this point instead.

But perhaps he is trying to avoid the awkward question of whether it is possible for honest socialists to stay in a Labour Party headed by the butcher of Walworth Road?

Frank Kitz, Crouch End.

Rottenness in an ideal world

I'm sorry I didn't convince Lilian Thompson with my defence of David Lynch.

I think this is because she's taking much too superficial a view of his work, starting from a knee-jerk reaction to the scenes of violence against women and missing the main themes altogether.

The 'wrath of God' stuff in particular has now been shown to be well wide of the mark. Laura was not inherently bad but had her life wrecked, then ended, by her father. Catherine Martell was not in fact immolated for her sins but has re-emerged as a strong, independent female character, while the 'nice girl' Maddy has been horribly murdered.

I'd venture to suggest that the point of *Twin Peaks* is this. Lynch has set up what

the likes of Ronald Reagan and the Moral Majority would consider an ideal world — tweeting robins, cherry pie and lumberjack shirts.

He then shows us that it's rotten literally to the core — the nuclear family personified by the Palmers is a nest of child abuse and now murder.

The 'perfect society' is based on the abuse of women, naked capitalist and male power, intimidation and violence. Agent Cooper's inability to solve the crime and prevent the second murder is due to his wilfully naive belief in *Twin Peaks* as utopia.

Characters like 'Bob' and Frank in *Blue Velvet* are shown as wholly bad and terrifying. They are also shown as potentially part of every man. Lynch is asking impor-

tant questions about male violence and about how we deal with it, how basically poisonous desires get into the subconscious of men and women alike and how hard they are to shift.

While there is a debate to be had about whether women should be portrayed as victims, I think this is a separate issue from whether a particular work is misogynist in itself.

Lynch certainly sets out to shock, but whether this can be classed as 'titillation for big bucks' rather than an attempt to confront difficult issues is a moot point. Certainly I think there are more positive inferences to be drawn from his work than those Ms Thompson has made.

James Shelley, Streatham.

Unity is strength

Reading your paper for the first time and finding it non-over-the-top and straight to the point, I thought I'd write as I fully agree with involving straight people within our fight.

I attended the Clause 25 march and dragged along two straight men who were drinking outside a pub as the march went by, much to my lesbian friends' disgust and dismay.

I argued that if we can get

the straight people on our side all the better. That's what we need.

How can we ask straights to be non-prejudiced if we are prejudiced against them? If that's how they feel about straights, why go on a march for equality?

I think it's this type of 'gays' that get us into trouble with their 'us and them' attitude. How can we ever hope to get anywhere? I think a few petitions from the straights sent to the government would go a long way!

Jo, Dartford.

WHAT'S ON

Thursday 14 March

Labour Against the War rally, 7.30 Central Hall, Westminster. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Bernie Grant MP, Ken Livingstone MP, Dennis Skinner MP, Gavin Strang MP, Dawn Primarolo MP, Audrey Wise MP, Labour Action for Peace, Labour CND

Nottingham SO meeting, "Fighting for Lesbian and Gay Rights", 8.00, International Community Centre

Friday 15 March

Sheffield Committee to Stop War rally at Sheffield City Hall, 7.30. Speakers include Alice Mahon MP Sheffield University SO Meeting, 12.00. "Third World and Imperialism"

Saturday 16 March

Left Unity student AGM, Manchester. For more details ring 071 639 7967

Sunday 17 March

Socialist Organiser student school. "A new world order — ours or theirs?". Details 071 639 7965

Anti-Fascist Action picket against racist attacks. Assemble at 10.00, Whitechapel Tube Sheffield Poly Socialist Organiser meeting, 7.00, Sheffield Poly Students Union. "Imperialism East and West"

Monday 18 March

Manchester SO meeting, "War and socialism", Bridge St Tavern, 8.00. Speaker: Jim Denham.

Wednesday 20 March

Manchester SO Meeting. "After the War — fight for socialism". Speaker: John O'Mahoney. 8.00 Bridge Street Tavern.

Thursday 21 March

Afif Safiah (PLO representative in Britain) speaks at a PSC meeting.

7.30. Manchester Town Hall.

Friday 22 March

Camden Nicaragua Association Social: Roberto Pla (jazz) and las Farolas Y Pepe (flamenco). £5/£3. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London 7.30.

Saturday 23 March

National anti-poll tax demonstration, London. Assemble 12.00, Emabankment

Monday 25 March

Socialist Organiser London Forum. "Their New Order". 7.30pm, LSE, Houghton Street. Speakers from Socialist Organiser and include Kurdish militant.

Thursday 28 March

"For democracy in the Middle East". Speakers from Palestinian, Kurdish, Iraqi and Iranian groups. 7.30 Pakistani City Centre. Organised by Manchester CAWG.

PR doesn't mean Popular Front

There are good arguments against proportional representation — particularly against the form being offered — but Al Richardson's talk of Popular Front coalitions is unconvincing.

Trotsky in his writings on Spain made it quite plain that when judging whether a particular front is an united workers' front or a popular one, one needs to take into account not merely the class composition of the leadership and/or membership of the various organisations, but also whether the front's demands are progressive or conservative.

Given that it is almost im-

possible — short of a Thatcher restoration — to conceive of any government that would be significantly more conservative than a Kinnock-led Labour one, it is inconceivable that an alliance with the Greens would deprive Labour of a radical characteristic.

Even an alliance with Lib-Dems and Heathite Tories, on the lines of the Callaghan government's dependence on Liberals and Scots and Welsh nationalists would not in any sense make Labour more conservative than it will be anyway. The choice is between two forms of conservatism.

Laurens Otter, Wellington, Salop.

British Timken: Defend Pat Markey! Defend your job!

By an AEU member

Against a background of threatened redundancy and short-time working, Pat Markey, AEU shop steward at British Timken,

Northampton, is facing the sack for contracting dermatitis while at work.

In response to a request for a transfer from his department to another suitable job in the factory, management are claiming there are no

suitable vacancies.

The timing is significant: Pat was given 3 weeks notice of dismissal at a meeting with the Personnel Officer on Thursday 7th March, taking effect from Saturday 9th March. On Tuesday 12th March, Timken announced

they want to make 90 people redundant plus have 3 lay-off days in April. It is obvious that Pat Markey — a union activist — has been set up. Union members at Timken have got to face up to either defending Pat Markey and thereby their own jobs, or let

Pat and their own jobs go down the pan.

The anger and frustration that have built up at Timken needs to be translated into effective industrial action. Simply appealing to management's better nature will have no effect.

Stop the job cuts!

Tube workers can win

A major battle is looming on the London Underground.

20,000 Tube workers are to be balloted by 8 April over 1800 threatened redundancies.

Union leaders are advocating an overtime ban. Many activists, however, favour strike action after the success of the 1989 strikes — which combined with action by railworkers to bring the capital's transport to a virtual standstill.

The tube workers have enormous power. If they use it they can halt the jobs massacre and provide an example that could turn the tide across industry.

Defend John Williams

Campaign against victimisation continues

By a CPSA member

John Williams, a long-standing activist of DE Plymouth Area CPSA branch, was sacked in January by the Employment Service (ES) agency.

The details of this victimisation were reported in SO No.474.

CPSA national officials are now taking up the formal appeal applications.

However DE Plymouth Branch, led by BL '84 have failed to lead any kind of campaign at all. No publicity material or circular has been produced to the members, and hence there is general ignorance of the facts of the case. Nor has a single workplace meeting been arranged.

As a result of this lack of activity and the risk of momentum being lost, the independent John Williams Defence Campaign was set up. The campaign, organised by Socialist Caucus supporters aims to counter management propaganda in the branch, and to spread the word of what has happened.

Already there has been

leafletting of civil service workplaces across Plymouth, and a successful public meeting held, attended by CPSA members and a broad spectrum of people from the local labour movement.

This has generated several donations toward the cost of the campaign, which aims to continue producing bulletins throughout the appeals process.

Another result has been the revitalisation of the local CPSA Area Co-ordinating Committee (ACC). As SO goes to press, the ACC is due to meet on 13th March to formalise the campaign.

The latest news is, though, that the branch has voted down a call for a one-day strike across Plymouth ES offices, planned for 15th March. It took a motion to the branch AGM for the leadership to accept the need for publicity. However, the membership accepted an amendment from a BL '84 supporter that the clause of the motion calling for action be deleted.

It will now be more difficult for the campaign to achieve action in more sympathetic branches such as DHSS Plymouth, Land Registry Plymouth, and Land Charges, without the vital lead from the branch.

The union nationally needs to monitor victimisations under agency management. It must make members aware of the threats posed and lead action where sackings occur or where personnel agreements are ripped up.

To send donations/messages of support, or to request a speaker on the DE Plymouth sacking, contact: John Williams Defence Campaign, c/o Traci Smith, Acting Secretary, CPSA Plymouth and Cornwall ACC, HM Land Charges Department, Burrington Way, Honicknowle, Plymouth PL5 3LS. Tel: (0752) 779831



Liverpool council workers lobby against cuts

NALGO Broad Left meets

By Chris Croome (Sheffield NALGO) and Tim Cooper (Secretary Notts NALGO, NALGO Broad Left steering committee)

The NEC of NALGO (the National Association of Local Government Officers) has surprised many in the union recently by its appalling failure to take up an anti-war position.

It wasn't until the last week in the war that the NEC actually called for a ceasefire. Until then the union had an official position of "... supporting action in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions to seek unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait".

There can be no doubt that the stance of the leadership of NALGO and of the British labour movement as a whole has massively hampered the anti-war movement in this country and therefore aided the warmongers. It's essential that they are not allowed to get away with this disgusting behaviour. The NEC must be called to account at this year's conference.

However, it is not only the leadership who have an abysmal record over the war. NALGO broad left has totally failed to pressurise the national leadership over its position on the war. After years of the SWP criticising Militant for failing to use the Broad Left to mobilise rank and file members this is exactly what they have done ever since they have taken it over. "Out of the frying pan and into the fire" as they say.

All we have seen nationally is the Broad Left issue a newsletter with Socialist Workers' line on the Gulf — troops out, but uncritical of Saddam and no call for Iraq out of Kuwait. No meetings of the Sheffield Broad Left were called for the duration of the war on the excuse that people were building in their workplaces — as if the two are mutually incompatible!

In the coming year it looks as if there are going to be numerous NALGO branches taking action over the cuts in jobs and services that implementation of the poll tax has resulted in.

So far this year, there has been industrial action in many areas including Waltham Forest, Strathclyde, Haringey, Liverpool and Southwark. Last year there

were poll tax related strikes taking place across the country, mainly over pay and conditions for carrying out additional duties. One huge failure last year was that there was no national co-ordination or strategy for similar local disputes — each branch was left to fight on its own. The most notable strike last year, the Greenwich strike, which lasted 9 months and was settled in February, could have been used far more effectively to provide a national focus for local

disputes on this count both the leadership and the left failed.

National action is needed with the demand 'No Cuts, No Poll Tax' to prevent further job losses and cuts in services. Socialist Organiser supporters have been arguing for a national focus and raising the idea of a NALGO demonstration at this year's Tory Party conference.

The Broad Left must campaign for the return of a Labour government and simultaneously fight to make that government restore all the cuts that have been made since 1979.

The forthcoming NUPE/NALGO /COHSE merger will create a super union that is likely to have a big influence in the Labour Party and potentially on a future Labour government. After a decade of retreat for local government trade unionism, it would be crazy for the left to restrict itself to direct action and not take the fight for jobs and services into the Labour Party.

NALGO Broad Left, No Poll Tax, No Cuts Conference
Saturday 16 March,
William Collins School,
Charrington Street,
London NW1

Liverpool council workers fight job cuts

By Stan Crooke

"What's the difference between a 'corpy' and a Scud missile? Answer: you can fire a Scud missile".

That was one of the banners outside Liverpool Town Hall on Wednesday 6 March, as 1000 city council trade unionists demonstrated in defence of their jobs.

27,000 out of a total council workforce of 29,000 struck in protest at the plans for 1500 job losses in the budget proposed by Labour Group leader Harry Rimmer.

The job-cutting budget was defeated by the votes of 29 suspended Labour councillors and another 10 Labour councillors not yet suspended. Four other budgets — proposed by the Liberals, the Tories, the SDP, and the Labour left — were also voted down.

Legally a budget had to be set by midnight on 10 March. Councillors faced a surcharge of £44,000 a day and being barred from office. So by 10 March the Labour right wing and the Liberal Democrats

reached agreement on a new budget, including 386 compulsory redundancies. It was voted through by 57 votes to 40, with only 27 of the 67 Labour councillors voting for it. The poll tax was fixed at

£474, up £25.

Council union leaders met on Monday 11 March to map out a campaign to stop job losses. GMB Branch 5 has already agreed to ballot on strike action.

Cuts budget forced through in Lambeth

By Dion D'Silva

A cuts budget was forced through the Labour council in Lambeth, south London, on Monday 11 March. If two Labour left councillors, Steve French and Greg Tucker, had not been barred from voting, the budget would have been voted down.

French and Tucker both have liability orders against them for not paying their poll tax. A legal ruling had been obtained that they had an "interest in the vote".

Strong-arm tactics were also applied to council leader Joan Twelves. We understand that she was

pulled in front of a Labour Party committee led by Bryan Gould and including Kate Hoey (MP for Vauxhall) and Keith Hill (PPC for Streatham) and told that she would be expelled unless she paid her poll tax, made every effort to collect the poll tax in Lambeth, and set a budget of £307 million (the maximum possible without rate-capping).

On 11 March, in league with the Labour right in Lambeth, she met two of those conditions. Publicly pledging to pay her poll tax, Twelves got a budget passed on the casting vote of the mayor. It involves £25 million of cuts, 500 to 800 job cuts, and a poll tax of £590.

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For more details contact Madeline Davidson, Secretary, Book Branch, NUJ, 314 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP. Tel: 071 278 7916 ext 229; 081 451 7608; or 081 801 2841.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Purge in Notts East Walworth Road moves against Socialist Organiser

By Martin Thomas

A recommendation will go before the Labour Party's Organisation Sub-Committee on Monday 18 March that Nottingham East Constituency Labour Party member Steve Battlemuch be "further investigated" for his "alleged association with *Socialist Organiser*".

These allegations have been slipped into the recommendations by Joyce Gould, the Labour Party's Director of Organisation, from her report into allegations of disruption in Nottingham East CLP. Neither *Socialist Organiser* nor Steve Battlemuch was even alleged to be involved in disruption; Steve was involved in the investigation as Chair of the CG.

There are no outstanding charges or allegations of disruption against Steve Battlemuch. Joyce Gould's case against him is purely political: is he associated with *Socialist Organiser*?

The National Executive decided to ban *Socialist Organiser* — without charges, without notice of evidence, and without a hearing — in July last year. It got its decision endorsed by last October's Labour Party conference, thanks to the block vote of the big unions, but the officials at Labour Party HQ in Walworth Road were evidently shaken enough by the campaign against the ban that they have held off on any action to implement the ban until now, when they can hope to sneak it through on the coattails of the Nottingham East investigation.

If the Organisation Sub-Committee decides on an investigation, and the investigation finds that Steve Battlemuch is associated with *Socialist Organiser*, then the National Executive can decide to refer Steve to the National Constitutional Committee for disciplinary action.

It still has to be tested whether the precise terms of the "ban" on *Socialist Organiser* — declaring the group round the paper "ineligible for affiliation" — are constitutionally sufficient to get Labour Party members expelled for selling the paper. Not everyone who sells or writes for *Socialist Organiser* is a member of an organised group, any more than everyone who contributes to or distributes the *Morning Star* is a member of the Communist Party of Britain.

In the case of Steve Battlemuch, as in the new "investigation" into Lambeth Council and the threats against *Labour Briefing*, the right of Party members to dissent is under attack again. What really bothers the Walworth Road officials is that Steve Battlemuch and publications like *Socialist Organiser* and *Labour Briefing* have opposed the Labour leadership on issues like the Poll Tax and the Gulf war.

Defend Steve Battlemuch! Write, and get your Labour Party to write, letters of protest to the National Executive.



Half million protest in Red Square Yeltsin [inset]

Miners' strike sweeps the USSR:

Yeltsin, the army's new strong man?

By Boris Kagarlitsky
(Socialist Party,
Moscow)

I have just heard of a supposedly secret deal between leading army generals and Boris Yeltsin.

The generals have pledged that they will not use force for the central government against Yeltsin's Russian government.

The army leaders are now more than neutral. The KGB and the army leadership want to get rid of Gorbachev. They see Yeltsin as the new strongman. Gorbachev is covering himself by moving back towards the army.

Yeltsin is approaching the culmination of his campaign against Gorbachev. Unless Gorbachev manages to use force, it would seem that Yeltsin has the upper hand.

The Soviet miners' strike is gathering pace. More than one third of the Soviet Union's three million miners have taken some strike action. The miners are now trying to get help and support from Yeltsin. In turn, Yeltsin, who ignored the strike at the start, is becoming very enthusiastic.

The miners' initial demands were economic, but when the Kuzbass region suddenly and actively joined the strike on Monday 11 March the economic issues were superseded by new political demands. The Kuzbass miners are demanding the resignation of Gorbachev, his

government and the Supreme Soviet. These are the top bodies of the Soviet Union, and these are the demands that appeal to Yeltsin.

Yeltsin's base and constituency is among the Russian Republic's bureaucracy. He is trying to destroy the central power in order to get some of its privileges.

In the Kuzbass, different pits have been on strike for one or two hours. The workers return to work only to strike again at some future point. Their joke is that they are deliberately trying to make it difficult for journalists to cover the strike action!

Of the other areas, the most active is Donetsk.

The situation in Vorkhuta is confused. The pit which was at the centre of previous strikes is now the least active. The other mines are more militant.

The Socialist Party has some support in the Kuzbass and Karaganda, but our main strength is in engineering and manufacturing in Moscow and Leningrad. The miners' leadership — in the form of many of the old strike committees — are pro-Yeltsin. The question is how long these committees, largely unrelected and unaccountable, can continue to shape events.

The miners' union has no republican structure: the mining areas are dispersed all over the Union, there is a single market in coal. So to follow Yeltsin would be a disaster for the miners.

In Russian we have a phrase, "working for someone else's

uncle". The miners must stop working for uncle Yeltsin. They must find their own way.

More on USSR on page 2.

They did not die in vain!

Vorkhuta is famous today as the home of a powerful and militant working-class movement.

In 1937 Vorkhuta was the place where the last, brave, defiant Bolsheviks were starved, tortured, and then massacred. They had fought the bureaucratic counter-revolution of Stalin inch by inch to the bitter end.

The workers have not forgotten them. During their last strike the Vorkhuta miners issued the following appeal:

"Comrades: At arctic Vorkhuta, where tens of thousands of detainees died from cold and hunger, cursing Stalin and the regime he created, there has been born a workers' movement whose aim is to destroy that system of administrative command. Those men did not die for nothing in the Stalinist camps!

"If the past is not to repeat itself, the cohesion of the workers and the unity of their demands constitute our only weapon against the bureaucrats, the functionaries, and the whole administrative system which hangs above our heads and is ready to strike us down so that it can continue to live and to command as before".

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