

When the Tories defied the law



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Asset stripping Czech style  
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For workers' liberty!



For socialist renewal!

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Get up, get out, get even!  
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# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

## Stop this genocide!

# Independence for the Kurds!



Kurdish guerrilla fighter recovering in hospital from phosphorous burns

During the war "the Allies", Bush, Major and their associates, called on the Kurds and the other peoples of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

The Allies waged their war for oil. They would not have cared about Kuwait without oil. But they dressed the war up in general principles.

This, they said, was a crusade to defend the weak and small nations, like Kuwait, against the big and strong — Iraq.

The implication for the oppressed Kurds inside the Iraqi state was, inescapably, that they too could be free if they stepped up their long-simmering insurrection. Showing in reality the heroism which those who recently operating the US butchering machine could only pretend to, the Kurds — the largest existing stateless nation in the world — rose all across "Iraqi" Kurdistan.

And the "Allies" let them be slaughtered. When it came to it, the Allies were for the survival of the Iraqi state, even under Saddam Hussein. For them the best would

be a pliant pro-American general to make a palace coup against Saddam while keeping the Iraqi state machine basically intact; but better Saddam than the peoples of Iraq taking affairs into their own hands.

The hypocrisy of Bush's and Major's rhetoric during the Gulf war has been thoroughly exposed and discredited by their collusive passivity while Saddam Hussein's army has defeated and systematically massacred the Kurds, down to the small children, and started millions of them on a desperate

flight towards the borders of Iran and Turkey. Tens of thousands of Kurds face death from cold and hunger, others from the Iraqi army.

Now, in response to the world outcry against the slaughter of the Kurds, Major, backed by the European Community's leaders and with nods of assent from Bush, talks about setting up an "enclave" for the Kurds in nor-

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Stop the slaughter!  
Defend the Kurds!

Thursday 11 April  
7.30  
Durham Road Community  
Centre  
London N4  
Speakers include Jeremy  
Corbyn MP, and  
representatives of  
Kurdish, Iraqi and  
Turkish organisations  
Organised by Labour Against  
the War

**Bush and Major: murdering hypocrites**

## The lie machine



**BLACKMAIL**  
Zoo slaughter threat is play to get £13m says Born Free star

**Daily Express**  
WIN a FREE family day out

**ZOO ANIMALS: NO REPRIEVE**

**DAILY Mirror**  
**WHO WILL SAVE US?**

There — and you thought the tabloids didn't care! Tens of thousands of Kurds face immediate death from hunger and cold and their attendant diseases. Millions face famine in Africa. Thousands of young people walk the streets of London without a home to go to. Let that give them uneasy pause? Not the tabloids!

Today got in on the act with a special hard-nosed cost-on-the-nail yuppie version of the animal magic story.

The Star's spluttering denouncement of a bishop who dared suggest this is not a time for celebrating the glorious victory in the Gulf. Shows just how much one tabloid cares about the carnage in Kurdistan...

# Tories in a muddle

By Cate Murphy

The Conservatives are still dithering and twitching and doing a sort of Tory tribal dance around the corpse of the poll tax.

Or is it a corpse? Some of them say it is, others that it is still very much alive.

It seems that the principle of it, that "everybody should pay", will survive at the heart of its replacement, entwined with a property tax.

The Cabinet is divided about exactly how much of a personal tax to keep (there is talk of £40 a head). The Cabinet fears that the Tory

party will be divided and in-wrong decision. Thus the dithering.

The Tories will try to keep as much of a "poll tax" element in the new system as they can get away with. The passivity of Neil Kinnock and the Labour Party is allowing them to get away with it. The initiative is still in Tory hands.

The gutlessness of the Labour Party leaders is helping the Tories and hindering those who are trying to fight them.

The fight against the poll tax is not over yet. Councils are still pursuing non-payers through the courts, including jailing those who can't, or won't pay. We should be demanding that Labour



Councils are still pursuing non-payers through the court

capacitated in the run up to the election if they make the

councils refuse to carry on implementing the tax. And

we should fight for an amnesty for all non-payers.

## Non-payer released from jail

By Nick Brereton

Poll tax non-payer Ian Thompson was released from prison on Tuesday 2 April following a campaign against South Tyneside council's decision to send him down for two months.

Ian was targeted as a prominent member of the anti-poll tax campaign, and the Labour Party, and was imprisoned on 27 March.

The move backfired when the Northern Region anti-poll tax federation published the phone numbers of the councillors involved and organised a picket of Durham prison, attended by over 100 people on the Saturday.

Ian's poll tax was paid for

him on Bank Holiday Monday (when all council offices were shut) and it is likely that the council paid it themselves to avoid further embarrassment.

South Tyneside council has been one of the most vicious pursuers of non-payers. Council leaders held meetings last year with their Scottish counterparts to discuss how to prevent people avoiding the tax, and were amongst the first to use bailiffs.

They are also planning to jail two more people in April: a 71 year old pensioner and also Ian Thompson's wife.

The local anti-poll tax unions need to continue their campaign against the jailings, and force Labour councils to put their energies into opposing the poll tax, and support the call for an amnesty for South Tyneside's 40,000 other non-payers.



## Victory against deportation

Dharmotwee Surju (right) has won her campaign against deportation and has the right to stay in this country — the family will not now be divided.

Dharmotwee is 26, and from Mauritius, at the time of the deportation campaign was pregnant and yet another black family faced the prospect of being divided by racist immigration laws. The Surju family can now stay together,

they have a 2 month old son, Jooneed Harry Surju.

Dharmotwee was one of three Asian women in Birmingham who were fighting deportation cases with the help and support of the West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign. Two of the women have now won their cases, Prakesh Chavrimootoo and her young son Prem are still fighting for the right to stay.

Photo: Mark Salmon

## Liverpool stitch-up

By Dale Street

"If you want a cathedral, we've got one to spare" is a line from a well known Spinners' song about Liverpool.

In many parts of Liverpool Labour Party members now have their own version of the refrain: "If you want a Labour candidate, we've got one to spare".

In six of the 33 wards in Liverpool two Labour candidates will be on offer to the electorate in the local elections being held on 2 May — one candidate selected by the local ward party, and one candidate imposed by the local Labour Party full-timer at the behest of the National Executive Committee (NEC).

The March meeting of the NEC also decided to suspend any ward which stood a candidate who was not on the panel. The ward Labour candidates will be up for expulsion from the party. So too will be their nominators and their seconders, and probably a substantial number of those party members who go out campaigning for them.

One ward is running its own candidate against the sitting Labour councillor. Another ward (a marginal Labour ward) is running an outsider from a neighbouring ward. Two wards are running sitting suspended Labour councillors as their candidates. The biggest winners from this duplication of Labour candidates will probably be the Liberal Democrats.

The blame for the duplication of Labour candidates lies squarely with the NEC and

local party full timers. This situation has been brought about by their increasingly undemocratic and dictatorial actions.

But the decision of wards to select candidates not on the panel is not the solution to the erosion of party democracy in Liverpool. What is needed is a campaign which links up the fight against the witchhunt in Liverpool with fightbacks against similar developments elsewhere.

Having failed to initiate an effective campaign against the witch-hunt in Liverpool, Militant is now backing the election campaign of the Labour candidates not on the panel. Whether this is just a

passing fad on the part of Militant or the start of a more fundamental shift by them remains to be seen.

As the Labour Party leaders step up their witch-hunting of party activists, campaigners from Lambeth are organising a meeting of the various anti-witchhunt campaigns — including End the Ban!, Friends of Brighton Labour Party, Nottingham East CLP, Liverpool and Birkenhead — for Saturday 27 April, ULU, 2pm, to discuss what ways we can link the various campaigns, exchange information, the better to fight the concerted attack on socialists within the party. For more information contact ETB! on 071 639 7965.

## Help our fund drive!

The winner of the £100 prize in the April draw of our "200 Club" is Richard Love, in Manchester.

Contributors to the "Club" pay a fixed amount — £1, £5, £20, as they choose — each month to help keep the paper going, and get an equivalent number of chances in the draw. The extra income is vital to balance a very strained budget.

One reader, writing in recently to subscribe, told us that this represented him succumbing to "the Leninist press" after long resistance. He found SO worth

reading despite thinking we were "of course" wrong on Israel and "naive" on the Labour Party.

If you think similarly — if you find the paper useful despite disagreeing a great deal — then you should consider helping us to keep going. Sales income alone won't do it.

And if you find the paper useful and agree, you should certainly help.

One-off donations are welcome as well as regular contributions. Thanks this week to "RH", Nottingham, and "a Nottingham reader".

Send donations to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

## 'Alliance for Workers' Liberty' plans May conference

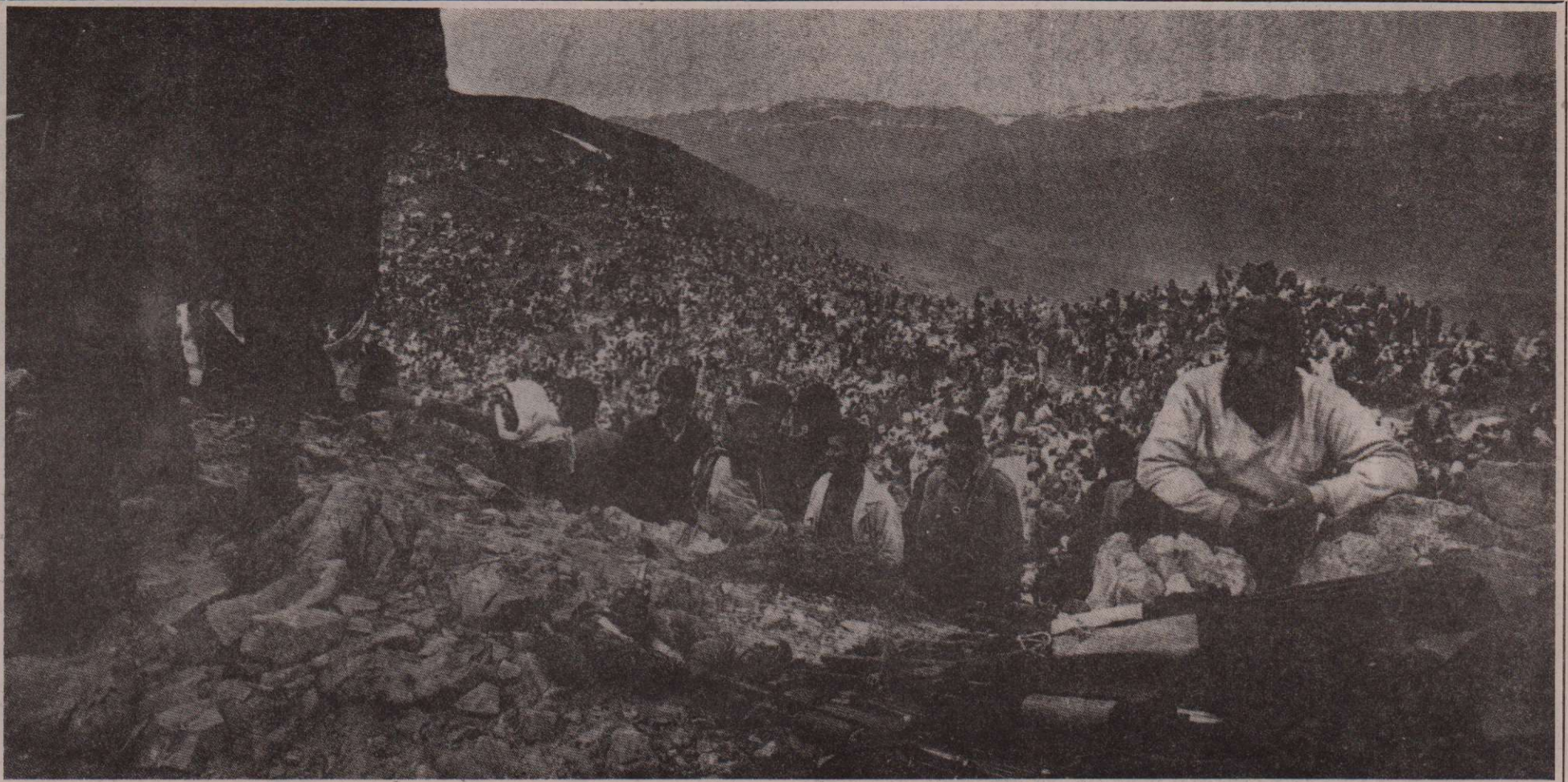
Alliance for Workers' Liberty

Launch conference Saturday-Sunday 4-5 May, London

Redefining the Left

Sessions include: The "new world order" • Prospects for the Labour left • Rebuilding the left in the unions • Finishing off the poll tax • Winning students to socialism • Organising the Alliance • Redefining the left  
Registration: £8 waged/£5 students/low-waged/£2 unwaged. Send cheques payable to Workers' Liberty, to AWL, c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Name.....  
Address.....



**Bush and Major: murdering hypocrites!**

# Independence for the Kurds!

From front page

thern Iraq, under the control of the United Nations.

They are taking the idea to the UN for approval. This means that Major and Bush are probably not serious about it.

China, or the USSR, or both, are likely to veto any interference under UN auspices into the "integrity" of the Iraqi state. They have too many unwilling minorities of their own, from China's savagely oppressed Tibetans to the USSR's Baltic states, or Georgia, which has just voted for independence.

So Major and Bush may really be going through a manoeuvre to disarm their critics. They may also be putting additional pressure on those within the Iraqi army to whom they look for a coup against Saddam Hussein.

If, nevertheless, the imperialist armies somehow press ahead and create a Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq, what should be the attitude of socialists? The short answer is that we should welcome it, while retaining our attitude of distrust and hostility to the "Allies".

We have opposed, and continue to oppose, the very presence of the US and British troops in the region; but the Kurds face genocide.

To counterpose the Kurds' own armed struggle for liberation to imperialist intervention is senseless when the Kurdish fighters have been defeated and the Kurds are fleeing in terror. If, for their own reasons, responding to the mass exodus of Kurds, the imperialist powers set up an enclave which allows the Kurds to save their lives and to regroup even to some extent, then we must be glad for the Kurds. At the same time we will not ignore the other things, the fundamental things, which the imperialist troops do too, and what they represent in the region.

**S**ocialist Organiser opposed the war against Iraq. It was a war for oil and prestige, waged against Iraq by Saddam Hussein's long-time backers and armourers.

Iraq, a would-be regional imperialism and one of the most savage regimes on earth, had no right to seize Kuwait, we said. But the US response — and that is what it was, essentially, under cover of the United Nations — meant a partial "recolonisation" of Arabia, turning the clock back decades.

Then the US and its allies bombed Iraq's cities back into the 19th century, and, strong with a commanding technical superiority, slaughtered Iraqi conscript soldiers. But they left the Iraqi military machine intact. That was not for humanitarian reasons, but because they want the Iraqi state to survive. They hoped for a military coup to cut away Saddam Hussein while keeping the Iraqi state intact.

**T**he 25 million Kurds are divided between five states: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, and the USSR.

Those states use the Kurds as tools and pawns in their antagonisms and rivalries. All of them are immovably against the Kurds' central demand, for an independent state encompassing all the Kurds: such a move would threaten their own states' integrity.

Turkey has long been an influential ally of the US. It is an aspirant regional sub-imperialist power, with a long-standing military regime which sometimes uses civilian masks. Turkey has eight million Kurds. It has long suppressed and oppressed them, attempting to force the Turkish language and identity on them.

The Kurds, to win freedom, face not one but five states unrelentingly hostile to their national aspirations. To win a state for all the Kurds will take a political earthquake.

The nearest parallel is that of Poland, partitioned for a century and a quarter between three great states, Prussia/Germany, Russia, and Austro-Hungary. It took the collapse of Russia's Tsarist Empire, and the defeat of the other two powers holding Polish territory, in World War 1, to give the Poles a chance to recreate a Polish state.

The Gulf war leaves all the opponents of the Kurds able to do business as usual, and worse.

**T**he Kurds have a right to an independent state. Until they win that right, they will continue to be the victims of oppression from five sides.

When Socialist Organiser opposed the US-led assault on Iraq, we did so in the name not of defence of the Iraqi state, or of the integrity of Iraq, but of *self-determination for the peoples of Iraq*. We supported

the Kurds' right to rise up against Iraq when it was weakened by war.

Today the Kurds have a right to play their enemies off against each other as best they can, and the right to take what help they can get. They face mass slaughter from Saddam Hussein's guns, and from disease, cold and starvation: anything which allows them to survive, and at least to hope to regroup, is better than that. For the left to tell the Kurds to reject an imperialist-protected enclave in northern Iraq because anything from the hands of imperialism is tainted would be to make ourselves absurd.

It would be no less absurd to have any confidence in those who have stood idly by while Saddam murders tens of thousands and sets over a million Kurds on a desperate trek to save their lives. They aided and apologised for Saddam when he used poison gas against the Kurds three years ago. This time the scale of the Kurdish revolt and of the repression, following the war, makes hushing-up impossible. If the Kurds gain any advantages now, that will be a poor and inadequate by-product of their own heroism and determination.

If the US and its allies do set up an enclave, they will probably try to disarm the Kurds within it, rather than supplying them with arms so that they can defend themselves. They will probably oppose self-government for the Kurds within that enclave. In the rest of Iraqi Kurdistan, outside that enclave, Saddam Hussein or his successor will push forward their policy of "Arabisation", driving Kurds into the enclave and replacing them with Arab settlers. Those Kurds who, understandably, do not wish to go back into Iraq whatever promises

they may get from the UN, will find the borders of Britain and the US closed when they seek refuge — indeed, it may be that one reason behind Major's proposal for an "enclave" is to deflect pressure for Kurdish refugees to be admitted to Britain's and the US's ally, Turkey.

Even if the US and Britain do decide to do something to help the Kurds, it will not undo the terrible things they did in the war against Iraq, and the terrible things they are likely to do in future if they maintain a military presence and the role of imperialist overlords in the region. Major and Bush remain what they were: murdering hypocrites.

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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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## Stop the bigots!

# Tankies versus new realists

As I mentioned here last week, the bitter "left" vs "right" battles in the TGWU are often pretty mystifying affairs involving personal antagonisms and long-nurtured grievances but precious little (at first glance) in terms of boring old politics.

So it is with relief that I turn now to the MSF. Like the T&G, the MSF is presently riven by a bitter "left" vs "right" battle. Unlike the TGWU, the politics of the dispute are fairly clear. Unattractive (on both sides) but clear.

As you probably know, the MSF is the child of the merger mania of the late '80s, being a combination of the old TASS and the ASTMS. The two unions had very different traditions: TASS was controlled by a tightly-knit Stalinist clique around Ken Gill while ASTMS was a much looser outfit with no particularly coherent political "line" beyond what suited Clive Jenkins' ambitions at any given time.

Despite Jenkins' vanity and bombast, the ASTMS was relatively democratic, with a strong branch-based structure and a large, accessible annual conference. TASS, by contrast, was run on the sort of lines you'd expect from people who thought that Eastern Europe was a workers' paradise and Uncle Joe Stalin was one of the great benefactors of humanity.

The merger itself was motivated by financial problems affecting both the old unions and by the failure of the TASS amalgamation with the AEU. But it was carried out surprisingly democratically, with a great deal of consultation with the respective memberships and no less than two special joint conferences. Formal policy differences were not the main problem (Stalinists and right-wing Labour opportunists have quite a lot in common once they sit down and talk things over in a civilised manner).

The problem was a culture clash in terms of union organisation. The TASS Stalinists made little secret of their intention to lick the ASTMS into shape and impose their regime on the new union. However, the ASTMS membership proved remarkably resistant to Ken Gill's version of union "democracy" and set very strict conditions on the merger — much to Clive Jenkins' displeasure. Central to the ASTMS rank and file's demands was defence of the branch structure against TASS's "divisional" arrangements. As a result, MSF remains a federal union, with "Section I" continuing the TASS tradition, and "Section A" being, in effect, the ASTMS of old.

The present election of "general secretary designate" is in many ways a showdown between the two traditions. Barbara Switzer is the "progressive" (ie. semi-Stalinist) candidate, backed by the old TASS bureaucracy. Her opponent, Roger Lyons, comes from the ASTMS side and has the backing of Neil Kinnock and "MSF for Labour".

The election has already been the cause of a major internal union row: under the terms of the 1988 merger, the procedure for electing the general secretary should have been sorted out at the 1990 annual conference. It wasn't. Many members felt that the election should, therefore, be delayed until the 1991 conference and invoked the union's internal grievance procedure to ensure that this happened.

Disgracefully, an NEC member, John Gardiner, took a case to the High Court to block members' use of the union's appeal court! Gardiner (who has stayed on the NEC throughout this affair) is firmly in the Lyons camp — which would seem to rather undermine their claim to represent a more democratic approach to running the union.

Switzer and the Ken Gill TASS "Broad Left" are undoubtedly bureaucratic and in many respects worse than Roger Lyons and Co. But at least Switzer represents some sort of opposition to "New Realism" and Kinnockism. She stands for the repeal of all anti-union legislation, for instance.

Of course, what's really needed is a rank and file-based left, willing to challenge the new realism of Lyons and the bureaucratisation of Switzer. Happily, there are some signs that activists from both the old unions are getting together to build just such a current. In the meantime, it has to be very, very critical support for Switzer.

### INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper



# Defend lesbians

## We need an ongoing, united movement

### OUT AND PROUD

By Nof Ttofias

The current attacks on lesbians and gay men have given rise to a

new movement of resistance from the lesbian and gay community.

There have been large demos in London and today's activities have brought thousands of people together in opposition to the Tory plans.

With each piece of intended government legislation against lesbians and gay men

we organise campaigns in opposition in order to defend ourselves. What has happened in the past (after Clause 28 became law, for example) is that the campaigns collapse after we've won or lost — so there is no on-going lesbian and gay movement as such to speak of.

In response to Clause 25 and Paragraph 16 campaigns and groups have been set up

in London, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Liverpool, Manchester, and no doubt elsewhere as well. Yet all these groups have little or nothing to do with each other — there is no single national focus for the campaign.

Groups like Outrage have recently been formed and have been successful in getting some media attention for the attacks on lesbians and gay men's civil liberties. Outrage concentrates mainly on organising 'actions' or 'zappings' which are publicity stunts, highlighting different issues — recently Outrage organised a turn yourself in at Bow St police station to highlight criminalisation of gay men with Clause 25.

'Actions' and 'zappings' are a tactic first developed by ACT-UP, the originally US-based Aids Coalition to Unleash Power. Such stunts are fine in raising awareness and getting publicity but in and of themselves will not develop the movement to defeat the real attacks we are facing now.

More than ever we need a lesbian and gay movement that can organise itself in an ongoing basis — that can involve people all over the country.

The campaign would be vastly strengthened if we forced the labour movement to come out in opposition to these attacks and also to take up positive demands — so we should aim to orientate to the labour and trade union movement.

Although there is a need for a strong autonomous lesbian and gay movement it's vital that in the current campaign to defeat Clause 25 and Para 16 we involve as many straights as possible. We need to reach out to as many community groups, women's groups and youth groups as we can.

Getting up, out and even means getting organised!

# Step up the campaign against Paragraph 16

By Janine Booth

Rumours have been abounding recently suggesting that the Tories may change the wording of Paragraph 16.

The Department of Health has said that Health Minister Virginia Bottomley is considering removing the sentence "Equal rights and gay rights policies have no place in fostering services."

Promises of changes have led to a definite faltering in campaigns against the Paragraph, and some activists have suggested scaling down our action. Instead, I think that campaigning against Paragraph 16 should be stepped up — for several reasons.

Firstly, we should not trust a word the Tories say. Three years ago their promises to "change" Clause 28 amounted to inserting the word "intentionally".

Secondly, removing this particular sentence will not cleanse Paragraph 16 of its bigotry. It will still contain the words "the chosen way of life of some adults may mean that they are unable to provide a suitable environment



for the care and nurture of a child."

These words seem to me to be even more dangerous, based as they are on assumptions about how children should be brought up. The idea of state-preferred parents and state-preferred families has implications beyond lesbians and gays. Virginia Bottomley probably thinks that every child should be brought up by married, monogamous, able-bodied, white owner-occupiers!

Thirdly, if the Paragraph is amended then it will repre-

sent a victory (albeit small) for the lesbian and gay movement — for our demonstrations and protests, and for the 70 organisations that made submissions to the government all condemning its discrimination. The best way to respond to a small victory is to go for bigger ones! If we are getting somewhere, it is not the time to quit.

I think that the Paragraph 16 campaign should address local councils. Although the Paragraph may become legally enforceable it is only a guideline at present. Local councils — who run fostering services — are expected to implement it. We should demand that they refuse to.

We should work in the Labour Party for Labour councils to take a public stance of defying Paragraph 16. And we should work with the council workers who can also prevent its implementation.

It would be a delicious irony if, by the time the Paragraph is passed, there are more fostering services than ever practising equal opportunities and more lesbians and gay men than ever fostering children.



## Letter from Moscow

These are excerpts from letters to a *Socialist Organiser* staff writer from an Australian friend currently living in Moscow

We continue to be astounded and appalled by the USSR. It intrigues me to read of predictions of economic collapse and military coups in the future tense, because the economy has collapsed and in a sense the military coup has already occurred.

The hardliners are now well in control and have been since about the time of Shevardnadze's resignation. Some say Gorbachev was pushed into line, others that he only ever pretended to be a liberal, I don't know.

Now they have to find a way of getting rid of Yeltsin, or at least keeping him in check. Poor man, he's had 4 car accidents in the last 12 months and I'll bet they were all his fault.

If Yeltsin continues to be critical that's okay provided he doesn't threaten the power and privileges that the senior slob in the party, the military and the KGB have awarded themselves. If he is perceived to be a threat then he will be silenced and any response from his supporters would be met with tanks as the recent demonstration was. Then again, Yeltsin is not the answer to the USSR's problems.

Meanwhile, prices are to rise on 2 April by 80-300%, which means less than it seems because with the exception of bread, the items are only available at black markets or cooperative markets where the prices are already double or triple what the new official prices will be.

Our last months in Moscow have been fascinating; lots of adjectives come to mind when I try to describe the place; fucked is one of them, bizarre is another...

Probably the most difficult thing is living with a population of aggressive and totally pissed off people. Regardless of how insulated we are from the problems of the locals (and indeed we are

not suffering) living in such a negative environment rubs off on everyone.

Not that I blame people for being pissed off when their standard of living falls away. Most dissatisfaction is caused by the lack of almost all consumer items in state shops (and at state prices). Some things are available but must be procured on the black market at 20 times the state price and in queues that have never been longer.

We foreigners have access to two supermarkets selling expensive imported food and a third shop which sells Russian goods for hard currency prices to foreigners and high ranking local bureaucrats and party officials. There are also cooperative vegetable markets where expensive (for locals) products are available during the summer months.

If security continues to deteriorate, and the food crisis likewise, I could see these three shops being attacked and looted. Selling otherwise unavailable Russian goods to foreigners and local high rankers for hard currency is an obscenity.

Moscow is an attractive place apart from its drab suburbs of endless apartment blocks. Still, at 12 roubles per month rent I guess you can't expect beauty; apparently rents have not increased since 1923. We've been into one Soviet apartment which we thought was sizeable, but most people complain that they have no space.

Our own living conditions are good. We have a large comfortable apartment and a wonderful car. Working conditions however, are appalling, and in Australia would long ago have been the subject of industrial action — very cramped and with poor ventilation which means considerable stress and illness.

Travel within the USSR is surprisingly easy. Internal airfares work out at about £3 per 1000 km, so we've been flying to places like Samarkand and Irkutsk for long weekends. We are travelling as much as we can as the cheap airfares can't last.

It seems that the further away you get from Moscow the lower the level of dissatisfaction; people in Samarkand actually smiled at us. Who knows, maybe they actually laugh in Vladivostok.



Poverty in Leningrad

# and gay men!

## Is 'queer' cool?

By Mark Holden

"Are you a queer?" Those words, spoken by some thug encountered in the street would probably terrify most lesbians and gay men.

They're the prelude to the sort of violent attack that is now on the increase. Recently, however, some lesbian and gay activists have asked this question to lesbians and gay men in general.

The London Paragraph 16/Clause 25 demo was led off by a banner proclaiming that it's "cool to be queer".

Confident assertions of our sexuality are a good thing but I'm not sure that the word "queer" can be used in any positive way. It's loaded with negative connotations. It

means strange, unnatural, peculiar.

For me it conjured up an image of a fifties underworld of sad, self-oppressed homosexuals which has little connection with either the present day lesbian and gay scene or with campaigning that is unashamed about lesbian and gay sexuality.

There has been some debate about this in the lesbian and gay press mainly prompted by the use of the word "queer" on actions organised by Outrage, the lesbian and gay direct action group. Perhaps a debate over the use of a word does seem like a luxury we can ill afford while under attack. Lousy slogans, however, can mislead and confuse, doing more harm than good in the process.

One of Outrage's recent stickers, "Stop the Straight War Against Queer Love"

completely fails to recognise who the real enemy is. We're not being attacked in a

*"The word the bigots have used for decades to dehumanise and abuse us should be left with them."*

generalised "straight war", on our rights. Many heterosexuals support the Paragraph 16/Clause 25 cam-

paign, some are active within it and many more can be won over to support lesbian and gay rights.

The enemy lies in parliament among a Tory government that listens too closely to the advice of moral bigots. The enemy is a government that feels it can win votes by attacking lesbians and gay men as it did in the '87 election campaign.

When the votes are taken on homophobic legislation it won't just be heterosexuals voting with the government, but sad self-oppressed homosexual Tory MPs thinking of their careers and cushioned by privilege.

The words the bigots have used for decades to dehumanise and abuse us should be left with them. We can continue to use the ones we've chosen for ourselves. We should also stop using lousy slogans.

men and their relationship with children. It ties in to the recent outcry in the media about virgin births and the restrictions on lesbians' access to donor insemination in last year's Embryology Act.

Clause 25 of the Criminal Justice Bill attempts to put victimless consenting gay sexual behaviour, such as cottaging (picking up men in public toilets) on a par with serious sex crimes like rape and incest and also introduces stiffer penalties for flirting and showing affection in public.

Operation Spanner was the first time since the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1968 that gay men over the age of 21 have been convicted for consenting sexual acts in private. Not one of the defendants in the sado-masochistic sex ring were forced to do anything they did not want to, yet the aptly

named Judge Rent ruled that consent was no defence.

A long-standing demand of lesbian and gay activists has been that everybody should have the right to define and express their sexuality as they choose, without fear of persecution for consenting sexual behaviour.

Our rights to do this are now directly under attack, yet the response of some lesbians and gay men has been less than adequate. Some groups and individuals involved in the campaigns around the present attacks are refusing to take up certain issues as they make them feel uncomfortable.

People should not let their personal views on sado-masochism prevent them from condemning Operation Spanner and calling for the quashing of the defendants'

sentences. All too often it is the parts of Clause 25 which refer to solicitation and procuring which are highlighted rather than the sections referring to indecency, as some people feel unable to defend cottaging.

However, we must defend all whose sexuality is condemned by the rest of society — our bottom line must be that men and women have the right to do what they want so long as it is consented to. To say anything less is to play straight into the hands of the bigots and those who want to totally criminalise our sexuality.

Everybody must feel able to participate in a united campaign without fear of condemnation. Our strength is in our unity — the state wants to completely outlaw us, they can't because we're fighting back!

## Love is not a crime

By Steph Ward (NUS Lesbian and Gay Committee)

The latest round of attacks on lesbians and gay men can be seen as the first steps towards the re-criminalisation of homosexuality.

Whilst many in the government would like to outlaw homosexuality completely this is not possible, even in the present climate. Instead, the state is picking on the aspects of lesbian and gay sexuality which people find most distasteful.

Paragraph 16 of the Guidelines to the Children's Act plays on old fears which surround lesbians and gay



Private enterprise Polish-style: a car boot sale

## New capitalist, old communist

### GRAFFITI

New capitalist is but old "communist"... a recent report by the Polish weekly *Wprost* identifies post-Stalinist Poland's 100 richest people, and comes up with a list dominated by ex-bureaucrats. Their cash often comes from mysterious business as "consultants". One of the new entrepreneurs is Jerzy Urban, for many years the chief spokesperson for the Jaruzelski dictatorship. He now publishes a successful satirical magazine. The *Economist* comments that Urban's magazine "makes *Viz* look like *Good Housekeeping*", and reports that it is being prosecuted for "pornography".

Just nine per cent of TV viewers give their full concentration to what they're watching, according to a recent survey. The survey (done for *Radio Times*) found that almost everyone watches TV, and the average person spends most of their leisure time watching. Yet most people, most of the time, are doing something else at the same time as they watch TV. A sizeable number claimed to read and watch TV at the same time. That's why we get so many TV programmes designed and structured on the assumption that no viewer will pay attention for more than a few minutes at a time.

The latest issue of the French weekly *Informations Ouvrières* (*Workers' News*, edited by Pierre Lambert) announces the launch of a new socialist journal in the US called *The Organiser*. *The Organiser* is edited by Alan Benjamin, formerly editor of *Socialist Action* (no relation to the British *Socialist Action* group, which has become much more pro-Castroite in recent months.) It's unfortunate that Benjamin and his comrades have teamed up with *Informations Ouvrières* and Pierre Lambert. Lambert collaborated for many years with Gerry Healy, and, though Lambert's group has not gone crazy like Healy's did, it has the same nightmarish intolerance within its own ranks, and factional unscrupulousness towards groups outside its ranks, as Healy made famous in Britain.

Jon Kavan, a Czech socialist who lived for many years in exile in

Britain, has been accused of having been an agent of Czechoslovakia's Stalinist secret police. Kavan's record makes the charge unlikely, and what his friends say is probably true: Kavan is being framed as part of a drive by the right wing of the Civic Forum (round Finance Minister, Vaclav Klaus) against the left. Robin Blackburn, editor of the *New Left Review*, and a friend of Kavan, has also been accused of being a secret agent, equally improbable.

The MVD is the USSR's political police, 600,000 strong, operating separately from the ordinary police and closely linked to the KGB surveillance machine. MVD troops are the men regularly used to suppress rebellions in the USSR. It was an MVD force, the Black Berets, which stormed Latvia's interior ministry on 21 January. The boss of the MVD, Boris Pugs, is an ex-KGB man. And who's helping the MVD? The American police. Under an exchange agreement between the MVD and the US's Office of International Criminal Justice (based in Chicago), Soviet cops and experts have visited Chicago, and the US's Joe Serio is currently working with the MVD. "One of the toughest parts of Serio's job", according to the *Moscow Guardian* news bulletin, "is dealing with the ministry's (the MVD's) image problem".

*Moscow Guardian* — an English-language bulletin for foreigners living in Moscow — also reports on a Soviet TV news item which showed Coal Minister, Mikhail Shchadov, cursing the TV reporter: "You're getting on my nerves. Go to..." The regional TV boss commented that "apparatchiks like Shchadov curse to show that they haven't lost touch with the people. They think that this is what democracy is all about."

The casino economy has come to Moscow — literally, according to another report in *Moscow Guardian*. A German-Soviet venture has just opened the fourth casino in the city. It is by far the largest, with an investment of [12 million. The USSR at present has no laws about gambling; so the casino management has drafted its own proposals for laws.

## GRAFFITI

# The grim reality

### PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Suddenly, the victory turned sour. The massacre of the Kurds and the cynical realpolitik of Bush and Major must sicken the millions of decent, misguided folk who thought the Gulf War had something to do with "liberation" and "democracy".

The unofficial spokespersons of this point of view, people like Hugo Young of the *Guardian* and Michael Ignatieff of the *Observer*, have been howling with rage and disbelief. Ignatieff nearly (but not quite) admitted that he'd been wrong about the war: "Now is the hour of our discomfort. We have got what we wanted, and it looks terrible".

Hugo Young, whose genuine dismay at the turn of events is not in doubt, attempted the unworthy trick of accusing the "anti-war school" of "grim relish... as it sees its prophetic warnings vindicated".

At least Ignatieff and Young showed some signs of remorse: not so that other leading pro-war "liberal", Neal Ascherson. His *Independent on Sunday* column is a characteristically erudite survey of the prosecution of national minorities through the ages. He comes close to suggesting that the betrayal of the Kurds was predictable. But he doesn't explain why erudite, left-liberal newspaper columnists with a good grasp of history didn't predict this outcome while they were busy supporting the war.

To their credit, both the *Guardian* and the *Independent* have given the plight of the Kurds the prominence it warrants. Both papers made it their front page lead all last week and devoted leading articles to the denunciation of hypocrites in Washington and London.

The *Times*, by contrast, was strangely subdued on the unfortunate matter of the Kurds. As Hugo Young commented bitterly, "The *Times* reduced the carnage to a handful of well-buried paragraphs from Washington. Having advocated a policy of doing absolutely nothing for the Kurds, no doubt it makes sense to sustain the impression that they are not front-page news anyway".

Mr. Murdoch's "quality" flag-ship can, however, lay claim to having published the strangest article about the



The left-liberal newspaper columnists did not predict this outcome of the war. Now they try to hide their shame

Kurds yet to appear. In Thursday's edition, Bernard Levin's column (movingly titled "We can only look and weep") contained the following pearl of wisdom: "The materialist view is that to exude sympathy into the world, without a name and address on it, is useless, indeed meaningless. But the rest of us know that the world can feel goodness even as it can feel evil. Almost all of the time

almost all of us are impotent to affect the course of history. But unless we practice an unwavering solipsism (it is possible) we are, for good or ill, members one of another." Or, to put it another way, no man is an island. Very good, Bernard. I'm sure the Kurds will be very grateful for all that sympathy being exuded their way just at the moment.

## I'm for Queen Nancy!

### WOMEN'S EYE



By Liz Millward

Marxism teaches you to look below the deceptive mere appearances of things, but to my shame I've just discovered that I have long been greatly misled by the "mere appearance" of former US First Lady Nancy Reagan.

For a start, I was never sure she was for real. You couldn't be sure "the great communicator" was for real either, but at least you could occasionally catch him in an old movie on TV and thus know he had a pre-political history and could not be the robot he sometimes appeared.

With Nancy you couldn't be sure. Nancy — Nancy

Davis — made few movies. All you had was the woman of a million "photo opportunities" who was always there with her rapt, silent half-smile of awe and adoration when her husband made a speech.

Appearance didn't help either since she looked like a Barbie doll come to life — a sort of upper income unadventurous female version of Worzel Gummidge.

I couldn't have been more wrong, according to Nancy Reagan's unauthorised biographer, Kitty Kelley.

Not only was Nancy the power behind Ronnie, the hand inside the Presidential glove puppet, she was responsible, according to Kelley, for moderating Reagan's right-wing posturings. She pushed him towards an arms treaty with the Russians, got him to distance himself — did you notice? — from the extreme wings of the anti-abortion lobby, and so on.

Nancy was Ronnie's liberal alter ego, says Kelley!

She knew how to fight her corner against the politicians and civil servants in Washington. Without even one US citizen ever casting a vote for her, Nancy Reagan won tremendous power over the lives of 200 million Americans, and over the thousands of millions influenced by US action or in-



Nancy dancing cheek-to-cheek with Mafia-man Sinatra

action.

A case of the hand that rocked the President ruling the world?

So did her astrologer: like Hitler, the superstitious Ronnie tried to plan his life according to the stars. But that is another story.

Not bad for a small-time one-time Hollywood starlet. What set me thinking about her and won me over to a new view of Nancy Reagan was this Tuesday's *Daily Mirror* page one account of her dealings with the British Royal Family. Under a giant headline "That damn woman" the *Mirror* tells us what the Queen thought of her, and why. How's this for social climbing: "America's former First Lady is said to have hustled herself on to the guest list of a private ball held before the 1981 wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana. And the Queen was

reported to be furious because she felt Mrs Reagan's reach was extending beyond her rank."

Worse. She turned up "for a polo match in a motorcade of black limousines with a helicopter hovering overhead — while the Queen drove herself there in a green Vauxhall estate with her corgis in the back seat.

"[She got] so excited to be in the public presence of Diana that she breached royal etiquette by putting her arm around the princess's waist."

The vulgar American upstart even dared walk "abreast of the Queen and 'brushing hips' as the two went to dinner when Mr and Mrs Reagan were invited to celebrate their 31st wedding anniversary aboard the royal yacht *Britannia*."

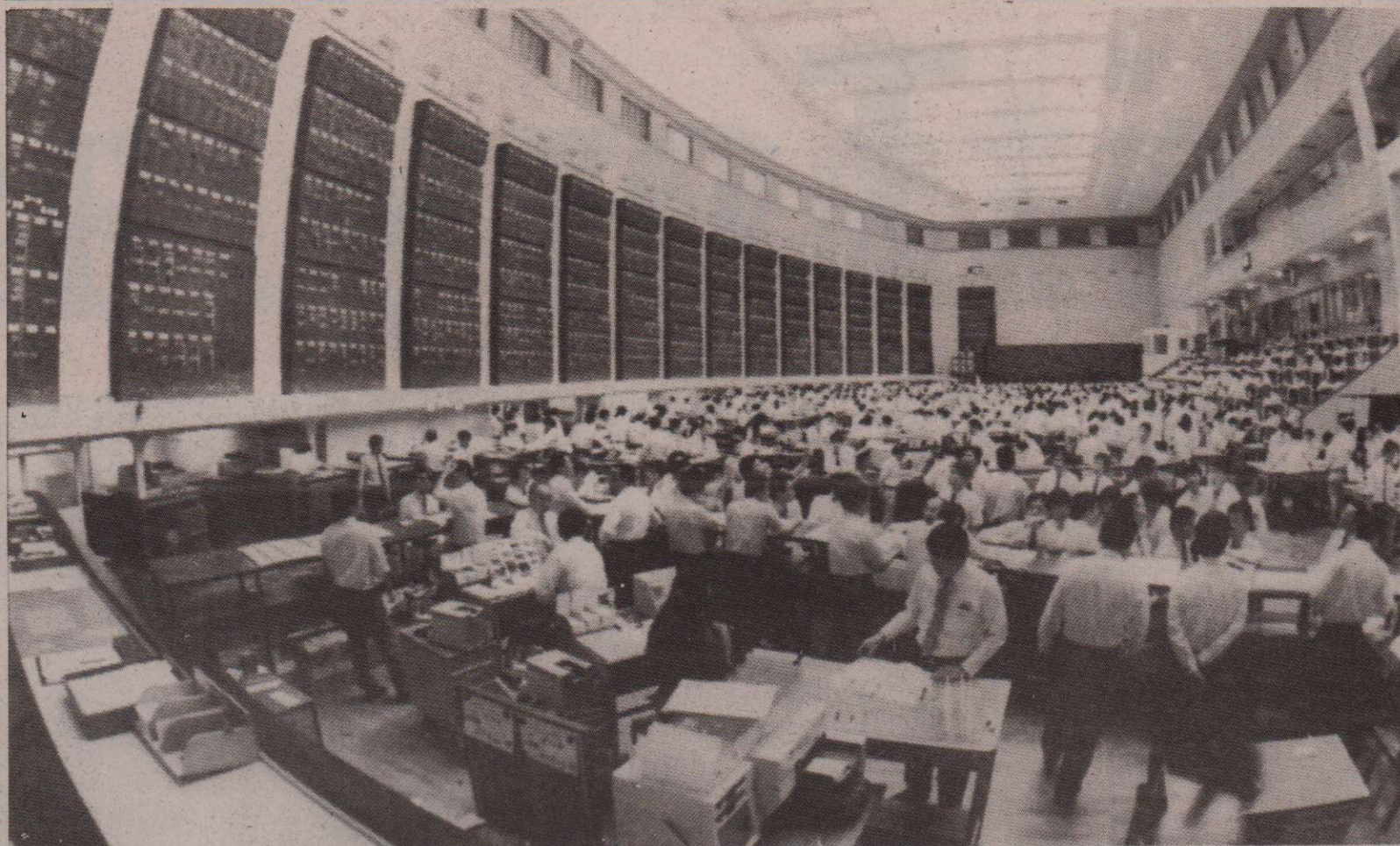
No wonder she was "that damn woman" to the Queen!

But I reckon that Kelley and the *Mirror* have probably got it wrong about the Queen's motives.

Surely that lady's real objection to Nancy Reagan would have been that they are too alike. Both have power and influence without ever having had to stand in an election for it. But Nancy doesn't have a single German princeling in her background...

If I have to choose, I'm for Queen Nancy!

## The decline of the USA



The Tokyo stock market

# Why the Japanese invaded the USA

Part 2 of a series by Tony Brown

Eight years of smooth EPR can't cover the fact that under Reagan America's decline as supreme imperial power accelerated, and the living standards of millions and millions of people reached new depths.

Reagan's ideologists, monetarist on economics and fundamentalist Christian on social policy, set out to smash what they saw as being the consensus that had existed since the Depression, and especially since the Second World War.

This consensus between business, government and unions had guaranteed certain outcomes on wages, welfare, employment and liberal social policy that wouldn't ordinarily exist if



Trade war cometh?

the market was "free". The Reaganites were quite open in declaring war on this consensus. If the price for returning to the "market", "freedom" and "profit" meant a return to pre-consensus politics, that is, naked class attacks, then that's how it would be.

The key economic task, according to the monetarists, was to rein in the growth of money and credit. The best way to achieve this was to reduce the government's deficit, that is, reduce the level of government spending.

Monetarists say deficits are bad because they must be paid for by either printing more money or borrowing. In the former the money supply grows too fast, which feeds inflation, and in the latter the state absorbs funds that would otherwise go to business, and so, private investment is crowded out.

According to Milton Friedman, cutting taxes (with the biggest cuts for the rich) would create growth and spur investment. Cutting government spending (mostly directed against the poor), would balance the budget and employment would grow.

Given the record on the subsequent rise in the levels of debt and deficits, it is hard to accept that these theories were actually believed by anyone in authority.

Between 1979-80 America's trade deficit (that is the difference between what is imported and exported, including both goods and services) averaged \$27 billion a year. In 1986 it was

\$169 billion. In 1988 it was \$120 billion. To the ordinary person these figures are incomprehensible.

In one month the US trade deficit is bigger than, for example, Australia's deficit in a whole year. In one year America's trade deficit is bigger than the entire Australian debt built up over its entire history.

Only now is the trade deficit coming down. But it is because America is entering another recession and so imports are harder to afford, thereby keeping the difference between imports and exports smaller.

In addition, the government's debt, expressed through its budget, is also historically high. For 1985 it was \$211 billion. In 1988 it was \$155 billion. This year it is expected to be a record \$250 billion.

Put together, total American debt reached a staggering \$3000 billion in April last year.

To appreciate the speed with which these figures are increasing one needs to know that in 1945 at the end of the Second World War America's national debt was \$250 billion. By 1962 it had reached \$300 billion. It broke the \$1000 billion mark in 1982 and in 1986 it hit \$2000 billion.

Because printing money was a cardinal sin for the monetarists, Reagan was forced to adopt a high interest rate policy. Interest rates had to be higher than in London, Tokyo, Bonn or any other major centre in order to

attract enough foreign currency to pay the debt.

High interest rates also served to prop up the value of the weakening US dollar, which meant that imports were cheap and exports expensive on the world market.

Domestic demand boomed under the high interest rate policy. Imports rose leading to huge trade deficits with most trading partners, some recording record surpluses. For instance, between 1983 and 1985 the West German trade surplus more than trebled from \$4.1 billion to \$13.1 billion. Japan's surplus more than doubled from \$20.8 billion to \$49.3 billion.

The United States went from being the world's largest lending nation to the world's largest debtor. Its deficit extended even to manufactured goods — now the US imported more manufactured goods than it exported.

Before the 1980s were finished, Japan, Germany, Italy, France, Britain, Belgium, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong all had a balance of trade surplus with the US.

In order to stem the flow of imports Reagan imposed quite severe quotas, notably on cars, and heavily subsidised American farmers. While this was contrary to the rhetoric of free trade and "level playing fields" it also produced quite unexpected consequences.

For example, Japanese car manufacturers in 1981 agreed to "voluntary" quotas which restricted Japanese car ex-

ports to 1.68 million per year (that is, 16% of the US market) for three years. This period was designed to provide a breathing space for US producers to regain their feet. However, during the 1982 recession domestic sales slumped and the 1.68 million quota became 22% of the market.

It also led the Japanese to change their strategy and instead of simply exporting to the US they began buying American car manufacturers so as to beat future protectionist policies. As the yen remained high in value compared to the dollar American land, buildings, stocks and shares became more attractive purchases.

In answer to the growing anti-Japanese feeling it should be noted that Japanese investment in the US is still less than that of the UK and is concentrated in the small to medium sized companies specialising in computers, telecommunications, financial services and electronics.

The table below gives some idea of the dramatic turnaround over 24 years of the proportion of imports in four important manufacturing sectors of the US economy.

Import shares of US market		
	1960	1984
Auto	4.1	22
Steel	4.2	25.4
Apparel	1.8	30
Machine Tools	3.2	42

## Trade union conference on anti-union laws

By Trudy Saunders, Unshackle the Unions steering committee and Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee

The 1990 Employment Act is the latest in a long line of vicious anti-union laws. Its effects will be felt throughout the movement.

Already this year we have seen management in the Post Office attempt to use this law against 800 Liverpool UCW members for taking solidarity action in support of striking postal engineers.

Shop stewards and union officials at all levels are directly under threat. In order to defend jobs and pay they will find themselves in direct conflict with the law and legal restrictions on their union's ability to defend them.

That's why we are organising 'Unshackle the Unions' so you can come and hear from leading trade unionists and employment lawyers the details of the Act and how it links into previous legislation. There will be time to discuss with experienced trade unionists the realities of fighting against the employers' offensive under conditions of the anti-union laws.

There will be the opportunity to attend meetings with those from your own industry or union to discuss the implications of the legislation and how to defend those victimised under it.

There will also be workshops on the various aspects of the legislation, its effects and how to oppose it. A briefing pack provided by the lawyers will be sent out in advance to help the discussion.

We are asking trade union and labour movement organisations to sponsor this event and help build it into a success.

A conference organised by Socialist Movement Trade Union Committee, Labour Party Socialists, Haldane Society, Solidarity Network and Trade Union Dues

## Unshackle the Unions

Fighting the Tory anti-union laws

Saturday 27 April  
11.00am-5.30pm

ULU, Malet St, London

Speakers will include • John Hendy QC • Ronnie McDonald (OILC) • Mickey Fenn (sacked Tilbury docker)

If your organisation is prepared to sponsor and/or make a financial contribution to this event, please fill in this form and send it to the address below.

We are prepared to sponsor this event on the issue of the Tory anti-union laws, their effects on trade unions, and how they can be opposed.

Name of organisation.....

Address of organisation.....

We enclose a donation of £.....towards the costs.

Please send a form for registration of ..... delegates at £5 waged, £3 unwaged per delegate.

Send to Carolyn Sikorski, 53a Geere Road, London E5

# The Tory in

## A split and divided party

John McIlroy continues his account of the Conservative Party

The Conservatives benefitted from the struggles within the Liberal Party over Ireland and its eventual support for Home Rule. Between 1885 and 1905 they were only out of office for three years. Their yoking of working class support into coalition with sections of capital enabled them to successfully negotiate the extension of the franchise in 1884-85, which gave the vote to workers in the country constituencies, although women and more than 30% of men who weren't householders were still excluded from the franchise.

The Conservatives were able to maintain their end-of-century dominance, despite any serious reforms, because of the Liberals' inability to deliver, although it was this political impasse which was to spawn the Labour Party.

They were able to successfully rely upon past achievements, imperialism, and relative stability. Even disgruntled Lib-Lab MPs, commenting in the 1880s, admitted: "The Conservative Party have done more for the working class in five years than the Liberal Party have in fifty."

By the turn of the century the Conservatives had constructed an alliance between land and finance capital, key consumer industries and sectors of the working class — rural rather than urban workers, southern rather than northern, professional and clerical workers

rather than the skilled craftsmen.

The City had attached itself to the Conservative Party and this already symbolised a neglect of manufacturing industry and a retreat from competition with German and Japan in the industrial market. Few would have predicted in the last days of Queen Victoria that a period of bitter internal dissension would endanger this achievement, lead to electoral disaster in 1906, and open up a decade of Liberal hegemony.

The occasion was the conversion of a major section of the party to a renewed imposition of tariffs to protect British industry against the now intensive and successful external competition from Germany and the USA. Change was also a response to the growing militancy of the working class in what was termed "The Great Unrest", indeed another developing social crisis reflected not only in the industrial sphere but in the struggle over Ireland and the fight for women's rights.

In the hands of the Unionists, led by Joseph Chamberlain, who had deserted the Liberals over Gladstone's policy of Home Rule for Ireland, and joined up with the Conservatives, the case for taxing imports became an argument for imperial preference: the development of Empire required tariff barriers, and, they hoped, a federated Empire.

The Party split into three factions and an ideological struggle, which in power and vehemence probably outdid anything seen in the 1970s or 1980s, raged both inside and outside the Parliamentary arena.

It was taken up in the country by

such bodies as the Tariff Reform League, and in opposition to them, the Free Food League.

The "Free Fooders" supported Free Trade against the proponents of protection. A third group, led by Balfour around the leadership, tried to sit on the fence, conciliate and hold the party together.

The prize of protection escaped the grasp of the reformers. By 1905 they were supported by 245 MPs, but as the electorate punished the divided party, they gained control of the apparatus in opposition, not in government.

The party's ensuing electoral impotence meant that they would not be able to put the issue to the voters in a referendum as Balfour proposed.

The Party had thus steered closer to manufacturing industry compared with their previous stance. But the issue was overshadowed by the constitutional disputes over the action of the House of Lords in rejecting the 1909 reforming budget of the Liberal Chancellor Lloyd George, another subsequent passage of legislation reducing the Lords' power from veto to delay.

In this crisis the Conservatives presented themselves as the Party of King and Constitution. However, Balfour's successor Bonar Law came from an Ulster Presbyterian background and the Party had always been firmly Unionist. For Bonar Law, as for the majority of Conservative MPs, the union now took precedence over the Constitution. When the Liberals introduced their Home Rule Bill in 1912 Bonar Law and Carson urged and aided unconstitutional and illegal resistance in pursuit of the exclusion of Ulster from the measure.

Bonar Law explicitly stated that if the Liberals called an election in March 1914 over the issue, "we will absolutely cease all unconstitutional opposition to the carrying out of your measure". When they felt that the interests of capital required it, the Conservatives were quite prepared to push overboard the totems of the constitution, Parliamentary sovereignty, and the rule of law.



Feb 1914: some of the UVF's 100,000 men show off their weaponry

## The party of protection

The Conservative Party emerged from the Great War recovered from the locust years and with its support intact. The City, to take one example, whose interests could well have been endangered by tariff reform, remained in the Conservative camp,

relying on the "good sense" of the Party leadership and powerful pressure from the Treasury and the Bank of England should the Party have formed a government on the basis of economic protection.

The evolution of the Party

## "Things stronger than parliament"

"There are things stronger than Parliamentary majorities", said Conservative Party leader, Andrew Bonar Law, as he campaigned against Home Rule for Ireland.

For the Conservatives, unlike some Labour Party leaders, obedience to laws made by Parliament has never been absolute. If they can secure their interests in accordance with Parliamentary formalities, well and good; if not, they will use other means.

That would certainly be true if a socialist majority were elected to Parliament and threatened their wealth and privilege. It was true even in the Home Rule crisis of 1912-14, when the stakes for the Conservatives were much lower.

For almost the whole 19th century, British-ruled Catholic Ireland seethed with discontent — and after the Great Famine of the 1840s with open rebellion. In the 1880s the Liberal leader W.E. Gladstone became convinced that the only answer was to grant Ireland Home Rule, i.e. self-government under the British Empire.

His first Home Rule Bill, in 1886, split the Liberal Party. "Liberal Unionists", led by Joseph Chamberlain, went over to the Conservatives, forming the "Conservative and Unionist Party".

But Gladstone, and with him a sizeable section of the British capitalist class, remained convinced that the cost of holding on to

Ireland far outweighed the damage that would probably result from Home Rule for Anglo-Irish landlord interests.

The Liberals introduced a second Home Rule Bill in 1893, but it was defeated in the House of Lords — and a third in 1900. The Lords' power to block legislation permanently had been removed. The Liberals depended on Irish Nationalist MPs for their majority in the Commons.

Meanwhile successive Acts of the British Parliament had to "buy out" the landlords and transfer the land to Irish farmers. The Conservatives supported this process. The port of the Land Acts, the Wyndham Act of 1903, was passed.

By 1912 much of the material interest behind Conservative opposition to Home Rule had been eroded. But the Protestant (Anglo-Scots) community in north-east Ireland, stirred up and again by anti-Home Rule agitation over three decades, increasingly alarmed by Gaelic-Irish nationalism, was mobilised.

Nearly half a million of them signed a "Covenant" and then to oppose Home Rule. The opposition to Home Rule increasingly slid over into the demand for the north-east to be excluded from Home Rule. An armed force which claimed to be independent, the Ulster Volunteer Force, was recruited to meet that demand.

Tory leaders backed the Ulster Unionists. F.E. Smith



The Tiger: "Curious! I seem to hear a child weeping!"

A contemporary view of the Versailles Treaty. French Premier Clemenceau takes a look at a child condemned to fight as a soldier in World War II.



defied the law

# Insurrection



## ... and laissez-faire

ter 1918 was conditioned by the development of the world economic crisis and the need to counteract in fashion the growing electoral power of Labour — given that the two threats were confronted by two parties which split the bourgeois

vote between them — and the industrial power of the unions which peaked in the immediate post-war years.

In power for 17 of the inter-war years independently, as the increasingly powerful force in the

1918-22 coalition with the Liberals and as the strongest party in the 1931 National Government of Ramsay MacDonald, Conservative policy development was limited, tentative and defensive, conditioned by the requirements of the different sections of capital in a world depression.

In the 1920s, there were few innovations and Conservative policy oscillated between conciliationist one nation tendencies personified

by Baldwin, and a "class against class" confrontationist emphasis personified by Churchill.

The interpenetration of the two tendencies when the system required staunch defence against the challenge of Labour, can be seen from the fact that it was the statesmanlike Baldwin who ruthlessly inflicted the traumatic defeat of the 1926 General Strike, following up fast and furious with a policy of wage cutting.

And of course, the 1927 Trade Disputes Act which outlawed secondary action and picketing as well as trade unionism in the Civil Service and introduced "opting in" instead of "opting out" of the political levy to financially disable the Labour Party.

The orchestration of "soft" and "hard" is evident from the way this was accompanied by attempts to ingest the leadership of the newly weakened unions through means such as the Mond-Turner talks — surely a better example than fox-hunting of the unspeakable in pursuit of the inedible.

The mechanisms of planning and state intervention developed during the war of 1914-18 were swiftly dismantled and the 1920s witnessed the return under pressure from the Treasury to financial orthodoxy, balanced budgets and a return to the Gold Standard — the mechanism which related national currencies to each other.

The drive of policy was to restore free trade and the UK's relatively strong pre-1914 international position. But whilst the Conservatives' policies favoured the City and the finance houses, export industries were hit as their products were made more expensive on world markets. The consequent sustained high levels of unemployment meant that the price of the world crisis was paid for by sections of manufacturing industry and sections of the working class.

In 1931 the Conservatives who had outmanoeuvred and marginalised the Liberals in a war of movement since 1918 were able to utilise the Labour leadership around McDonald and Snowden to orchestrate through the National Government cuts in real wages and unemployment benefits.

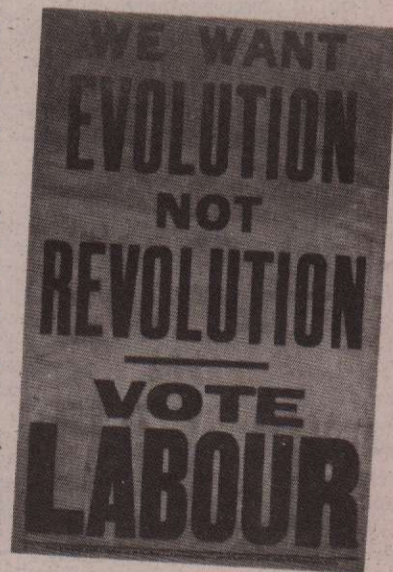
But the world picture stimulated a pallid reflection of other countries in a limited and gradual abandonment of laissez-faire doctrines. The government came off the Gold Standard and introduced tariffs to protect the declining industries, based on the

Import Duties Act 1939 which Neville Chamberlain proclaimed as achieving everything his father had campaigned for three decades earlier.

The turn to economic nationalism prompted by the world depression and trade war combined with a foreign policy of first isolationism and the appeasement to motivate the Second World War. It was combined with efforts to encourage cartelisation and the reorganisation of industry particularly shipbuilding. Some have therefore seen in the post-1931 period an erosion of laissez-faire and a greater reliance on state intervention which primed the Conservatives for the changes of the 1940s and 1950s.

The limited nature of the response, however, can be seen by comparisons with policies in the US (or even Germany) and the firm rejection of radical policies for solving the crisis such as those proffered by Oswald Mosley when in the Labour government.

The successes of Baldwin in engineering a growth in manufacturing industry from the early 1930s, in broking between finance and industrial capital and in protecting sections of the working class from the worst of the Depression, meant that, like Thatcher, but in a far superior fashion, he was able to construct a successful electoral coalition. In the 1935 General Election, the Conservatives won nearly 12 million votes, representing almost 54% of the total vote, nearly eleven points more than Mrs. Thatcher was ever to achieve.



Labour election poster

## ary majorities"

Belfast rally that this was "one of those supreme issues of conscience to which the ordinary landmarks of permissible resistance to technical laws are submerged". Bonar Law said: "We are drifting inevitably to civil war... If Ulster resists we will support her".

At the Curragh military base, British army officers declared that they would resign their commands rather than be used against the Ulster Unionists. The Liberal Government gave them a written assurance that they would not be.

The crisis was ended in August 1914 by the outbreak of World War 1. The Liberal Government seized the chance to suspend the Home Rule Bill for the period of the war.

After the World War followed an Irish war of independence, and, eventually, Home Rule both for southern Ireland (where it quickly became real independence) and for a new partitioned-off state of Northern Ireland (ruled for 50 years by a one-party regime of the Unionist Party, then still an integral part of the Conservatives).

The result was a mess, the price for which is still being paid today. A victory for the Liberals' Home Rule plan in 1886 would surely have brought less suffering. Yet it was the Liberal Party which was shattered by the Irish troubles; the Conservatives survived.



The general strike 1926

# By their heroes ye shall know them

## AGAINST THE TIDE

Sean Matgamna



This year's markedly muted celebrations in Dublin to mark the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising, and of the martyrdom before the British firing squads in Dublin and on the gallows in Pentonville Jail of the founders of the Catholic Irish state, reminded me how starkly people, classes and nations may change their heroes.

From Lenin to Yeltsin is a long way down... The descent from Wolfe Tone to Ian Paisley is even longer and steeper. In Britain it isn't "mainstream" any more to think much of the World War 2 heroes whose very stiff-upper-lip exploits held our attention for a generation after the war, filling the movie screens, books of memoirs, novels and boys' comics. In part this change is the natural result of the distance that comes with the passing of time and of generations.

**"Pagan myth and Christian myth were merged and fused with ancient and modern history — and with the history of Christianity, in which the Irish have played and play a big part — to create a powerful messianic Catholic Irish nationalism."**

Of a different order is the changing public attitude in the Twenty Six Counties to "the names that stilled our childish play" — the heroes of Catholic Ireland's struggles for independence in the first quarter of the 20th century. This is icon-smashing with a vengeance! The blind, panicky vengeance of Ireland's huckster bourgeoisie, to be exact.

For many decades they endorsed and propagated a version of the story of Ireland's unequal contest with England, burnished into a splendid epic legend. The long half-forgotten myths of ancient pre-Christian Ireland — such as the story of the young champion Cucullain — were rediscovered, refurbished, and woven into the fabric of living history by men like Padraig Pearse. They took heroes like Cucullain, the great warrior who died on his feet, having tied himself to a tree to face his foes, his wounds staunched with moss, and Jesus Christ in Gethsemane and on the cross, as their inspiration for the lives they expended in political action.

Pagan myth and Christian myth were merged and fused with ancient and modern history — and with the history of Christianity, in which the Irish have played and play a big part — to create a powerful messianic Catholic Irish nationalism. And, naturally, Irish nationalism also drew into itself much from the currents of romantic nationalism with which Europe was saturated for the first half of this century.

And whose history was this? What had all this struggle led to? To the rule of the miserable Twenty Six Counties' own pocket bourgeoisie — who lived on after their apotheosis as exporters of farm produce, and exporters, too, of generation after generation of Ireland's young!

As we used to say, arguing for socialism, anything less than the Workers' Republic was a grim mockery of the long struggle of the common people of Ireland embodied in our history, and represented even in the mythological version of it. The Ireland of the bourgeoisie was a grim mockery indeed.

In fact, it was never their history. All that should be said about the true worth of the bourgeoisie and of their ancestors in the struggle of the great mass of the disinherited Irish people was said by one of the Jacobin "United Irishmen" leaders, Henry Joy McCracken, 200 years ago: "The rich always betray the poor".

So they did. So they do. Immediately after the 1916 Rising, which was to become the keystone of the Irish bourgeoisie's myth of its own origin, the Dublin Chamber of Commerce passed a "loyal" resolution denouncing the Rising and branding it as a form of "Larkinism" (the name then of Irish working-class militancy, which had fought the bosses to a standstill in an eight month industrial conflict in 1913-14).

After most of the 1916 leaders had already been shot, the *Irish Independent* — today the organ of Fine Gael, one of the two main Irish parties — editorialised to encourage the British military authorities to go ahead and shoot the badly wounded "Larkinite", James Connolly. They had scores to settle from 1913.

It was never really their history: only the myths were theirs, and they gloried in them, preening themselves, dressing up like baboons who have broken into a theatrical prop room.

The disgusted pseudo-aristocrat Yeats, believing in *noblesse oblige*, had got their measure during the 1913 lock-out and strike, when they starved the workers and their children in an attempt to break their union. *What need you, being come to sense But fumble in a greasy till And add the halfpence to the pence And prayer to shivering prayer until You have dried the marrow from the bone? For man was born to pray and save; Romantic Ireland's dead and gone, It's with O'Leary in the grave.*

It was a sort of warning to them. And then, when the war of independence was over, and the bourgeoisie had seized control over the popular mass movement, divided and suppressed it, and assured their own rule behind the legal and ethical walls of the Catholic state they built — then, in safety, they could indulge themselves, not noticing the incongruities Yeats pointed to so bitterly.

Fifty years or so it lasted. And then the North blew up. The official Catholic Irish myth had it that "the North" was — just a matter of British imperialism and "British-occupied" Ireland, nothing to do with the other Irish bourgeoisie, the one enmeshed in the collapsing myths of the British Empire, and the Northern farmers and workers who followed them.

It had no grip on reality. Neither had the Irish bourgeoisie. Their interest in Northern Ireland collapsed, and so did their myths.

Perhaps the moment of sobering up came in 1970 when Prime Minister Jack Lynch put two of his Cabinet ministers (one of them the present Prime Minister, Charles J Haughey) and an Army officer, Captain Kelly, on trial for "gun-running" to the beleaguered Northern Catholics! (They were acquitted). According to the Constitution Lynch was pledged to defend, the Six Counties was part of his government's "national territory". It still is, officially.

**"Like the Irish bourgeoisie for so long, many socialists have lived for decades in a world of inappropriate myth and misunderstood reality. That too has collapsed."**

But Lynch didn't believe it. The bourgeoisie didn't either. Like the sobered adolescent whose day-dreaming has brought him close to disaster, they turned tail and extravagantly repudiated their former view of themselves. Now Romantic Ireland really was



## Those who do not learn from history are condemned to relive it

Liberty Hall, Dublin, 1916. This is the headquarters of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, and of its military offshoot, the Irish Citizen Army (seen in the photograph). The Army began in 1913 as a strikers' army to stop the Dublin police breaking the heads of striking workers.

James Connolly, acting general secretary of the ITGWU, led the Citizen Army into the Easter Monday uprising to win independence from Britain in an all-Ireland Republic. Connolly, badly wounded, was shot propped up in a chair on 12 May 1916.

Thereafter the nationalist segment of the Irish labour movement was taken in tow by middle class nationalists. The labour movement had long been divided on Green and Orange, Nationalist

and Unionist, lines (the majority of the Irish working class was Unionist not Nationalist). The southern Irish labour movement played a big role in the war of independence, as soldiers and organisers of political strikes.

In early 1919 striking workers organised a soviet in Limerick city, and for a while controlled parts of the city, issuing travel permits, even printing their own money!

But the Irish labour movement, crippled and inhibited by its own divisions along Unionist/Nationalist lines, did not play the politically independent role it might have played.

The Ireland they wound up "serving" was a bourgeois Ireland, which is not what James Connolly and his comrades had fought to win.

dead and gone. It has been succeeded by an age of the cold revision of history. Like pikes and guns, heroes such as Pearse and Connolly had been found to be dangerous things. They have been cut down to size.

The Irish bourgeoisie has finally adapted to reality!

From Pearse and Connolly to the grasping millionaire CJ Haughey — a son of Catholic refugees driven south by pogromists in the early '20s — and his rival, Fine Gael understudy Blue-shirt Bruton, that is the history of the modern Irish bourgeoisie in a nutshell! It is a long, long way down. This Easter's commemoration service sums it up nicely.

Like the Irish bourgeoisie for so long, many socialists have lived for decades in a world of inappropriate myth and misunderstood reality. That too has collapsed.

In Ireland, those who know what Pearse and Connolly and the Fenians and their predecessors really stood for will disentangle it from the bourgeois collapse, as they disentangled it from the grotesque parodies of it the bourgeoisie used to brandish.

And in the world of international socialism, the serious revolutionaries will disentangle the true socialism — working class liberation — from the Stalinist and other myths, fantasies and alien ideological encrustations. We will continue to do now, when so much has collapsed, what we did in the days when all sorts of freaks and horrors paraded around the world eagerly proclaiming their own horrible deeds to be the essence of socialism.

In both cases the collapse of the debilitating and imprisoning myths and fantasies is good because the way is thereby cleared for the truth.

Asset-stripping in Eastern Europe

# The start of Czechoslovakia's "small privatisation"

By Adam Novak

Vaclav Havel's new Czechoslovak government's plans for property are divided into four parts:

- \* The "restitution" — returning property to former owners,
- \* The "small privatisation" — an auction of about 100,000 shops and services to Czechoslovak citizens,
- \* The break-up of the collective farms,
- \* The "large privatisation" — selling off of state enterprises to foreign capital, with some limited coupon scheme for the population.

The small privatisation started with 16 auctions in Prague on 26-27 January 1991. The restitution process threatens to re-allocate many small shops and enterprises earmarked for the small privatisation. However, nothing is to be allowed to delay the small privatisation, which is an important symbol for the government.

The small privatisation, along with the coupon distribution in the large privatisation, is to be the population's share in a deal largely conducted between the bureaucracy and foreign capital (the large privatisation). For example, 10% of Slovak petrol pumps will be sold or leased to citizens, 40% sold or leased to foreign companies, and the rest maintained by the present bureaucratic enterprise<sup>1</sup>.

The privatisation of a large number of enterprises generates a lot of cash. Where does this money go? It does not go to the enterprise previously owning the privatised unit. The money raised is controlled by the Ministries for National Property and Privatisation. These bodies use the money raised first of all to pay themselves.

Official statements suggest, at some point in the future, the transfer of a part of the funds to act as a state guarantee on loans to private entrepreneurs. At the moment, however, the money is simply paying the day-to-day expenses of a growing section of the bureaucracy.

Emigre economist, Milan Zeleny argues that the privatisation "drains away capital from the entrepreneurial sphere, where it is needed, to the state coffers where it

is completely useless"<sup>2</sup>. It is indeed interesting to note that the Czech Privatisation Ministry has always been vehemently against any lease of enterprises to private entrepreneurs, a measure which could have enabled a much wider participation in private enterprise, and the accumulation of small amounts of private capital, but which would of course have raised less money for the state.

The local bureaucratic/mafia groupings managed to exclude their enterprises from the privatisation in several ways.

One enterprise even applied for exception from the privatisation on the grounds that they were intending to transfer the workshops in question to a collective of disabled people.

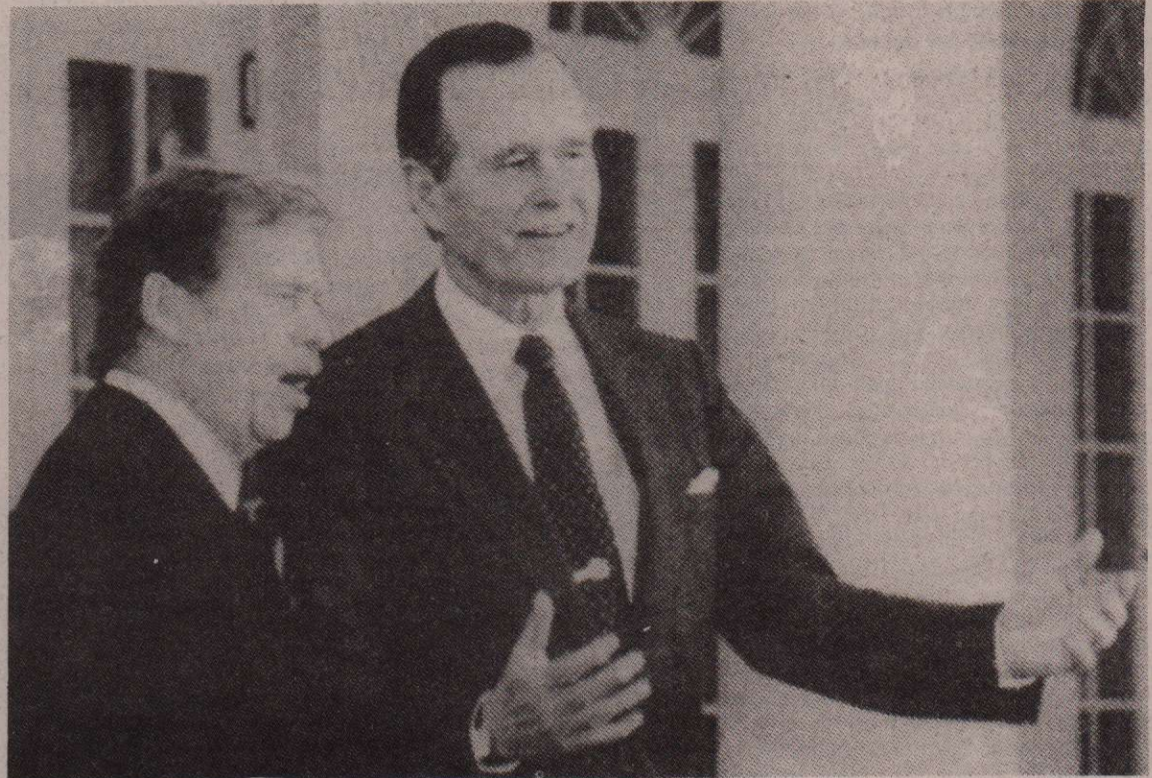
Many enterprises quickly took on apprentices, since enterprises where apprentices worked could not be included in the first round of the privatisation process.

Some enterprises or workplaces unilaterally declared themselves to be state joint-stock companies. This was not a movement for workers' self-management, even if it was supported by workers opposed to private enterprise. It was a legalistic manoeuvre of the managers alone. There is no evidence of workers taking action they saw as defending their enterprises against privatisation, such as barring entry to valuers, prospective buyers, or new "owners".

Many of these "independence" declarations have been ruled illegitimate by the privatisation ministry<sup>3</sup>. Only the ministry has the right to create state joint-stock companies, the legal form into which a bureaucratic enterprise must be transformed before shares in it can be sold.

Many local governments opposed privatisation of services under their control, in some cases virtually boycotting the privatisation commissions.

The main winners at the auctions were not usually present. These winners were certain groupings in the bureaucracy-mafia, whose gains are measured in terms of the number of enterprises they managed to exclude from the privatisation. The mafia



Bush spins a yarn to Vaclav Havel

now has several months to find a way of removing its favourite smaller enterprises from the open privatisation process altogether.

As a result of all these manoeuvres, the district privatisation commissions<sup>4</sup> and ministry have demanded, and will certainly receive, greater powers to overrule and defeat opposition from enterprises and employees to their work in the future.

The small privatisation so far is hardly a victory for the nascent Czech bourgeoisie. The first 16 enterprises auctioned in Prague<sup>5</sup> brought in some ten times their starting price. This seems due both to their central Prague location, their nature (including antique and clothing shops) and their low starting price.

Given such prices, it is not surprising that only one enterprise passed into the hands of an independent Czech entrepreneur not acting as an agent for a foreign interest<sup>6</sup>. Some foreign residents operated through Czechoslovak agents, while some, mainly Viennese, foreign entrepreneurs of

Czechoslovak birth, were able to buy openly. Ordinary citizens were quite simply unable to compete financially.

Liberals, even left supporters of the small privatisation, like deputy and director of the state press agency (CTK) Petr Uhl, have centred their defence of the government around the necessity to break up the bureaucratic monopoly over retail<sup>7</sup>.

It is however already clear that private sector interest is in restaurants and city-centre shops. In a large majority of auctions of food shops away from the centre of Prague, only one or two bidders take part in the auctions<sup>8</sup>.

The most plausible reduction in price and increase in service for the working population comes not from Uhl's corner grocer, but from the west-European supermarket chains. The Czech Commerce Ministry has long been negotiating with the aim of withdrawing some 10% of food shops from the small privatisation for sale direct to those western buyers able to give certain guarantees.

Stepova's openness provoked government concern, but there has been no theoretical challenge to her assertion that such a move to foreign domination of the retail system "is inevitable sooner or later, and we just wanted (with our plan) to save the population time and money"<sup>9</sup>.

Given the crisis in the food retail system, many suppliers have started selling a part of their produce direct, from stalls or lorries. Despite the appearance of chaos, this trend may be forcing some retailers to drop their prices<sup>10</sup>.

The small privatisation was originally conceived, against the opposition of the Klaus clique, as a protected redistribution of national property to an emerging middle-class layer of citizens.

Different variants of this scheme allowed for collectives of employees to have the right to purchase or lease their workplace before it was placed on the market, or for co-operatives of citizens to form with the aim of taking over village services, or other enterprises of their choosing.

However, with the growing alignment of the bureaucratic centre to international capital, its desire to create large private capital at the expense of small, and its hostility to any kind of collective ownership, have increased. The small privatisation project has been assimilated closer and closer to the large privatisation.

On an ideological level too, the soft, acceptable option of the small privatisation has served to introduce people to the hard reality of the large privatisation, in which private individuals will be almost completely excluded.

The bureaucracy will get its injection of cash from the liquidation of national property. The Czech ministry of privatisation, along with Vaclav Klaus's federal finance ministry, will continue to grow in power. Their tight control of the de-statisation process will continue to strengthen the legitimacy of their "white communism".

There will indeed be some sort of private sector, though so far only in commerce and services. What there will not be is any real introduction of competition and price competition among the shops ordinary people use. The cheapest food will continue to be that you buy off the back of a lorry.



Slow road to the free market

- 1 *Ecoservice* No.22, November 30, 1990.
- 2 *Ceske noviny*, 30.1.1991.
- 3 Czech Privatisation Minister, Tomas Jezek, interviewed in *Mlada fronta dnes*, 31.1.1991.
- 4 These commissions, each of 15-20 members, were named by the minister. According to one report "among them are lawyers, economic workers, entrepreneurs, someone from the town council, town-owned enterprises, and someone from a bank or savings bank", (Jiri Leschtina, *Mlada fronta dnes*, 31.1.1991).
- 5 *Ecoservice*, No.20, 29.1.1991.
- 6 This claim came from Vlasta Stepova, Czech Minister of Commerce and Tourism, quoted in *Rude pravo*, 31.1.1991.
- 7 See "Interview de Petr Uhl: la situation dans le forum civique", interview by Slavyna and Adam Novak, 21.1.1991.
- 8 *Ecoservice*, No.23, 13.2.1991.
- 9 *Zemedelske noviny*, 24.1.1991.
- 10 See my "New behaviour of food producers and retailers", *Ecoservice*, 5.2.1991.

# Where is the SWP going?

Martin Thomas reviews the history of the Socialist Workers' Party.

The events of the 1980s, and the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe especially, have shattered illusions on which much of the left has nourished itself for decades.

The left must rethink, reorient, rediscover habits of serious debate. This article makes a start by looking at the ideas of the Socialist Workers' Party, the largest faction on the left.

In the '50s and early '60s the Cliff faction, the group which would take the name SWP in early 1977, was very different from what it is today. It had a coherent (though false) picture of the post-war world.

Western capitalism had achieved stable expansion through the "permanent arms economy": permanent high military spending kept the economies permanently pumped up. The arms race also defined the nature of the USSR: it was state-capitalist because of the "competitive accumulation" forced on it by the arms race.

Third World revolutions would create new state-capitalist systems. Those revolutions would not bring progress, nor were they a threat to capitalism. Imperialism had been the "highest stage but one" of capitalism, in the words of a famous article published in 1962. It was finished: it had been replaced by the permanent arms economy.

The economic function of imperialism, so the Cliffites argued, had been to provide fields for investment of the excess capital of the metropolitan countries, and now the arms economy did that instead.

Much of this argument was in point-by-point counterposition to the ideas of the so-called "orthodox Trotskyists" (mainly the groups that would become Gerry Healy's WRP and Militant). The Cliffites were not Trotskyists, not even unorthodox ones. "Trotskyism", they said, pointing to the Healy faction, meant dogmatism, crisis-mongering, and a fetish of "leadership". Nor were they Leninists. Again, they pointed to the Healy faction. "Leninism" meant intolerance, rigidity, the building of bureaucratically-run sects with ridiculous pretensions.

As events unfolded, and as the Cliff faction grew, it changed its view of the world — not by critically revising it, but by abandoning it piecemeal.

Not only did it quit the Labour Party: within a few years its arguments on the Labour Party were so dismissive as to make a nonsense of everything it did in the '50s and most of the '60s.

In 1968 it suddenly went "Leninist". It made no theoretical reappraisal: in effect, all it did was decide that the emphasis on building an "alternative" organisational machine which (when small and in no position to do such a thing itself) it had long derided in the Healy faction was now opportune for the Cliff faction itself.

Whatever was good about its attempt to understand the world less dogmatically than the so-called "orthodox", and its accurate perception that the USSR was no workers' or post-capitalist state, was outweighed by its basic approach to politics and theory. Throughout, both in its "anti-Leninist" and its "Leninist" phases, the Cliff faction leadership has rejected Lenin's approach of fighting first for political clarity, and organising round that political clarity. Instead it has made the building of organisational strength primary, and treated ideas as things to be used, manipulated, or discarded accordingly.

In late 1971 the Cliff faction moved decisively to shut down its internal democracy by expelling the faction round *Workers' Fight* and instituting new rules which permitted opposition factions only as episodic groups around single issues (i.e. which outlawed across-the-board opposition).

The expulsion of the so-called "Right Opposition" (the grouping which would later



These arguments for and against entry into the Common Market are essentially arguments about how different sets of capitalists are to maintain their profits. It should not be our concern to argue one way or the other, for either way the profits are made at our expense.



The breathing space provided by the presence of British troops is short but vital. Those who call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops before the men behind the barricades can defend themselves are inviting a pogrom which will hit first and hardest at socialists.

spawn the RCP and RCG) followed in 1973; the expulsion of further oppositions in 1975 and the late '70s. Since then criticism or dissent inside the SWP has been confined to tentative bleats by small groups, and, more recently, it would seem, not even that.

As it has drawn down the shutters on debate, the SWP has also adopted an increasingly sectarian attitude to the labour movement.

The two developments are linked. In the early '70s it prided itself on building rank-and-file groups in the trade unions, on a militant bread-and-butter basis. It started to argue that the economic difficulties of capitalism were ending reformism's room for reforms and thus creating the conditions for the rapid rise in the working class of an alternative to the Labour Party.

**"The 'rank and file' groups were shut down. Over a decade of operating in the labour movement only as a propagandist sect, effectively trying to build the SWP's own parallel labour movement, has followed."**

It talked itself into an increasing ultramilitancy which, around 1975, lost it most of the trade unionists it had recruited in the early '70s. It then reoriented not by criticising its own underestimation of the power of reformism (a power which does not collapse automatically even when reformism offers no positive reforms), but by deciding that the working class had gone into a "downturn". The "rank and file" groups were shut down; over a decade of operating in the labour movement only as a propagandist sect, effectively trying to build the SWP's own parallel labour movement, has followed.

By now most SWP members have no ex-

The much less well equipped Iranians proved more effective fighters. In part this was because, even in distorted Islamic form, the mobilising impulse of the 1978-9 Revolution allowed far more scope for initiative and the use of flexible tactics. Only Iraqi air superiority and Western military and economic support made possible Saddam's eventual victory over Iran.

As it was, the war shook many Arab governments. A longer ground war, which could have been waged by a genuinely revolutionary army rather than demoralised conscripts, could have hit the region like a political earthquake.

The zig-zags of the Socialist Workers Party. *Labour Worker*, December 1966, 'defeatist' on the question of the Common Market. By 1971 they had, under pressure from the CP and Labour Party left, changed to opposing Britain's entry into the EC.

In September 1969 they refused to call for the withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. You will find no reference to this policy in any SW publication today.

In the latest issue of *Socialist Worker Review* they demonstrate the content of their 'anti-imperialism'. During the Iran-Iraq war Khomeini sent hundreds of thousands of troops to their death by the use of the 'human wave'. Is this what they mean by 'flexible tactics'?

perience at all of work in the labour movement aimed at convincing people and winning majorities. They have as little debate — as distinct from slogan-spouting — with other currents in the labour movement as they have within their own ranks.

The "permanent arms economy" theory was essentially a version of the Keynesian strand of academic economic thinking, according to which capitalism had crises because of insufficient market demand, and increased state spending could overcome those crises.

It added only that the state spending would be military spending, because competition between capitalist states forced them into such military spending.

When Keynesian economics floundered in the 1970s — because increased state spending was bringing only inflation and worse economic crisis — the "permanent arms economy" theory floundered too. Expositions of the theory had always included vague assurances that the "permanent arms economy" could not stabilise capitalism for ever — for example, the level of military spending imposed by international competition might not be the desired level for stability — but the attempts made to explain the slumps of the 1970s on the basis of those reassurances were increasingly desultory. Two attempts were made to reformulate the "permanent arms economy" theory in "Marxist" terms, and then the theory was quietly abandoned.

The idea that imperialism had been the "highest stage but one" of capitalism, now ended, was also quietly abandoned. Here as elsewhere, the SWP did not criticise and revise consciously and deliberately. Instead, it drifted slowly into adopting the "anti-imperialist" conventional wisdom of the "orthodox" Trotskyists which it had once derided.

By a process of sliding from one concept to

another, that conventional wisdom viewed anything clashing with the imperialism of the US and its allies — even such petty imperialism as Saddam Hussein's grab for Kuwait — as anti-imperialist, hence progressive and indeed likely to become socialist if pursued militantly enough. The Cliff faction once stood very far from such ideas. Gradually, however, it has drifted into them.

In 1967 it defined the Israeli Jews as a "national minority" in the Middle East who should have the same rights as, for example, the Kurds. "The only possible solution to the needs of the Middle East is the workers' and peasants' revolution aimed at the establishment of a socialist republic, with full rights for Jews, Kurds and all national minorities" (Tony Cliff, *The Struggle in the Middle East*). Now it insists vehemently, indeed hysterically, that progress in the Middle East can come only by the conquest of Israel.

As late as 1982 the SWP had essentially the same line on the South Atlantic war as *Socialist Organiser*. It opposed the war on both sides, Britain and Argentina, and rejected the argument that Argentina must be supported as "anti-imperialist". By 1988 the SWP was supporting Iran against Iraq on the grounds that US aid to Iraq made Iran's war "anti-imperialist"; by 1990 it was backing Saddam Hussein because the confrontation with the US caused by his invasion of Kuwait must make him "play an anti-imperialist role".

The thesis that the USSR is "state capitalist" seems to be the one element of the Cliff faction's old world-view which it has maintained.

Even there the continuity is more apparent than real. Cliff's original version of "state-capitalist" theory (in 1947) considered the USSR's economic organisation to represent the highest stage of capitalism. It was the highest stage — abruptly arrived at because of the workers' revolution in Russia — of the increasing subordination of all capitalist economies to state-directed military expansion (the "permanent arms economy").

That "state-capitalist" theory was inseparable from the "permanent arms economy" theory and could not stand without it.

The rise of Stalinist states outside the USSR which visibly were not regulated economically by arms competition made this thesis dubious long ago. So did the collapse of the "permanent arms economy" theory. The downfall of Stalinism in Eastern Europe demonstrates that Stalinism is not the "highest stage" of capitalism but a primitive stage of capitalism, or parallel to capitalism.

Instead of criticising and revising the "state-capitalist" thesis, the SWP has gradually trimmed away from it all the specific content which Cliff gave it in 1947, and reduced it to a mere label, nothing more than the assertion that the Stalinist systems are no better than capitalism. Thus on Eastern Europe, despite its loud boasts of being vindicated, the SWP has had very little to say other than that the change there should not be exaggerated and the free market is no cure-all.

So: some aspects of the old world-view have just been abandoned (the "permanent arms economy"), some maintained in hollowed-out form ("state capitalism"), and others replaced piecemeal by ideas from the Cliff faction's opponents within the left (on imperialism and anti-imperialism, and on Leninism).

A printing press, an established public profile, a core of loyal activists, and the general socialist ideas which are the common stock of all the left groups, provide enough momentum to keep a political group going for a good while whatever its ideological problems. Yet in the long run a revolutionary group cannot derive sustenance only from inertia: it must win a place by providing some more or less coherent view of how the world is, where it is going, what forces will change it, and how the group itself stands in relation to all that.

The SWP no longer has such a view. In that sense it is moribund.



Beatie Edney as Celia Rudbeck and Maynard Eziashi as Mister Johnson

# Casualty of Empire

## Film

Belinda Weaver reviews *Mister Johnson*

**"M**ister Johnson" is about a casualty of Empire. It's the story of a black man who not only had his country colonised by the British, but his mind too.

Set in British West Africa in 1923, the story begins with Johnson in his post as government clerk to Judge Harry Rudbeck. Though none too competent, Johnson is obsequious enough to hang on to his job. He doesn't shrink from even the most shameless flattery as a way of keeping his post.

For his job is his badge of pride; he glories in it. He considers himself

an Englishman, believing that his white suit and his solar topee are enough to make him "one of them".

He's wrong, of course. The whites lump him in with all the other "natives"; they don't even hesitate to cut him loose when it suits them. But even betrayal doesn't dent Johnson's fantasies about the English. To the end, he wants them for his friends, and all his ambitions are focussed on them. He yearns more than anything to belong.

Yet he belongs nowhere. Endlessly caught between the black culture he rejects, and the white culture that rejects him, he's a misfit, an outcast.

Johnson should inspire pity in the audience, yet somehow he fails to. It's partly his endless, off-putting subservience to the whites that alienates; it's hard to watch someone abase himself so completely.

But there is more to it than that.

Johnson is really so deluded, so deep into his fantasy that he is unreachable. He shuts us out. We can't get inside his head to see what drives him, so we end up not caring all that much.

This is a great failing in the film, because Johnson is the central character, someone we need to care about if we're to care for the film.

Yet we're deliberately kept at arm's length. There's no reason given for Johnson's dream of being white; he's like that when we meet him and he's like that at the end, a true and fervent believer in a crazy creed.

The film meanders and feels too slow all through. Characters appear but they're rarely pulled into focus. Even the ones who should register — Bamu, Johnson's uncomprehending wife, and Rudbeck, his ultimately compassionate employer

- don't make much of an impact.

The forces shaping Johnson's world are also left vague. Rudbeck is trying to build a road to encourage more trade in the area. He is opposed by the local Emir, who worries about losing control. Both of these powers impact on Johnson, who tries to balance between the two, but the issues are never made clear. Rudbeck's wife does ask whom the road building will benefit, but the question is deliberately left rhetorical.

The film is trying to expose colonialism and colonial attitudes. It tries to show the blinkered assumptions of the whites, yet also reveal the calculations of black leaders like the Emir who did not have the best interests of the majority at heart.

Yet it's all rather limp and uninvolved, as if the good intentions the filmmakers set out with simply wilted in the blazing African sun.

## The 'Rose Marie of the Met' variation

## Television

By Jean Lane

Lynda La Plante's *Prime Suspect* (ITV) shows what a talented writer, producer, director and actors can do with the worn and over-used murder hunt format.

It also shows you what the cop opera format can do to a talented writer, etc.

The story interweaves a hunt for a murderer of young women with internal police politics: the cop in charge is a woman, Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison. That is the show's gimmick.

She has to fight to get a job no woman has done before, and she gets it only after the man first put in charge drops dead.

Her colleagues harry and undermine her, unable to cope with a woman in charge; witnesses talk through her and over her head to her male subordinates. She has a hard time. The clichés of the police show drag her down too: her partner can't take the strain.

But things come right. Reader, she Wins Their Respect!

Soon it is "Yes, boss" and "No, gov'nor", and "the team" of happy clean-limbed young cops is clicking away like a football team in good morale. *The Manageress*, in fact.

At the end, the chorus of cops burst into song for her! It is a sort of "For she's a jolly good fellow" song. But a song was what was needed at that point!

If at that point they had sung variations on "Rose Marie" — the silly old stage and film musical about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police — I would not have been surprised — "Oh Tennison, we love you, we're always dreaming of you..." Or the Mountie song: "Give me some men who are stout-hearted men..."

The programme-makers used dead, mutilated or decomposing female corpses as horrifying stage props rather too casually and too often throughout the two-part film. This ugly sensationalism went very badly with the blatant chocolate-box unrealism of the "Rose Marie of the Met" scenario and treatment.

## We fight the sea at Kronstadt

We crossed the frozen hostile misted sea

To Kronstadt, to attack the white guards

Manning the garrison there, mysteriously

All powerful where once we could command,

Talking now to our own as we talked, before:

Workers' control, soviets to power (with no

Bolsheviks!), peasants' rights —

echoing the roar

From the countryside: impossible demands.

What could we do? Abandon the fort commanding

Petrograd? Call it off? Surrender! Give up

The workers' power, looming chaos notwithstanding?

No! We would take a stronger, sterner grip

And fight to bridle History run amok!

We marched to conquer Fortress Kronstadt!

Beating them as we beat the other whites

(Who did not sound like us) we wreaked bloody spite.

We marched to conquer Fortress Kronstadt:

Under their guns across the ice-clad

sea

Went Congress delegate and soldier elite;

Their cannon smashed the ice on which we stood.

The abyss opened under us, and ice closed

Above white sheathed warriors splashed with blood.

The ghostly camouflage, pale cloaks like clouds

We wore, did duty too for billowing shrouds.

After, when our bodies were reclaimed from the sacrifice

The red still showed, frozen, in long coffins of ice.

S. Matgamna

## By the fan, for the fan

Paul McGarry reviews *When Saturday Comes*, the alternative football magazine

**W**hen Saturday Comes, the alternative football magazine has recently published its 50th issue. That's quite an achievement. Most similar ventures run out of steam after a year or so.

When Saturday Comes is the best of the football fanzines, the unofficial publications that have mushroomed in the last few years.

Each club has at least one fanzine produced by its dedicated supporters, many with the self-mocking wit (a regular feature of the fanzine) most evident in their titles, eg. Torquay United has "Mission Impossible" or Slough Town, "Rebels without a clue".

Present favourites, however, are Chester's "Hello Albert" and Bradford Park Avenue's "Aye aye, Rhubarb Pie". I only hope the content lives up to the names. There are a number of general fanzines too of which *When Saturday Comes* is the best known.

The success of *When Saturday Comes* — it is professionally produced and has a large number of outlets — comes from its humorous, perceptive and critical approach. The April issue carries articles on the recent Commons report on football hooliganism, and a rejoinder to the homophobia and racism now making an appearance in some of the fanzines.

When Saturday Comes also carries a wide range of satirical pieces and a lively letters page. Its strength comes from the fact that it is written for the fan by the fan. It reflects the interests that the genuine supporter has.

As its lead explains, "the prime motivation behind the creation of *When Saturday Comes* was to express discontent at British football's persistently appalling treatment of its most important asset, the fans."

That discontent, high prices, poor facilities, the apparent lack of interest that most clubs have in the wishes of their fans, has manifested itself in other ways too.

The Football Supporters' Association (FSA) organises fans across the country and played an important role in the above mentioned Commons report. The recent and ongoing shambles that is passing as soccer management at Tottenham generated the Tottenham Independent Supporters' Association. And recently Preston supporters expressed their anger by occupying the pitch.

These examples show a healthy development in "the people's game". The fans want more say in how their clubs are run, want more information on how the directors invest the profits they have generated.

They want more consultation on the design and range of facilities. Socialists can only welcome such a yearning. *When Saturday Comes* has played an invaluable role in this movement "from below", here's to the next fifty!

Get WSC from Fourth Floor, 2 Pear Tree Court, London EC1R 0DS.



# No advice to capitalists

## WRITEBACK

I'm surprised that your article ("The log jam moves in Northern Ireland", *SO 481*) posed the possibility of a democratic settlement resulting from Peter Brookes' round table of Ireland's capitalist politicians.

Your article approvingly states that "the majority of Catholics have been long for" "London-Dublin powersharing" (a suggestion that may result from the talks). You suggest that some form of powersharing can be established by the talks which, if broadly acceptable to a majority of Protestants, can break the political logjam in the six counties.

According to a 1988 "Fort-night" poll, only one in four Catholics, not a majority, and one in seven Protestants, support any form of powersharing. Even if it were different, isn't "London-Dublin powersharing" as bad or worse than the current situation? Either way the bosses' agents in London and Dublin have power, not the people. If power were shared between two states, perhaps what little justice and accountability

there is could be lost. Why should the Protestants or Catholics agree to deals agreed over their heads by some capitalist cabal?

*Socialist Organiser* argues for a united Ireland guaranteeing equal rights for Protestant and Catholic workers. Quite right. But it would be mistaken to offer up a formula for equal rights to capitalist politicians for their consideration. It is utopian to think that any force, except the working class in the six counties, could end the political logjam. Only a democratic solution devised by them, bringing Irish unity and the withdrawal of British troops, can ensure the equality of Protestant and Catholic workers.

As British socialists, we have a special duty to point out that the army and politicians of our ruling class have no progressive role to play in the six counties. Yet to describe killing in a civil war as "random violence" where the "senselessness of the killings was so graphic that politicians from all sides and the RUC condemned" them, falls into the outlook of liberals not socialists. The murder of two Catholic girls was cold-blooded and horrific, but it was neither random nor senseless. It was a rational, reactionary murder aimed at terrifying and in-



timidating the Catholic community. The capitalist politicians and the RUC may claim to condemn it, but didn't the RUC or the UDR probably arm the killers? Isn't it the capitalist politicians who stoke up that hatred?

Is the article right to suggest that anti-Catholic discrimination was caused by their support for Irish unity and their competition for jobs? Wasn't it engineered by the colonial British prior to partition as the bosses' way to split the working class? Is it the Protestant workers, their competition for jobs, who stop the Catholics get-

ting jobs, or is it the capitalist employers who stop them? Unless we understand that discrimination against Catholics, or women, or blacks or any other group of workers starts in the ruling class (although those ideas are reflected by backward workers) then we cannot go forward.

The national question is central to politics in the six counties. But only a fighting organisation of Catholic and Protestant workers will end repression with a democratic solution.

Donald Church  
Manchester

## Special ticket offer: 20 days to go!

There are now 20 days left to buy a discount ticket to three days of socialist debate — fill in the slip now.

For *Socialist Organiser* sellers and sympathisers there are also 20 days left to sell these special tickets for Workers' Liberty '91.

The first print run of Workers' Liberty '91 leaflets have been sent out for distribution. If you need more or have not got your copies yet, phone Mark on 071-639 7965.

Hackney sellers are canvassing six local Labour Party members and *SO* readers this Sunday.

Matt Guy is selling Workers' Liberty '91 tickets

at his workplace, and Mike Fenwick has promised to visit four *SO* readers in West

Yorkshire colleges this week. Sheffield and Nottingham supporters are visiting

readers this week to sell Workers' Liberty '91 tickets. More reports next week.

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## WHAT'S ON

### Thursday 11 April

"Stop the Slaughter — Defend the Kurds", Labour Against the War meeting. 7.30, Durham Road Community Centre, London N4. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Kurdish, Iraqi and Turkish groups.

### Friday 12 April

Socialist Organiser quiz night. 7.30, Bridge Street Tavern, Manchester

### Saturday 13 April

Liberation '91. Lesbian and gay march and celebration. Assemble 12.00, Whitworth Park, Manchester. Rally/party 3.00-6.30, Albert Square

### Sunday 14 April

"Redefining the Left", Islington

*SO* meeting. 7.30, Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Rd, N7. Speaker John O'Mahony

### Monday 15 April

Lambeth Against the Witchhunt. 7.00, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton, London.  
"Socialism and Lesbian and Gay Liberation", Manchester *SO* meeting. 8.00, Bridge St Tavern, Manchester. Speakers: Janine Booth and Simon Wood  
"Fighting the anti-trade union laws", Southwark *SO* meeting. 7.30, Two Eagles Pub, Elephant and Castle. Speaker: Trudy Saunders

### Tuesday 16 April

"Defend the workers' movement, left and minorities against state repression". 7.30, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, Holborn. Speakers include Spartacist League and Socialist Organiser. Organised by the Partisan Defence Committee

### Wednesday 17 April

"Socialism and War", Luton *SO* meeting. 12.30, HE College. Speaker: Mark Sandell

### Thursday 18 April

"The Gulf after the war", Sheffield *SO* meeting. 7.30, SCCAU, West St. Speaker: Clive Bradley  
"Trade unions and the law", South West London *SO* meeting. 7.30, Lambeth Town Hall. Speaker: Tom Rigby  
"Labour and the general election", Leeds *SO* meeting. 7.30, Packhorse Pub, Woodhouse Lane  
"Justice for the Middle East". 7.30, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. Speakers include Afif Safiah (PLO) and Tony Benn MP. Organised by the Committee for a Just Peace in the Middle East

### Saturday 20 April

Manchester Committee to Stop War dayschool on Democracy in the Middle East

### Monday 22 April

"Pornography and Censorship", London *SO* Forum. Speakers include Mary McIntosh (Feminists Against Censorship) and *SO*

### Monday 29 April

"Lessons from Australia — Labour in Power", Islington *SO* meeting. 7.30, Red Rose Club. Speaker: Janet Burstall  
"Redefining the Left", Southwark *SO* meeting. 7.30, Two Eagles, Elephant and Castle

### Tuesday 30 April

Lambeth Against the Witchhunt public meeting. 7.30, Lambeth Town Hall. Speakers include Dennis Skinner and Jeremy Corbyn

### Thursday 9 May

"Myths of Irish History", Liverpool *SO* meeting. 7.30, Hardman St TU centre

Disease threatens lives of millions of refugees around the world.

## Scuds or butter

Les Hearn's



### SCIENCE COLUMN

the eye. Softening of the cornea may be followed by rupture of the eye ball and total blindness. Cod liver oil capsules are a convenient source of Vitamin A.

*Beri-beri in Thailand between 1980 and 1983.* Caused by lack of Vitamin B1 (thiamine), symptoms include malaise, nerve damage and, in severe cases, oedema (swelling of the tissues with fluid), which may lead to heart failure. People living mainly on white rice are at risk so giving brown rice or pulses will prevent beri-beri.

*Pellagra in Malawi in 1990.* Characterised by dermatitis and diarrhoea, it is found where diets are poor in Vitamin B3 (nicotinic acid). Death can occur from the diarrhoea. B3 is found in milk and yeast extract, while high quality protein (from animals or pulses) also helps.

*Scurvy in Ethiopia in 1989.* Now rare, scurvy was one of the first vitamin deficiency diseases to be recognized. Symptoms are swollen and bleeding gums and aching joints. It is easily cured by eating fresh fruit and vegetables or by taking Vitamin C tablets.

*General malnutrition (protein-energy malnutrition or PEM) is also common amongst refugees.* The world minimum for emergency rations is some 2000 calories per day but, in 1989, some 170,000 Ethiopians had to survive on less than 1/3 of this, 1400 calories, for 2-3 months.

In Senegal, 120,000 refugees were on little more than a third of the minimum for a time. For comparison, prisoners in Japanese camps in World War 2 were fed 1600 calories per day.

Part of the problem is the slowness of the international response to food shortage, often dependent on the vagaries of public opinion. In addition, some of the "aid" consists of agricultural surpluses that may have a low nutritional value. "Donor" countries are just using the refugees as a sink for their surpluses.

It is clearly possible for the world to establish stocks for distribution in cases of failure of rains or of displacement of civilian populations in war. It is also clearly possible to make up vitamin deficiencies in diets with the sort of multi-vitamin tablets that some Westerners swallow unnecessarily each day.

However, this needs funds and the UN High Commission for Refugees has to make do with an essentially unchanged budget while the number of refugees has doubled in ten years.



Food aid to places like the Sudan — where there is a terrible famine — often doesn't provide sufficient vitamins. This causes malnutrition and disease

## LUL bosses threaten to sack strikers

# Tube workers — vote yes!

By a Central Line guard

Anyone who uses the London Underground regularly will know the appalling state it is in. Our new "customer friendly" management have got plans however — to make it worse!

Due to financial mismanagement by tube bosses there is a £100 million-plus budget deficit. In an attempt to balance the books they are trying to impose huge cuts in jobs and services.

Management had secretly drawn up a three-level cuts document. In March they announced the level 2 cuts — 980 job losses, cuts in train services, staffing levels and station closures. RMT

level 2 initiatives and in view of this there is merit in introducing the more radical working practices and employment conditions of level 3", i.e. use the strike to defend jobs and services as a cover to impose even worse cuts!

Against this background it is vital that workers in RMT and TSSA record a massive yes vote for action. The ballot started on Monday 8th and the result will be announced by the 29th. Just before the ballot started management issued letters to 16,000 staff threatening "suspension without pay or dismissal" if we go on strike.

Also, station staff have been called in individually to be told the same by management. Management are pulling out all the stops to intimidate members before the ballot.

Many tube workers have a lot of faith in the strategy of one-day strikes which was used in '89. It is true that they can be sustained for a long time. However, it is also true that an all-out strike would put the pressure on harder and quicker. Continued one-day strikes open the possibility of a management lock out and victimisation in which case all-out action would be necessary anyway.

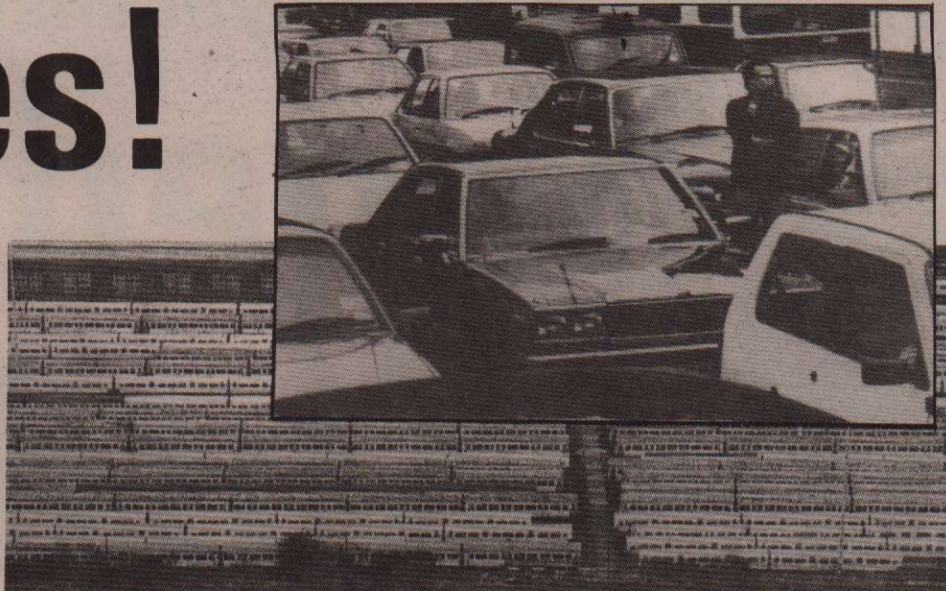
While RMT have produced numerous leaflets aimed at both members and passengers, ASLEF have produced only two leaflets for traincrews, arguing that the cuts aren't that bad after all. This is a disgrace. It is, however, a reflection of their leadership not their rank and file, who should call their leadership to account and unite with the other unions.

\* Vote yes for action!  
\* For an all-out strike!  
\* Mass meetings to run the strikes!  
\* Rebuild the unofficial structures of '89!

"Many tube workers have a lot of faith in the strategy of one-day strikes which was used in '89."

rightly refused to discuss these cuts with management but ASLEF and TSSA, the booking clerks' union, joined "working parties" on the cuts. They were rewarded with an increase in the number of job losses proposed! — These were quickly overshadowed however when the document detailing the level 3 cuts was leaked. The level 3 cuts will mean 2,000-plus job losses and the imposition of all the strings — flexible shifts, variable meal breaks, "annual hours" — that caused the strikes in '89.

The document does reveal the depth of management's cynicism. To quote: "industrial action is likely to result from



Tube workers have the power to paralyse London's transport system: scenes from the '89 strikes.

## How we organised in '89

In May 1989 a Piccadilly Line driver explained how the unofficial one-day tube strikes were organised. These structures need to be rebuilt today.

Local co-ordinators get together every week or so. They review how it is going and we communicate by word of mouth or leaflet.

There are several different people on different lines putting out their own leaflets to keep people informed.

A co-ordinating fund has been set up to pay for leaflets, etc.

There has been quite a few local depot meetings. But at the moment there probably won't be any because the mass meetings are coming up in two weeks time. Everything will be decided there and sorted out.

The local meetings and co-ordination meetings have lots of very heated discussions on every idea you can think of — how long to make the strike? Whether or not all out? How to step up the action? And whether or not to accept the latest offer. Every view is aired, to say the least.

Any driver or guard can go to the co-ordination meetings. The co-ordinators aren't elected, but the meetings are generally known about. Anyone can come along and give their opinion and become active if they want to.

It's very open — as long as you have a pass and are known you have every right to vote and put forward resolutions and say what you want.

At first there was the question of whether it was legal and how the company would react. But since the first few weeks no-one has thought about it because it is legal, because it is individuals withdrawing their labour in demand of the wage rises they should have had five years ago and in protest at the slave charter.

The general attitude towards picket lines was that because it wasn't an official dispute and because it was a question of people feeling so strongly and we felt we had the support then it wouldn't be necessary.

There is no precedent for this kind of action on the tubes. Action in the past has been very divided with ASLEF out and NUR working, or vice-versa, and controlled through the official union structure. There has

been no history of the blokes on the job acting unilaterally.

It is the first time you have got a democratic framework for running the strikes — with everyone having the right to have a say and having a right to object to things at meetings without the leadership just hijacking it.

It hasn't been left groups taking the initiative: many guards and driver operators vote Tory and are quite reactionary about a lot of issues but they are determined to get the rise.

They want their money. People have had enough. We've been constantly battered over five years in terms of productivity, one-person operation, deteriorating tracks, trains and safety standards, abuse from passengers. It's just worked up into the feeling that you've got to fight back.

So far there has been no attempt to victimise anybody. Management are keeping an eye on who's saying what and what's being done by whom. Even if we win this battle, activists are in danger of losing their jobs in the long run, especially if they keep the victimisation clauses in the new

package.

People feel that there should be one union for train crews and many like myself believe there should be one union for all underground workers. A lot of people are recognising that the existence of two unions is a weakness.

When the dispute is over a lot of the involvement will probably die down, but we will be able to use what's happened as an example in the future.

The action of the train crews has given people the idea that they can fight back. Also the NUR ballot has given heart to the train crews. Confidence is growing. Management doesn't want to take people on. Victimisation would lead to an all-out strike.

The biggest lesson I've learned is that you don't have to wait for the leadership. You can take the upper hand by yourself and it seems an effective way at the moment of getting round trade union laws.

The power of tube workers to shut down London comes from our unity. If there wasn't that unity then the action wouldn't have been effective.  
From SO 404

## Manchester council victimises strikers

By Tony Dale,  
Manchester NALGO  
Assistant Convenor,  
Housing

Manchester City Council is threatening to discipline over 100 housing workers for taking part in a one-day strike last month.

The one-day strike was organised by NALGO to lobby the Housing Committee on 22 March over proposals to "restructure" the department. The report proposes fundamental changes in workers' job descriptions.

The decision to strike was taken at a Housing Department NALGO meeting. The action was for one day only and the strike had to be organised quickly, therefore no ballot was organised.

Management are claiming they are justified in disciplining "unofficial" strikers.

This outrageous anti-union attack on the right to strike is being carried out by a Labour council.

No doubt housing management had consulted and got the support of Labour councillors

The battle against the cuts continues in Lambeth. NALGO are balloting for all-out strike action. Last week the debt section walked out after workers were given two weeks notice of compulsory redundancies. A separate ballot is going ahead for borough-wide action involving all Lambeth council workers on May Day.

Liverpool council workers are set to strike for three days next week in protest at the cuts.

## Pay dispute could disrupt universities

By Maxine Vincent, City University NALGO

NALGO members in universities up and down the country have for a long time been undervalued and underpaid.

On 30 January NALGO submitted the 1991 pay claim which is 15%; this reflects the dissatisfaction of NALGO members throughout the University Sector, who have voted to take action if the claim isn't met.

The campaign has already started, with many branches lobbying their management, and the CVCP (Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals). The negotiations began on 26 February, but so far the response has not been encouraging. The CVCP made their most political reply to the claim for many years; they told NALGO that they wanted to offer 6% but were unable to do this because of lack of funding from the government; therefore they were going to ask the Department of Education and Science for the money. The CVCP also made no secret of the fact that they would welcome moves from the unions to lobby the DES in addition to them.

Many branches have voted to take action in the form of one-day strikes, and a mood of quiet frustration is spreading amongst members. There are also plans for joint demonstrations in London.

The situation is made worse since last year's agreed 9% increase in London Weighting has not yet been awarded. For NALGO and NUPE members this is the last straw. London Weighting barely keeps pace with inflation, and rising transport costs in London mean that already the annual increase has been virtually eroded.

NALGO is planning strike action, and has also been holding talks with AUT and NUPE about joint action. If the 15% pay claim is not met by 24 April, then NALGO members will decide when they will take industrial action. The summer term is exam time, and any strike will throw departments and therefore institutions into turmoil.

If NALGO members come out on strike then letters will not be typed, students will not receive their grant cheques, payrolls will not be processed; if AUT and NUPE members join them then lectures will be cancelled, exams will not be invigilated and exam papers won't be marked, refectories will close and management face their institutions erupting before their eyes! Students must also join this action; student unions must contact their campus trade union committees and JULC's and offer their support.

The prospect of mass disruption in the universities could become a reality. The DES is unlikely to award any extra money for salary increases. Institutions now have to bid against each other for funding from the government, forcing them to be competitive, which really means they have to spend as little as possible.

It is up to all those working in the University Sector to join forces and take action to force the government to give more money to the Higher Education system. Students and trade unionists must recognise that the only way to win is to fight together.

For too long the Tories have eroded the standards and quality of HE institutions; staff are now demoralised and under stress, students are packed into classrooms like sardines, new courses are hastily set up to attract funding from the government. All those in the HE sector need to support the NALGO action, join the unions' struggle and fight for education to be funded as it should be — properly.

## Train drivers one-day strikes

By Joe Motherwell,  
ASLEF, West of  
Scotland

On Wednesday 27 March a one-day strike of ASLEF drivers took place at Motherwell and Yoker Depots.

It was part of a series of planned one-day strikes over the cancellation of Single Manning Agreement payments by Scotrail management.

The strike arose out of the introduction of driver-only passenger trains and the five stage agreement between unions and management to complete this process.

SMA payments of £8 per shift, averaging £40 per week on top of their basic wage, had been agreed upon to compensate for the extra responsibility of the drivers.

Dates for the payments have been arranged and broken at short notice on three occasions now, the last time being on 21 January 1991.

Taking guards off certain trains increased the risk of accidents. The completed SMA continues this unsafe policy in

the pursuit of the bottom line, i.e. profits.

Drivers now have to announce all station stops before entering them, key into a terminal exactly where they are at regular intervals, do the guards' duties and deal with anything that goes wrong by him/herself using new radio equipment. (Oh, and incidentally, drive the train as well.)

There are two issues here. One is the failure of management to stick to agreements which is why the strike, overtime ban and refusal to work rest days (at Yoker) are justified.

The other issue is safety. This new system is not safe as quite clearly the already heavy burden on drivers has now been increased.

After victory in this dispute, the unions must rejoin the fight for the return of guards to trains. This must be combined with a living wage campaign. It is low wages that allow management to undermine support for action over non-economic issues like safety.

In the meantime the solid support for the strike should be stepped up from Wednesday 3 April onwards. Train men and women and guards should show all necessary solidarity action.

Victory to the railworkers!

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Defend Pat Markey! Defend your union!

## British Timken: vote for strike action!

Labour must expose Tory hypocrisy

# The tragedy of the Kurds

By Tony Benn MP

The tragedy which has overtaken the Kurds, the continued denial of their rights to self-determination, and the refusal to recognise the demand of the Palestinians for their own state, has confirmed the fact that President Bush launched his war against Iraq to gain American control over Kuwaiti oil, and to establish a permanent presence in the Middle East, and it has nothing to do with justice or the defence of human rights.

Indeed, America has consistently supported Israel in its determination to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state, and has never recognised the rights of the Kurds for fear of alienating Turkey which has the largest Kurdish population and has repressed their language and culture, and now dare not offend Iran or Syria where there are other significant Kurdish communities.

The only sure way in which Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship can be overthrown is by the Iraqi people themselves, and yet it now seems that Washington is even prepared to accept the continuation in power of Saddam Hussein — whom they supported for years — so long as his military arsenal is dismantled.

The war has made the situation far worse and the triumphalism that followed the military "Victory" has now been shown up for the fraud that it was, and the United Nations has suffered grave damage by allowing itself to be taken over by the United States.

Urgent action must be taken to deal with the situation.

First, the Turkish and Iranian borders must be opened and the United Nations must take full charge of, and fund on a massive scale, the relief operations there, and in Iraq, where the refugee problem has reached crisis proportions that is in no way matched by the limited air-drop of supplies that is now in progress.

Second, a UN Peace Conference, at which the Kurds and



Tony Benn (right) with Bill Hamilton of Labour Against the War

the Palestinians are represented, must be summoned with an agenda that includes the safeguarding of human rights, democracy and self-determination for the Kurdish

people who are now scattered in Iraq, Turkey, Iran, Syria and the USSR, and for the Palestinians who have also been denied a homeland.

Third, all foreign forces must

be withdrawn from the area as quickly as possible so as to permit these matters to be dealt with by the peoples who live in the region.

Tony Benn was speaking at a Labour Against the War press conference

## Britain and the US are more interested in maintaining Saddam

By Jeremy Corbyn MP

The Gulf war left 150,000 dead. It resulted in the restoration of a reactionary monarch in Kuwait, the rounding up of Palestinians in Kuwait and genocide in Iraq.

The Kurds need immediate help. They need food, shelter, baby units, water purifiers and other aid.

But housing Kurds in refugee camps is no solution to the Kurdish question. I have visited the refugee

camps in Turkey caused by the massacres of Kurds in Iraq during 1988.

President Ozal and the Turkish government have treated these people very badly. Even Red Cross access and medical aid were denied to the Kurdish refugees who were herded into camps by the Turkish authorities.

The Kurdish issue can only be solved by recognising the Kurds' rights to self-determination.

Unfortunately, Britain and the US are more interested in maintaining Saddam and helping Ozal than recognising the rights of the Kurds.



Jeremy Corbyn

Finally, we must protest at the priorities of the British government. They can find £3 billion to pour into the Gulf war but start wringing their hands over £10 million in aid to the Kurds.

People are dying on a mountain-side and they need aid now.

Jeremy Corbyn was speaking at a Labour Against the War press conference

As the slump bites and the bosses across industry go for large scale sackings we can expect a renewed drive to root out active trade unionists from the workplaces. Already there are signs of such an offensive.

At British Timken, Northampton — key roller bearing producers for the motor industry — shop steward Pat Markey has been sacked. At the same plant the bosses want to 'shed' nearly 10% of the workforce.

An AEU steward reports the joint shop stewards' committee at British Timken's Northampton plant have thrown a lifeline to shop steward Pat Markey, who was sacked for contracting dermatitis while at work.

The JSSC has supported a ballot for industrial action in the Roller Grinding Shop (RGS) where Pat worked. There was also a unanimous decision to support any action by a "voluntary" strike levy of the rest of the factory.

The decision to support a strike ballot was not won easily. A minority even argued that Pat had manufactured his sacking for his own political ends! As if anyone would deliberately go through the physical discomfort of contracting dermatitis in order to get sacked so there could be a strike. The mind boggles!

The ballot in RGS is due to take place later this week. By Thursday the result should be declared. However, no industrial action would begin until any strike result has been authorised by the national executive of the union, the AEU, in compliance with the latest employment legislation.

The tasks now are to build on the JSSC vote. You can be sure that the company and, unfortunately, a minority on the union side won't waste any time putting the boot in, in an attempt to undermine any support for Pat.

That minority, whether represented on the JSSC or not, should be aware that there were only 14 stewards voting at the last meeting, representing over 1000 workers. Not so long ago, there were over 40 stewards at the factory. A victory for the reinstatement of Pat Markey, would be a victory for trade unionism and could begin to stop the rot.

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