

After the collapse of Stalinism:

# Has socialism a future?

Roger Scruton and John O'Mahony debate the issues: pages 7-12

# SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

## Fight racism:

# Stop the Euro-Nazis!

By Jill Mountford

Fascism is again raising its gruesome head all across Europe, feeding on racism, and growing at an alarming rate.

In the USSR and the USSR's former satellite countries, especially in the East of Germany, the collapse of Stalinism has made fascism and even Nazism suddenly respectable with large numbers of people.

Just as many people there look to the relative prosperity of the West and endorse market capitalism —

Stalinism's opposite — many also look backwards in history and do the same, embracing Stalinism's great enemy in the past, fascism.

For many of the youth in the former East Germany, it is a matter of looking with understandable but ignorant sympathy at the system that existed in their country before it was conquered by the USSR.

Thus part of the great vacuum created by the collapse of Stalinism is being filled in the countries now making the transition from Stalinism to capitalism by the nightmare politics of the Hitlerian 1930s.

It is not just in the East that

fascism is growing mightily. In West Germany racist attacks are increasing as fast as in the East, and extreme right wingers recently made gains in elections in Bremen.

In Austria, the Freedom Party of Jorg Haider — who openly praises Hitler's economic policies — came second in Vienna's municipal elections. In France, the Front National of Jean-Marie Le Pen now occupies the place in politics that the French Communist Party had in the three decades after the Second World War — that of the big, powerful outsider party.

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Le Pen

# For a Europe without frontiers!



# Stop the Euro-Nazis!

From front page

In Belgium, Flemish fascists won 20 per cent of the vote in Antwerp, and a big share elsewhere in the north of the country. In Italy, too, fascism is a growing force.

Much of the growth in fascist support comes from the working class, especially the youth.

All these movements have in common racism, chauvinism, and xenophobia directed against dark-skinned immigrant and refugees.

But that is not the root of it. That is a consequence.

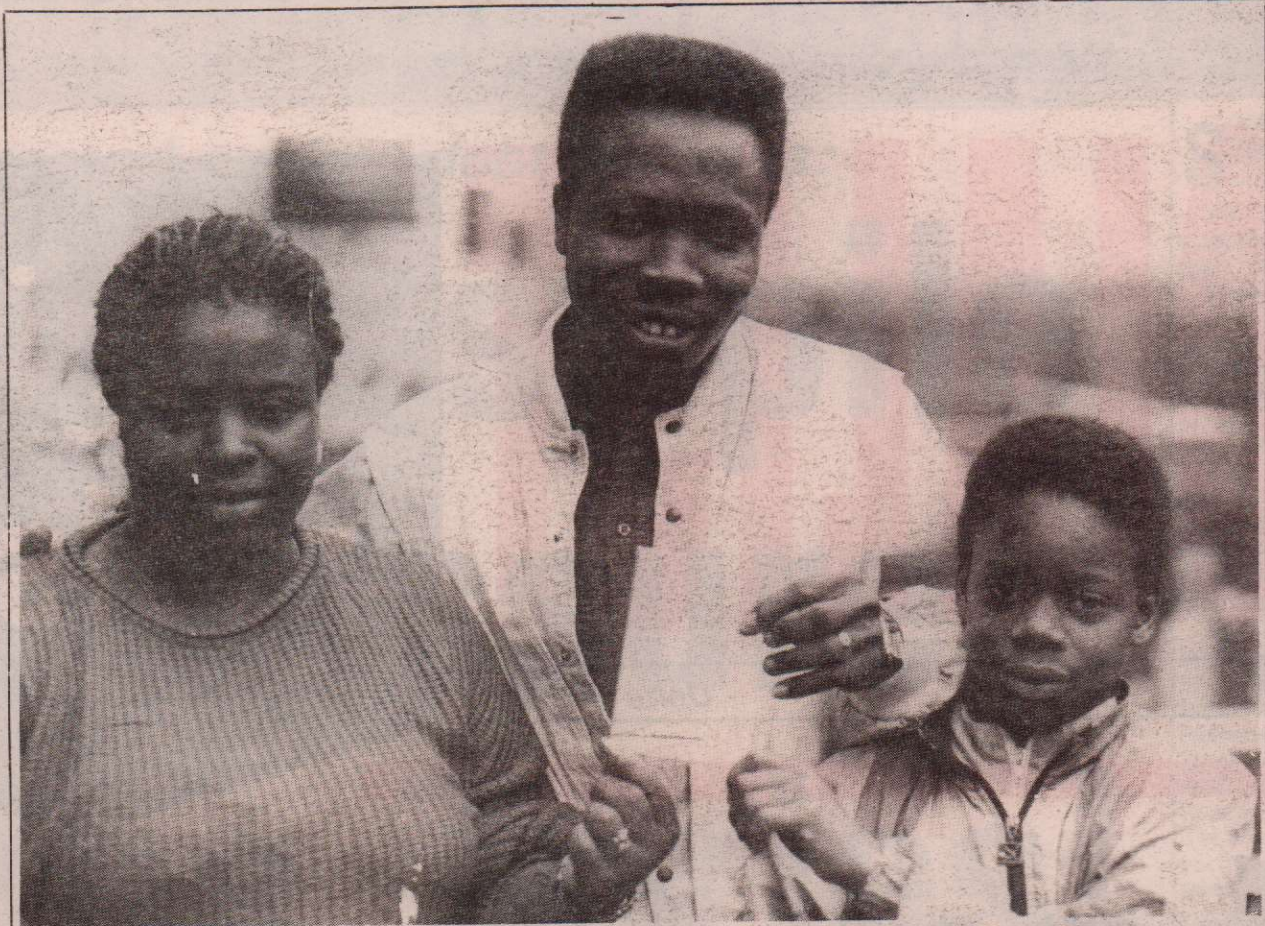
The real root, in the West, lies in the great pools of poverty, neglect, decay and hopelessness within the officially very prosperous European Community. In the East, its roots lie in the chaos and disruption caused by the collapse of Stalinism and the new governments' drive to impose market forces on their people.

Helplessness and hopelessness before those who control society — that is the common root, East and West.

That, and the collapse of the Left. It is not just a matter of the crisis of the ideas that have long passed for left-wing which has come with the collapse of Stalinism. It is that a powerful working-class-based left does not exist in Europe able to win over to socialism and organise the young people who now go to the racists and fascists.

In the East, the real left was long mercilessly crushed by Stalinism. It is only now beginning to revive — and lagging tragically behind the speed of events. In most of the West, there no longer exist strong working-class-based organisations which oppose and fight the capitalist Establishment.

Everywhere in the West, the reformist socialist parties are cowed and tamed in opposition, or running the capitalist system in government. The leaders — the MPs and the trade union tops — leave the youth at the very bottom of society, the youth with no prospects, hopeless and



## No more deportations!

Andimore Panton, a Jamaican, has just won a fight with the immigration authorities, to join his wife Jennifer and son Colin in Birmingham.

helpless and at the mercy of the scapegoating politics of those who tell them that their plight is caused by immigrant workers.

Here in the West, too, there is a vacuum, and in the West as in the East it is being filled by racism and fascism for an increasing number of people who are hostile to the way things are in our society.

**The Left must organise to fight the fascists. They must be stopped**

in the streets wherever they show their ugly faces.

But fascism will not be eliminated until socialists have revived the labour movement, and until the revived labour movement is fighting to change the conditions we live in.

Where it is a matter of mobilising on the streets to stop the fascists from marching, demonstrating, or attacking black people, the broadest possible alliances should be built on the single plank of a given mobilisation.

For such activities, socialists can and should unite with people in the labour movement far to the right of us.

But the core of effective anti-fascism has to be the mobilisation of the labour movement on a fighting programme against it, and against the social conditions which breed fascism. That means that we must organise independently from those in the labour movement who do not stand for a fighting policy

against capitalism.

In the late 1970s, for a while, the Anti-Nazi League put together a big broad coalition to oppose the National Front. Big demonstrations and carnivals were held. Trade union and Labour leaders made liberal speeches on Anti-Nazi League platforms denouncing racism and fascism. And then they went about their daily business, refusing to organise the struggle against the social conditions that were breeding the political successes of the National Front.

The organisers of the ANL — in the first place the SWP — subordinated everything to getting "celebrities", often from outside the labour movement altogether. As one SWP organiser put it: "We'll have Winston Churchill too, if he's still alive". On one notable occasion, in late 1979, this approach led the ANL to direct activists to an anti-fascist concert in South London rather than to the defence, on the streets, of an Asian community in East Lon-

don directly targeted by a National Front march.

That bland Liberal/Labour anti-fascism and anti-racism was shot through with lies. To repeat it in the early '90s would make no sense.

Right now fascism in Europe — despite its alarming successes — is at an early stage of its growth. The labour movement must be roused up and made aware that it will face a mortal threat to its very existence if fascism is allowed to continue to grow and develop and if its social roots are not dealt with by the labour movement itself.

Socialists must immediately organise to stop the fascists physically, and to help protect those they target.

Turn to the labour movement and help rouse it to fight the threat of fascism, and the capitalist social conditions which are breeding fascism! The socialist who refuses to turn to the labour movement on the grounds that it is "too right wing" is, no matter what "revolutionary" slogans he or she favours, a whingeing defeatist.

The central lesson of the 1930s is this: when the working class does not defeat a powerful fascist threat, then no-one will.

More on page 5

## Commercial pirates

By Gerry Bates

The millionaires who run the big high street stores have just given the labour movement a valuable lesson in what to do about a law you do not like: break it!

All over the country, last Sunday, many hundreds of stores were opened in an organised defiance of the law, and for the purpose of forcing a change in the law.

That is what the trade union leaders should have done to the first Tory anti-union laws back in the early 80s!

Sunday trading is a good idea because it will allow peo-

ple who work all the rest of the week to shop. But it is a good idea in the hands of unscrupulous commercial pirates.

They will use "Sunday Opening" as an excuse to drive a coach and four through the self-protecting agreements and practices won by shopworkers in decades of trade union activity.

Regular Sunday opening now seems irresistible. The way forward for shopworkers is to use their strength to impose civilised conditions on the bosses under 7-day opening conditions.

No increases in the hours of work; compensation; time off; double time for Sunday; and the right for every worker unwilling to work Sundays to keep their job!

## The lie machine



A good-looking young woman dead, her lover on trial, what spacy police accounts of what they say he said to them add up to a pre-Xmas tabloid-fest of prurience and sleaze.

Between them, these 3 sell about 5 million copies every day...



So, what happened to Tory do-whatever-you-can-afford-to-do "libertarianism", then?

There are limits! Lord Chancellor Mackay has put his foot down against liberalising the divorce laws.

Perhaps Mackay and the Tories would like to go back to the days when divorce inescapably meant wading through a deluge of muck in the courts, and then reading about yourself the following Sunday — as would millions of others — in the *News of the World*.

## War in Croatia

# A plague on both houses?

## LEFT PRESS

By Alan Gilbert

"Much of the left is tempted to take sides...But... neither of the nationalisms currently tearing Yugoslavia apart has anything to offer the mass of people."

With those words (in Alex Callinicos's "Comment" column, 23 November), *Socialist Worker* washed its hands of the war in Croatia.

Callinicos declares that "all the different peoples of Yugoslavia should have the right to self-determination, the right to form their own separate states freely", but argues that in the war between Croatia on one side, and Serbia and the Serb-dominated federal army on the other, both sides are wrong.

He points to the failure of Croat leader Tudjman to dissociate himself from the fascist and murderously anti-Serb Ustashi, or to offer any guarantees to the Serb minority which is 12 per cent of Croatia's population.

These are certainly important factors in the situation. Support for Croatia's right to resist Serbian conquest must be coupled with support for the rights of the Serb minority in Croatia.

And as long as it remained possible socialists should have argued against Croatia's secession and for keeping some federal framework in Yugoslavia: given the intricate intermingling of peoples, the break-up of Yugoslavia could never have failed to produce horrors.

Nevertheless, federal Yugoslavia is dead. And on all the evidence, the war in Croatia is not primarily about the rights of the Serb minority there, or equally about that and about Croatia's rights.

The pattern over the last several years has been for Serbia — the strongest nationality in Yugoslavia, and the one dominating the federal army — to make ever more aggressive moves for Serbian domination. That pattern was established well before the war in Croatia.

The Serbian government extinguished local rights in Vojvodina (an area of mixed population) and Kosovo (an area where the great majority are Albanians). It used great violence in Kosovo.

The Serb-dominated federal army tried to use force to stop the independence of Slovenia, a republic which has no significant Serb minority.

The Serbian war in Croatia has driven deep into areas which have clear Croat majorities.

All these facts mean that socialists cannot avoid siding — however critically, and with whatever qualifications — with Croatia.

*Socialist Worker's* usual line on national conflicts is to look for the "good", oppressed nation and then pose as the most gung-ho, aggressive and "revolutionary" champions of that nation against "bad" oppressor nations. That, for example, is how SW approaches the Israel/Palestine conflict.

The war in Croatia can not be fitted into that approach. Neither the Croats, historically often "pro-imperialist", nor the Serbs, clearly aggressive and dominant, fit the role of "good nation".

Unfortunately, SW has chosen to retreat to abstract socialist abstention rather than rethink its general approach to national conflicts.

## This week's SO

We have given an unusual amount of space in this SO to the debate with Roger Scruton, because we believe that tackling triumphant capitalist ideology is a central task for socialists now. Some of our usual coverage is missing or curtailed: apologies. This is a special issue of SO, covering the whole Christmas/New Year period. SO no.511 will be out on 9 January.





Kinnock's politics do not negate the class character of the Labour Party

*Socialists and the Labour Party: what the Alliance for Workers' Liberty says*

# Stay in the mainstream of working class politics

**S**ocialists are, wherever possible, members of the Labour Party, the mass party of the working class.

In the Labour Party, they make socialist propaganda, promote the class struggle and try to organise the broader left to fight for limited objectives and against the class collaborationist politics of the incumbent leaders.

In the present Labour Party this is increasingly difficult.

The Labour Party is run by a witch-hunting, purging, intolerant sect around Kinnock.

The active party members now focus single-mindedly on a Labour victory in the General Election: they

have shown themselves willing to put up with almost anything from the leadership if it can be presented as necessary to that goal or likely to forward it, or prevent damage to it.

There has been a large-scale exodus of left wingers from the Party whose departure makes the work of the witch-hunters and purgers easier.

The sectarian candidacy in the Walton by-election has generated a strong witch-hunting paranoia against the Marxist left in the Party. It seems to have taken down most of the residual barriers against the purges. We too have felt the force of this paranoia.

In the conditions socialists now find themselves in, where one of our cardinal tasks is to raise and defend the banner of socialism against the triumphalism of the right, *it is simply not possible to do what has to be done politically and remain within Labour Party legality.*

(It would have been possible if conditions in the Labour Party were still what they were in the early '80s).

We have already recognised this. This is why last May we set up the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

Nevertheless, socialists must, where possible, continue to fight the right wing in the Labour Party.

Kinnockism in power has not fundamentally changed the class character of the Labour Party.

Labour remains the mass party of the working class. It is now what it always has been: a *bourgeois workers party*.

No qualitative change has taken place in Labour's relations with the unions.

Kinnock's *politics* do not negate the class character of the Labour Party. These politics reflect the

dominant bourgeois consensus: almost always in the past Labour has reflected that consensus.

The two minority Labour governments did; so too, to a considerable extent, did the reforming post-war 1945 Labour government, which, essentially, riding the wave of working class revolt expressed in the 1945 election, realised a programme worked out at the behest of the wartime coalition government (the Beveridge Report etc.)

If much of Labour's post-war outlook was based on belief in Keynesian economics, the fact remains that in 1930, when Keynesian economics had not yet won hegemony over the bourgeoisie, Labour had rejected "Keynesianism" and rebuffed those within its own leadership who were "precocious Keynesians", notably Oswald Mosley.

Official Labour's relationship now to the conventional wisdom of the bourgeoisie is, essentially, what it always was. Labour's class character has never been derived by Marxists from its dominant politics.

## Socialists in the Labour Party

**T**he National Committee of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty last weekend discussed what activities socialists can best develop in the Labour Party. These include:

- Building Labour Party Socialists — an open left alliance which has led the opposition to Kinnock's policies on issues like the Gulf War and trade union rights.
- Developing "Socialists for Labour" — a campaign designed to give socialists their own independent and critical voice within the official Labour campaign at the General Election.
- Reaching out to Labour-affiliated trade union branches and pro-Labour

We never shared the illusion that Labour was socialist, or could evolve peacefully and as a whole into a socialist party: we have no reason now to share in the disillusion felt and expressed by those who, in the '80s, had such hopes and illusions.

The fluctuations in Labour's vote do not determine the party's character, even should the working class segment of Labour's vote plummet dramatically (though that is unlikely to happen in the General Election).

Labour remains the working class electoral alternative to the Tories and the Liberals. There is no credible alternative.

Socialists, therefore, relate to the working class politically, through the Labour Party.

There is no other credible working class alternative to the Tories.

The class, in so far as it is active politically at all, will express itself through voting Labour.

Quite apart from the question of whether socialists can be, or should be, *members* of the Labour Party,

socialists relate to the mass working class party by way of criticism and demands on it as their best means of taking the working class forward on the basis of political struggles, for immediate working class interests.

The alternative to this is either political abstention and the advocacy of political abstention; the running of a token election campaign; or an incoherent SWP-style hodgepodge consisting of a day-to-day politics implying political abstention during elections and an election-day policy flatly contradicting the group's day-to-day staple politics!

All those socialists who remain committed to the political development of the labour movement, refusing to allow the triumphant right wing to drive them out of mainstream working class politics, must place the fight to kick out the Tories and return a majority Labour government at the centre of their work in the coming period.

"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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## Late but not too late

The next few weeks could be crucial ones for British trade unionism as a whole.

The leaders of the AEU and EETPU are rushing towards a merger that would result in a new million-strong union and a powerful right-wing bloc either inside or outside the TUC.



### INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

The merger proposals have been public knowledge for several months now but so far there has been no visible opposition from the AEU Broad Left — a fairly bureaucratic grouping whose public face is the *Engineering Gazette* paper. Indeed, the two leading *Gazette* supporters on the AEU National Committee, Jimmy Airlie and Roger Butler, were reported to be in favour of the merger. Even good AEU activists who campaigned against the last merger proposals 3 years ago, seemed to be resigned to the deal going through without any serious opposition.

The situation was not helped by the AEU leadership's notable failure to carry out their promise to "consult" the membership before pressing ahead with the merger proposals. Even the latest AEU journal doesn't mention the merger.

Fortunately, as news of the proposals has filtered through to the AEU rank-and-file, opposition has slowly mounted.

District Committees and Shop Stewards committees are now discussing the mergers and the overwhelming opposition. Activists from the Sheffield and Barnsley District Committees have called a public meeting in opposition to the merger.

Jordan's plans have also received a setback from a most unexpected quarter: the government's Trade Union Certification Officer has ruled that the proposed ballot (on the "principles of amalgamation") in January would not allow sufficient time for consultation.

The unexpected level of rank-and-file opposition and the intervention of the Certification Officer have caused a rethink among the leaders of the *Engineering Gazette*. The latest issue describes the proposals as "a pig in a poke" and calls on delegates to the AEU National Committee to vote against at their meeting on December 18th.

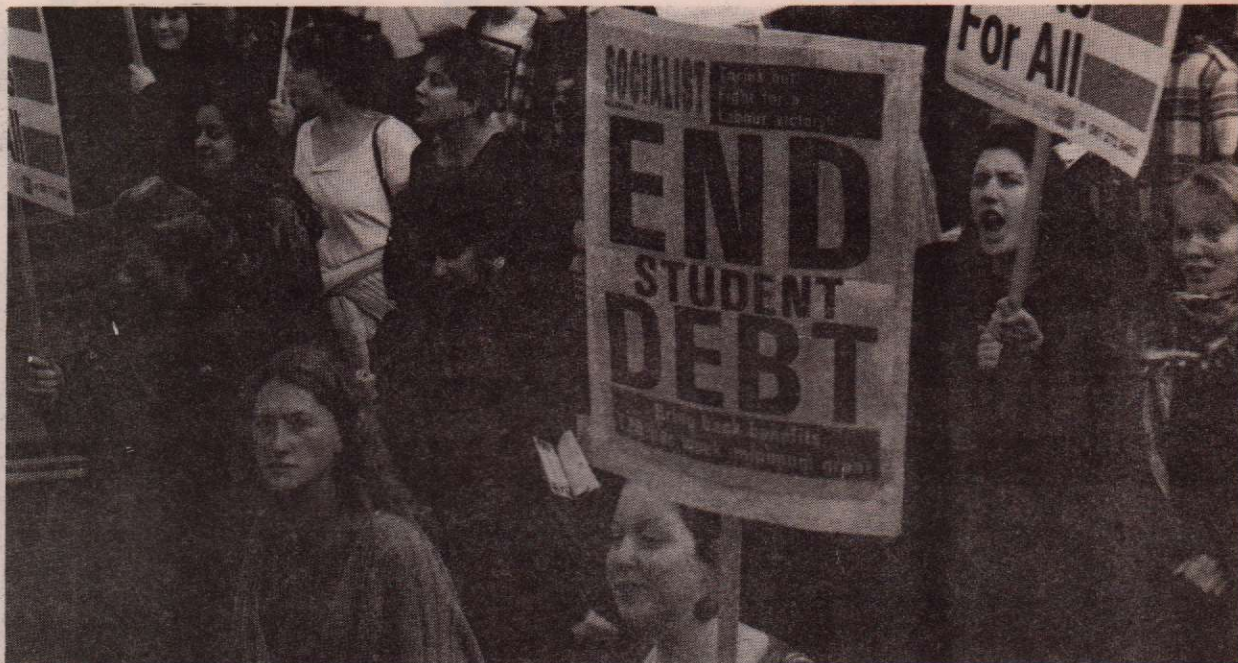
National Committee member, Bill Prophet, is quoted as saying "No-one has argued against the industrial logic of such a merger. Most members and activists however will be horrified that the latest proposals do not guarantee the democratic principles and for that reason will quite rightly be campaigning against the merger should we fail to amend them".

What Bro. Prophet is referring to here is the drastic differences between the two unions' rulebooks and structures: the AEU elects its officials and (in theory at least) its policy is decided by the lay-member District Committees and National Committee; the EETPU appoints most of its officials and has no structure for lay-member policy-making. The merger document which will be presented to the AEU National Committee proposes an interim structure for the new union that would keep the two unions as separate and largely autonomous sections until a final rule-book is approved by a membership ballot within 4 years of merger. Jordan and Laird have never made any great secret of their dislike of the AEU's "anachronistic" rule-book and few informed observers doubt that the final structure of the new union will owe much more to the "top-down" EETPU than to the AEU's creaky but potentially highly democratic structure.

Now that the *Gazette* has finally roused itself there is a real possibility of defeating the merger. But time is short: Jordan's plans have been stalled for a few weeks, but the Festive Season and the New Year will be crucial if an anti-merger campaign is to get off the ground in earnest.

AEU activists should not overdo their festivities.

Lobby the AEU  
National Committee  
Wednesday 18 December  
9.30am  
Winter Gardens,  
Eastbourne



Students need a better lead and organisation to fight poverty

# Student conference should call leaders to book

Kevin Sexton outlines the main issues for debate at the National Union of Students' Conference (7-9 December in Blackpool)

The escalating action against student hardship should dominate conference time.

Left Unity motions will call for support for the current action and for the National Executive to lead a wave of rent strikes and occupations in the run up to the national demonstration on 12 February. The debate should focus on the record of the

NOLS-led National Executive over the last few months, and how NUS should campaign next term.

NUS Reform will be the second issue on the agenda. The right wing in NUS have led a campaign to make NUS less democratic and to give more power to the National Executive Committee and to the big universities. Left Unity has submitted a series of motions that defend having two conferences a year, keeping NUS areas as the local form of organisation instead of bureaucratic regional structures, and maintaining the multi-member component on the NEC.

Conference will also be debating employment and

training. Left Unity has several motions calling for NUS to run a proper campaign for trainees' rights, attacking the Tories' economic policies and calling for the right for free trade unions.

Students' anger against the Tories' policies will be

reflected on conference floor. Left Unity will be leading the fight to make the NEC take on the Tories instead of just waiting for the General Election, and to build up an organisation in the colleges that can lead if the NEC won't.

## Newcastle campaign

By Tom Robin

Last weekend (30 November-1 December) students at Newcastle Polytechnic were forced out of occupation.

The seven day occupation, in protest against an extra rent charge of £80 over the Christmas period, ended when Polytechnic security staff enforced the court injunction served on the leaders of the occupation.

The campaign continues.

students responded to the intimidatory tactics of the Poly bosses with a successful education shutdown on Monday 2nd.

Students involved in the action also voted to build for an all-out rent strike.

Despite the occupation ending the mood is still militant. The graduation ceremony for Arts and Design students was disrupted when two students unfolded a banner saying "End Student Debt" during the Directorate's speech.

Such action needs to be built on and stepped up.

## 2,000 rally in Lancaster

By Dan Judelson

Students at Lancaster University are building up their campaign for union autonomy and fair rents.

A national rally on campus was attended by almost 2000 people and addressed by Janine Booth (NUS Women's Officer), Alan Watson (AUT president-elect), Terry Fields MP, and Paul Foot.

Messages of support came from all over the country, and a common theme was apologies for not being present because they were in occupation following Lancaster's example.

The rally voted unanimously to call for a national student rent strike next term.

Though he was present at the rally, National Union of Students president Stephen Twigg was asked not to speak, as the rally organising committee, made up mostly of first-year students radicalised by the campaign, did not feel he had shown

sufficient support for their action.

The role of Labour Club activists in the rent strike and occupation was rewarded at Thursday night's student union executive election count (28 November). Two Labour candidates stood, and both were elected.

An unexpected morale boost came on Friday (29 November) at the University council meeting. The University management's proposal to fine the Union and review its funding with a view to bankrupting it and taking over its functions was defeated.

Instead, council members called for rents to be reduced, acknowledged student poverty, and criticised the University's attempts at Union-busting.

At a well-attended Labour Club meeting, the call for a national rent strike was reaffirmed, and activists agreed to start planning now to make it as big a campaign as possible, acknowledging that NUS can not be relied on to do the job.

## Action in Nottingham

By Rod Marshall

An Emergency General Meeting of the Student Union at Nottingham Poly has been called for Wednesday 4 December and will call for an immediate occupation either of the library or of the administration buildings.

Despite an unhelpful right

wing executive in the Student Union, students are not prepared to sit back and do nothing about student debt.

As well as calling for a condemnation of loans from the college authority, the occupation will be demanding better disabled access to buildings.

At the University, a similar meeting is planned for Thursday, calling for an occupation over student hardship, with demands including a proper coffee bar in the Union building.

## Essex occupy

150 students have gone into occupation on Tuesday 3 December at Essex University.

Paul Ramsamooj, Union

## Occupation in Brighton

By Garry Meyer

Students at Brighton Poly decided overwhelmingly at an Emergency General Meeting on Monday 2 December to occupy the Polytechnic's administration block.

Around 100 students are involved at present, but the demonstration should spread to all sites of the Poly by the end of the week.

President and SO supporter, told us:

"We are fighting to highlight student debt and the poor facilities on campus. We are planning how to spread the occupation".

Students are demanding:

- An increase in accommodation
- Better safety and security on all sites
- No further cuts in staff
- A ballot of all staff and students as to whether the Directorate should spend up to £100,000 in changing the Poly's name to Brighton University or on improving education and facilities at the institution
- That the directors issue a statement condemning the cuts in student benefits.

## IN BRIEF

A Union General Meeting of 400 students at Goldsmiths College decided to occupy the main college building over course cuts, rents and accommodation, and the overall under-funding of the education system. Speakers from the Middlesex Poly occupation called on Goldsmiths to join the campaign, and Kevin Sexton from the NUS Executive brought support from the occupations across the country, such as in Lancaster and Newcastle.

The college plans to build a Conference Centre rather than invest in more resources for education. Over the weekend hundreds of students have occupied the main hall, the registry, and the switchboard.

Students at Queens University, Belfast, have won their battle against the Vice-Chancellor over Student Union funding.

The Vice-Chancellor had demanded that the Union pay back all profits from its bars to the college, or he would close down the Union bars.

Last Friday the Union led 200 students to occupy the administration building. Within hours, the Vice-Chancellor gave in and dropped his demands.

Three hundred students are in occupation at Luton College following a Student Union General Meeting on Tuesday 3 December.

Students are protesting about library, child care, and computer facilities, and the food in the canteen.



# The Nazi threat is growing!

By Pete Fishman

This week Jean Marie Le Pen, leader of the French National Front (FN) visits Britain along with a delegation of MEPs to set up here a section of a Europe-wide fascist "network", and to address the annual dinner of Western Goals, the right wing entryist group within the Tory Party.

The programme of the FN can be summed up in the slogan "Stop Immigration — Start Repatriation", which was the main slogan of the National Front here, with whom the FN had close contact in the seventies, a contact which appears to have been secretly maintained.

Le Pen showed his true

**"Le Pen's history makes sordid reading."**

politics when he stated on the sleeve notes of a record he produced of songs of the Waffen SS:

"Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party came to power through legal elections. They linked their ascent to a mass movement which was popular and democratic".

Le Pen's history makes sordid reading.

Soon after the second world war, he joined the Maurrasists, who were Nazi collaborators during the war. Several of Le Pen's convictions for crimes of violence date from this period, including two convictions for violently assaulting police officers.

In the fifties, he volunteered to join the paratroops to fight in Algeria against the independence movement, where he was known to have tortured prisoners.

Amongst the other paratroopers he is reputed to have earned the nickname "Thompson-Savonette". Thompson after the machine-gun, savonette after the soap, because his solution to the "Arab problem" was they should be mown down with Thompson guns and their bodies made into soap.

French National Front leader Le Pen is visiting London...

**PICKET LE PEN!**

Friday 6 December  
10.00am — picket of press conference, Sheraton Park Hotel, Knightsbridge  
• Speakers include  
Jeremy Corbyn

7.00pm — demonstrate outside the Western Goals dinner where Le Pen is guest speaker. Charing Cross Hotel, Charing Cross Station

In 1972, he founded the Front National, along with Francois Duprat, a Hitler-worshipping Nazi fanatic, Roger Holeindre of the terrorist OAS, Pierre Bousquet, who volunteered during the war to join the 33rd Waffen SS division, the SS Charlemagne, Francois Brigneau, an active member and volunteer of the Nazi auxiliary police during the war, and Gabriel Jeantet, a member of Marshall Petain's kitchen cabinet from 1940-1944.

The largest component in the formation of the FN was the openly Nazi and extremely violent Ordre Nouveau (New Order).

Today the FN tries to hide its true Nazi character and puts on a face of respectability, but it does not take much probing to uncover the truth, that the FN is a violent, terrorist and semi-militarised organisation dedicated to nazism. Its goal is to make France the same as Nazi Germany.

Recently Le Pen produced a fifty point plan, which includes the rounding up of "illegal immigrants", who will then be held in "special camps", until they can be repatriated. Le Pen supports the campaign to deny the Nazi holocaust. The FN has built up a horrendous catalogue of racist and political violence. It has been responsible for a series of sickening murders. The Nazi leopard can hide his spots — but he cannot change them!



Fascist FN scum gets bust head and broken club after attempted attack on black school students

## Socialism or barbarism?

**AS WE WERE SAYING...**

When four and a half million French voters mark the twentieth anniversary of the greatest strike in history by backing an openly fascist party, then it is time for the labour movement and the left throughout Europe to beat the alarm drums.

No fascist movement has had this sort of support since World War 2. Jean-Marie Le Pen's main plank in the presidential election on 24 April was hostility to France's two and a half million immigrant workers, most of whom come from North Africa; but his National Front comes forward as the embodiment of a comprehensively right-wing outlook on the world.

We may now be entering a new cycle of history in which the central question of modern times, socialism or barbarism, is



again posed to the workers of France and other parts of Europe, immediately and urgently.

Once more, maybe, everything will depend on the strength of the internationalists, the revolutionaries, the fighters for workers' liberty — will we be strong enough to shape

the course of history, or will we once again be prophets unarmed? We do not and cannot know how long or short the time-scales will be. But Le Pen's election triumph, in the shadow of a looming economic slump, should focus the minds of all serious socialists.

The labour movement is not now in any state — of collective mind or body — to secure the socialist alter-

native to barbarism. We need to regenerate and reorient the labour movement. We need to rearm and regroup the socialists. We may not have as much time to sort ourselves out as the professional optimists or the complacent sectarians among us thought. For sure, we do not have all the time in the world.

Workers' Liberty, May 1988

### Briefing

## FN — a murderers' front

By Pete Fishman

With the rise of the French National Front (FN) there has been a corresponding rise in political and particularly racist violence and murder in France.

So bad is the racist violence, that the Moroccan Government has felt itself compelled to protest officially to its French counterpart.

In just a short period, numerous mosques have been bombed, and the famous mosque in Rennes severely damaged. At Saint-Florentine, south of Paris, a racist fired several shots at two Arabs, leaving one dead and his brother paralysed. In Loire, Magid Labdaoui was brutally murdered by six racists.

In Nice, a six strong gang of skinheads went on the rampage. In the process they kicked to death a 41 year old Tunisian building worker.

In another attack four skinheads armed with chains and bottles brutally attacked and seriously injured a young black man in the main railway station. When another man tried to remonstrate with the skinheads, they beat him so badly he lost an eye.

In the southern town of Bagnolles, 22 year old Aissa Bedaine was gunned down by three men firing from a moving car. The third victim of racist violence in as many weeks.

Le Pen claims the racist violence and killings justify his view that the Arabs must be expelled. He also claims that the FN is in no way to blame.

Anne Tristan, a young journalist who infiltrated the FN, described how they change people. For instance, the story of one woman she knew:

"At first she was only wanting to fight to change society and her life. FN militants got her along to the meetings by telling her that the FN could help her to do these things. Within three months, they had transformed her into a violent woman, and she was going out in her car, with other FN members and attacking Arabs".

This and the direct involvement of the FN in so many cases proves the point.

Jean Pierre Chatelain, the security officer of the FN in Savoy, was the ringleader of an FN gang which blew up a bar in Annecy, and later bombed the offices of the FN's political opponents in Annemasse.

Alain Barthes, FN correspondent in Perpignan, gunned down a North African car driver.

Phillippe Brocard, a socialist, was attacked in the street by a gang of FN thugs, including Regis Devaux, a top man in his local FN youth group, who had recently received a citation from its leader for his qualities as a "fighter".

Devaux and his gang brutally murdered Brocard, stabbing him nine times, and kicking him repeatedly as he lay dying in the gutter.

Michel Chivat, the FN candidate in Beauville, brutally attacked an elderly couple in their own home.

FN activist Vincent Delebrel brutally murdered Areski Sadi.

Pierre Van Dorpe, an FN activist praised in glowing terms by former FN MP Robert Spieler, was the leader of a gang of street thugs responsible for over two hundred violent attacks.

These are just a few of the hundreds of cases, and this is what the FN is all about. The FN is a neo-Nazi organisation.

Wherever it goes, it maims and murders. It has come to Britain to build up a section of its "international network" here. It is our duty to oppose it every inch of the way. It is our duty to stop it.



# Congratulations, Socialist Worker!

## GRAFFITI

**"B**etter late than never" wears a bit thin when the lateness stretches to 20 years. So congratulations to *Socialist Worker* this week have to be muted.

But the political line is there: "Given a choice between the brute realities of international capitalism and nationalist fantasies, socialists should reject both. Just as we say neither Washington nor Moscow, so we should say neither Fortress Europe nor Little England — but international socialism."

This *SW* line on the Euro-row in parliament (expounded in Alex Callinicos's "Comment" column, 30 November) lacks a little. It confines itself to the general aim of international socialism, rather than spelling out immediate objectives — European workers' unity, democratic powers for an elected Euro-Parliament, levelling up of conditions and rights across Europe.

Nevertheless, it is far better than what *SW* has argued for the last 20 years. In the row over British entry to the EC in 1971, and in the referendum on the EC in 1975, *SW* was four-square behind "the traditional Labour left position of root and branch opposition to the EC" which Callinicos now denounces.

Much of the far left remains with that traditional left position. *Socialist Outlook* (23 November) has the headline "Say no to bosses' Europe".

The article denounces the EC as "a capitalist Europe...an imperialist Europe...a racist Europe", as if Britain would be less capitalist, imperialist or racist outside the EC. It bemoans the fact that the Labour leaders' unwillingness to campaign against European integration "leaves the opposition under the domination of Thatcherite Tories" as if socialists should be trying to spearhead the Europhobe nationalism currently championed by Thatcher.

It squares its circles by insisting that it is Europhobe "from a very different point of view" and it calls for a "united socialist states of Europe".

Since, however, no-one believes that a Europe-wide socialist revolution is an immediately available response to the Maastricht summit, the formula "no to bosses' Europe, yes to socialist Europe" comes down in practice to "no to Europe, keep Britain out".

*Militant* argues the same line, rather more guardedly. "Militant rejects the bosses' EC and demands a Socialist United States of Europe... Any campaign against Britain's membership [of the EC] must be based on the struggle for socialism in Britain as the first step to a socialist Europe."

But if *Socialist Worker* can rethink, there is hope for us all. It would help a lot if Callinicos could follow up with an article explaining where *SW* went wrong over the last 20 years.

**A** story from the heart of serious and unselfish trade union leadership.

The EETPU Executive Council is one of those bodies driven by a desire for working class collectivism without any taint of personal ambition, careerism, or time-serving.

The 14-member council is to merge with the 11-member AEU executive. Come the vote on this pro-

posal, there was much counting of fingers — eventually it dawned on some members of the council that three of them will have to go.

Bro. Hector Barlow looks at Bro. Lew Britz, Bro. Harry Hughes begins to sweat — they are all a little near retirement age and seem to be lined up for a little "early retirement".

Still, you can't let self interest get in the way of principle. Well, this is the EETPU, so three vote against the new executive. The minutes declare "they were not voting against the proposals for amalgamation but for their own personal futures."

**A** company which specialises in parliamentary lobbyists and political advisers to private companies, Privy Counsel Recruiting, are now head hunting for people who have worked closely with the Labour leadership.

"They have taken over from the old Thatcherites", a spokesperson for the recruitment agency declared. "Frankly, if you have worked closely with Norman Tebbit or Cecil Parkinson, you are well past your sell-by date."

Close associates of John Smith or Jack Cunningham are worth £30,000. Even Tony Blair's sidekicks rate £20,000.

The question is — is it worth £30,000 to admit you've worked closely with Jack Cunningham?

**A**t the Scheveningen pre-Maastricht talks, John Major has really been battling for Britain.

Great news that we will be perfectly free to work for more than 48 hours a week, and there will be no law limiting Sunday working; surely now the threat of a cowed and oppressed British public having minimum wages, legal rights for workers or workplace creches imposed on them is now receding, all thanks to the caring Tories.

But John and Norman could strike an even greater blow against the Eurocrats. The ecu is planned to include a national symbol on the reverse; for Britain, the Queen's head.

But what about the Scots, who currently have their own banknotes? They should be allowed to have a thistle on the reverse of their "ecu-notes".

But "ecu" doesn't sound very British does it? In fact, the ecu is the name of an old French coin. To address this imbalance John is backing a proposal to have each ecu divided into ten good Anglo-Saxon shillings. And then we can refer to the ecu as "ten bob".

So forget your long working hours, forget your lack of trade union rights, grab some "ten bobs" and off down the pub to toast John Major, saviour of the nation, with an 0.57 of a litre of beer.

And rest assured, John Major will defend to the last the great British institution of exploiting the workers.



"Up yours Major"

# The party's over, but the pseudery lingers on

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**T**he demise of the Communist Party of Great Britain was hardly an earth-shattering event and, unsurprisingly, received scant press attention.

There wasn't even very much gloating: the "serious" papers have already run all their "Death of Socialism" pieces and the tabloids have more important matters, like sex and soaps, to concern themselves with.

Saturday's *Independent* did, however, carry an extraordinary lament to the CP's journal *Marxism Today*, by Neal Ascherson. I've always rather admired Ascherson, who writes an intelligent column in the *Independent on Sunday*.

My admiration declined sharply during the Gulf War

when Ascherson declared himself a "reluctant warmonger", but I still thought he was very, very clever.

Now I'm not so sure. How can you take someone seriously who reckons coining the word "Thatcherism" was an important achievement? Or that "MT almost alone understood what Thatcherism was really about, often more clearly than its architects"?

Or try this for size: "In 1988 *MT* launched its audacious 'New Times' theory of history, a dazzling hypothesis about pluralism and individualism in a 'post-Fordist' society beyond the disciplines of production lines and organised labour."

Strange, isn't it, that you don't hear much about 'post-Fordism' and all those other dazzling hypotheses, these days. Maybe it's because most of this audacious new theory wasn't really so very new, or so very clever, after all. And, of course, most of it has been shown to be downright wrong.

I will have to read Neal Ascherson's column more carefully in future. Perhaps I've been dazzled by the fancy language and "theoretical" pretensions.

Ascherson's lament to *Marxism Today* could compare in naivety to Sarah Benton, writing in the

## Marxism Today

# The Election That Will Avoid The Issue

Britain is dominated by antiquated ideas and institutions. Neither Left nor Right seem capable of addressing the country's urgent need for modernisation.



Marxism Today: dominated by antiquated ideas

*Guardian* about her "shock and horror" at the news that the CPGB was, for many years, funded by Moscow.

"I did not know and nor did I suspect, that the British Communist Party received large, secret sums of money from the Soviet Communist Party over a period that included the six during which I was a member, and the two and a half years during which I edited a Communist party paper", wailed poor Ms Ben-

ton.

As the *Independent's* "Weasel" (the high-Tory Alexander Chancellor) commented: "Well, who on earth did she imagine was paying for it? Did no flicker of suspicion cross her mind? It's rather as if Paul Foot were suddenly to write an article expressing horror at the discovery that his salary at the *Daily Mirror* in recent years was paid by Robert Maxwell."

# The body sexist

## WOMEN'S EYE



By Sigrid Fisher

**T**his morning I went to my local sports centre to do a bit of 'body-toning'.

It's not that I'm interested in how I look or indeed in exercise at all, but they have a creche and I have a young baby so it's a good way to have an hour to yourself!

With Abi and my friend's son, Joe, tucked up safely and happily in someone else's care, we headed off to the weights room.

Now, they do have women-only sessions but this time the hours didn't suit us so we went along when the room is open to anyone.

It was no real surprise to find men huffing and puffing on the torture-machines. 3 men and no women apart from ourselves.

We did not hesitate to enter this male domain; however we were soon to be reminded why they have

women-only sessions.

Within a few minutes (after the inevitable initial looks of mocking amazement as we entered) we were well and truly patronised.

My friend had been before, she knew how the machines worked, which muscles they agonised, the best system to use if you wanted your body to be able to carry you home.

But no, to these men, we were "bonny lasses" there to be watched like monkeys in a zoo.

They proceeded to tell us what we already knew — don't they always? — as they orientated around the equipment we were using, following us onto them as we left and elaborately increasing the weights by at least five times the amount!

Their mockery gradually increased to hostility as it

became apparent that we did not appreciate this male attention, and that in fact we were, surprise surprise,

**"No doubt in the workplace too they would impose the same swaggering how-can-you-resist-me manner on some female victim."**

perfectly capable of looking after ourselves.

To look at these men, how did they have the nerve to act as if they were so superior in their masculinity? Two were as thin as pins, nowhere near the macho image they were

frantically trying to create.

The third strode around, groin-first, which was some feat, as it could hardly be seen under his 15-pints-a-night belly.

The sweat poured off these specimens of manliness as they heaved and pulled, and I think we were supposed to be attracted or impressed... or at least interested.

Their behaviour was exactly the same as it would be if we were sipping cocktails (or downing pints!) in a bar.

No doubt in the workplace too they would impose the same swaggering how-can-you-resist-me-manner on some female victim.

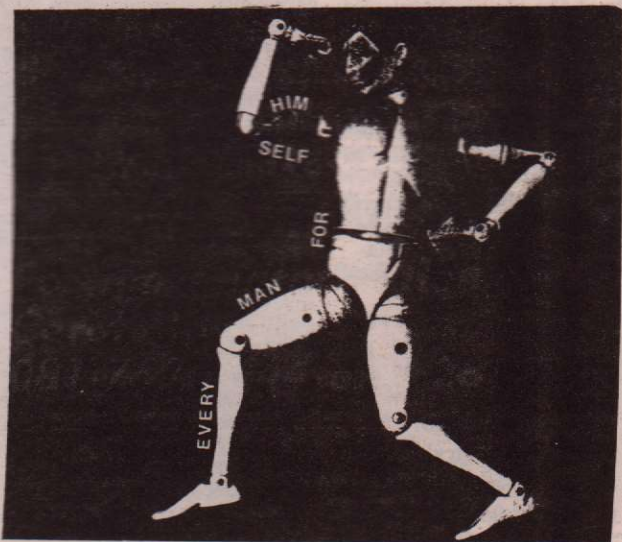
It is the same attitude every woman faces every day and everywhere in this society which pitches men against women, by giving the men the power (or so they think) and women the battle for survival. The same society that gives the rich and privileged the weapons to keep the working classes in their place.

So, they leave us with no option but to fight back with our weapons: our numbers, our labour, our determination to change this world once and for all.

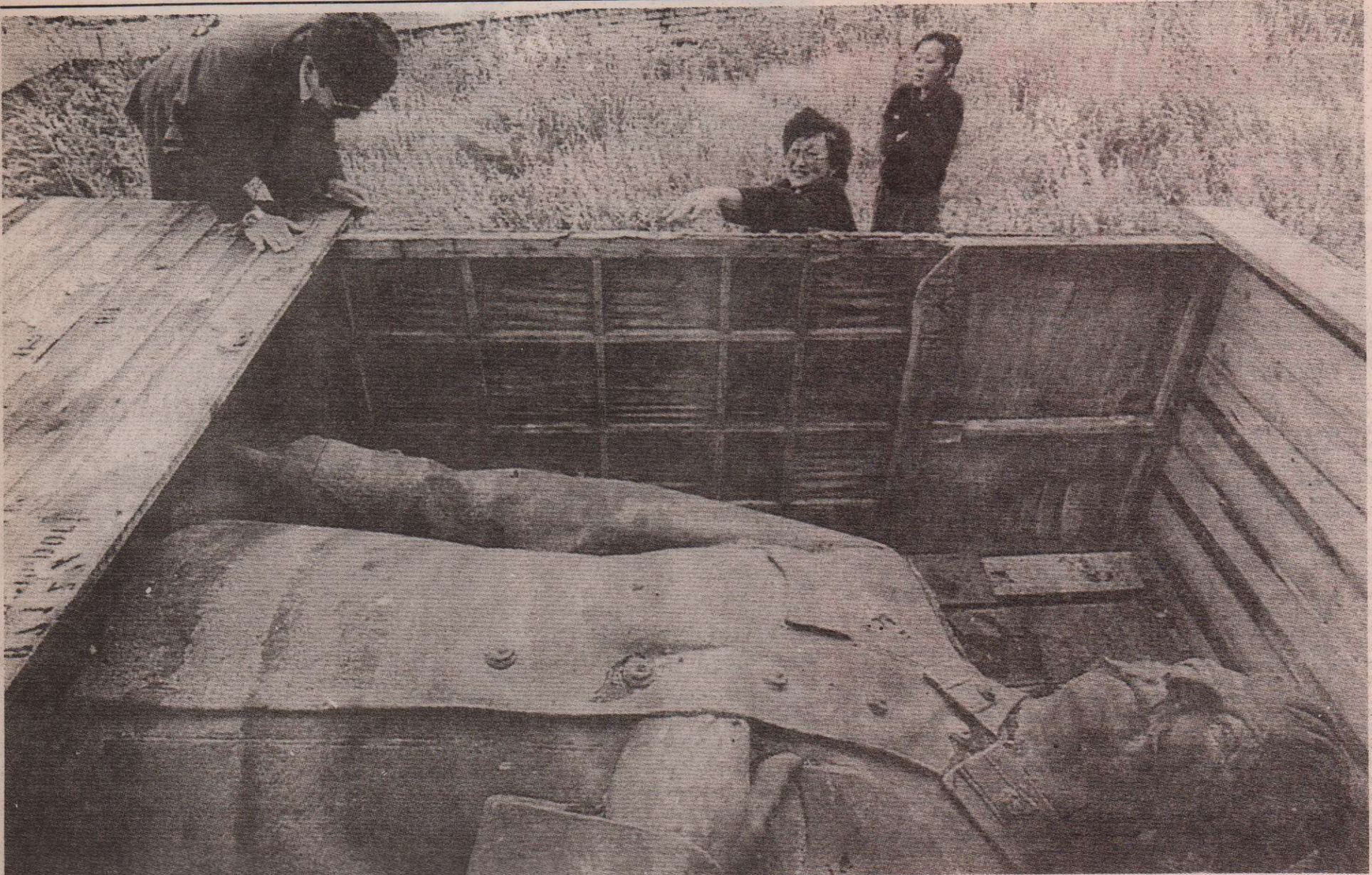
They can keep their ivory tower, their false world of superiority.

My friend and I shall exercise our choice to 'enjoy' leisure pursuits away from the male gaze: we are off to the women-only session next time, free from harassment, being patronised, and insulted.

They can strut their stuff for each other — they're welcome to it!







Burying a statue of Stalin in Mongolia: Stalinism is dying, but this does not mean the death of socialism.

# Has socialism a future?

John O'Mahony from AWL debated Roger Scruton (Philosophy Department, Birkbeck College, and editor of *Salisbury Review*) in London last month. John O'Mahony spoke first.

When, recently, I debated Professor Kenneth Minogue, one important point he made against me was this: if you pin down a socialist about a particular regime in a particular country you invariably get the reply: this was not real socialism.

Minogue made the point that it is very hard to know what we are arguing about. Ours is an idea which is never realised and therefore can never be criticised.

On a certain level that is a reasonable point to make. So I will try to define what I mean by socialism.

Obviously, socialism is one of those words with a vast number of different meanings. Hitler was a socialist in his own designation, so was Clement Attlee. So was Ben

Gurion. So was Nasser.

What follows is that they cannot all be socialists. The people I mentioned are to a high degree mutually exclusive. You might try to find some socialist "essence" shared by them all — statism or whatever — but it strikes me that the word is so vague that it is best to start out by defining it.

Socialism I understand to be the ideas that Marx and Engels developed. This is one of the ways of defining what real socialism is. According to Marx, socialism will grow out of capitalism, as capitalism grew out of the womb of feudalism. Socialism is being created inside capitalism by the spontaneous socialisation of the means of production under capitalism, ultimately leading to a rationalisation on a political level: the social property, now capitalist-owned, would become collectively owned social property.

According to Marx, this socialism would differ from all previous socialisms, because it was not just based on a wish for a perfect, ideal world. It was based on the natural development of our existing world.

Socialism was the necessary outgrowth of advanced, developed capitalism.

Throughout history — and Marx

was keen to admit this — ruling classes have emerged for particular reasons. Ruling classes have played progressive roles. The *Communist Manifesto* is full of praise for the bourgeoisie because capitalism had developed the means of production. Throughout history ruling classes have been necessary, because human beings have lived in a world of scarcity. That is the root of the class struggle.

According to Marx capitalism had created, or was in the process of creating, a situation where there was no need for the struggle of classes, no longer a need for some people to rise to the top and create some sort of civilisation on the basis of exploitation.

Marx said socialism came out of advanced capitalism. This was Lenin's view also.

So why did Lenin — who was the first to insist that socialism was not possible in backward Russia — make a revolution there? Why did Lenin and Trotsky make a revolution in a country where, though it was politically possible for the workers to take power, socialism was not possible because the country was so backward?

Lenin saw the Russian revolution as the first of a chain of revolutions in which the workers would take power in places like Germany and,

eventually, America. The Bolsheviks did not see the Russian revolution as a socialist revolution in the sense that in Russia it was possible to create a better world than the world of advanced capitalism. The revolution was socialism only in so far as it was the beginning of an international working-class revolution.

This is fundamental. When Marxists insist that what happened in Russia from the '20s was not socialism, it is not a way of saying that we do not like it — we are saying that it was an historical abortion, an historical cul-de-sac. If you look at what Lenin and the Bolsheviks said, nothing else could have been expected according to the bedrock ideas of Marxism. An historical abortion is what Lenin and Trotsky said would happen if the workers' power in the old Tsarist empire remained isolated. They did not foresee Stalinism; they expected that an isolated Russian workers' state would be overthrown by bourgeois forces; but the point here is that socialism could not have been the result of the October 1917 Revolution unless October was the beginning of a series of victorious proletarian revolutions. And it was not.

Socialism is the seizure of power by the working class in the advanc-

ed countries. It takes as its starting point the best that capitalism has achieved. From this point of view Russia was not socialist, and could not be socialist.

I am not repudiating the revolution. *Socialist Organiser* defends and stands by the Russian revolution. But the revolution was defeated by a bureaucratic, Stalinist counter-revolution — that is, a counter-revolution made by the state bureaucracy who came under the sway of the scarcity and backwardness which has dominated human history.

The Stalinists created a totalitarian collectivism which most people take to be socialist.

From the Marxist point of view, Russia was the opposite of socialism. In many ways it was further from socialism than the advanced capitalism we have in Western Europe is.

A second way of judging what real socialism is, is this: what does an alleged "socialism" mean to the working class?

Did the workers rule in Russia? No! Were the workers better off in

Continued on pages 8 and 9



# Has socialism a future?

## "Stalinist statification was the very opposite of socialism."

From page 7

Russia than in, say, Britain? No, they were not.

I repudiate the idea that statification is socialism. Stalinist statification was the very opposite of socialism. All the conquests of the last few hundred years of human history — human rights, the slow spreading downwards of civilisation — were wiped away. They were not disposed of by socialism but by the Stalinist bureaucrats, behaving as ruling classes always do in material conditions as backward and primitive as they were in the USSR.

Therefore, the collapse of Stalinism does not mean the collapse of socialism. On the contrary.

For decades, the notion of socialism, which I have broadly defined, has been encrusted by a series of ideas which are alien to socialism. There are no shortage of quotes. James Connolly, for example, commenting on middle-class socialists like the Fabians, put it sharply: if state property is socialist property then the jails and enterprises like the Post Office are all socialist institutions; and the jailers, the hangmen and the police are all socialist officials.

Socialism has been encrusted with all sorts of statist ideas alien to socialism.

Not all these ideas have come from Stalinism. During the last hundred years a collectivist wing of bourgeois liberalism — in this country in the past represented by the Fabians and the Labour Party — has grown up. These people also want statification. For example, Bismarck's state was the first attempt at a modern welfare state. He was not a socialist.

I want to take a different tack. We can all — Tories included! — agree that Stalinism is a bad thing. We will disagree when it comes to defining why Stalinism was a bad thing, what exactly was wrong with it.

Socialists believe that there should be collective ownership of the means of production — I mean the *basic* means of production, rather than every single property — on the basis of a political democracy. Only on the basis of collective ownership of the means of production can there be a real, self-determining, self-controlling democracy.

From this point of view, what was wrong with Stalinism?

Stalinism could be seen as a grotesque caricature of every society which ever existed. A state with unbridled power beat down the people. The state had such power that it could turn over the lives of tens of millions of peasants, wipe out millions of them, turn natural calamity to its advantage, and artificially intensify famine in the Ukraine to break the peasants.

That state dominated the population in the interests of an elite. The elite, unlike the British elite, did not have private ownership of the means of production. The state had ownership of the means of production — but the Stalinists owned the state.

You had exactly what you have in this country, in a different form! Stalinism had too many points in common — taken to a ridiculous caricature — with countries like Britain for people of Roger Scruton's persuasion to have a right to say: "That was the socialist future, and it did not work". It was the past of human history, in class society, encapsulated and intensified!

In Britain there is a ruling class which controls the lives of the people, not in a totalitarian fashion, not by direct force, but nevertheless for goals similar to those of Stalinism, and with immense powers of repression in reserve. Stalinism, in this respect, is a grotesque caricature of what exists in Britain.

In the Stalinist states, for example, education was formally accessible to the entire population, but in fact was semi-monopolised by the bureaucracy and their children. Exactly the situation that exists in Britain. Only the mechanisms of control differ.

Now Mr Scruton would think this is a good idea, or something you have to live with because there is nothing better.

Socialists want neither Stalinism nor the system that Mr Scruton champions! We believe that we live in a world where objectively it is possible that elites can be dispensed with — whether they are Stalinist elites or British Tories and the class they represent.

We believe we live in a world where it is now possible to *realise* democracy. Although capitalism has been progressive, and did create possibilities for human beings that have not existed before, capitalism has raised possibilities that it cannot realise. Democracy is perhaps the clearest example.

Democracy is necessary because the mass of the people cannot be liberated unless they can rule themselves democratically.

If you are an elitist you believe democracy is not necessary. Desirable or useful, perhaps; necessary, no. But democracy is necessary if you believe in the rights of the vast majority of the people, that is, if you are a socialist.

The various political formations which developed capitalism — in Holland, Britain, France and America — put forward the idea of democracy. But at the very best this has only been realised in part, realised fully only for a section of the population.

**"Capitalism has the possibility to create a real abundance on the basis of real self-rule. But what do we get? We get the rule of savages! An elite rules on the back of the mass of the people and exploits the people".**

For example, in this country democracy is only a rough approximation to what democracy should be. It is not real, self-controlling political democracy. It is obviously better than that which exists under Stalinism. But there is not real self-rule in Britain.

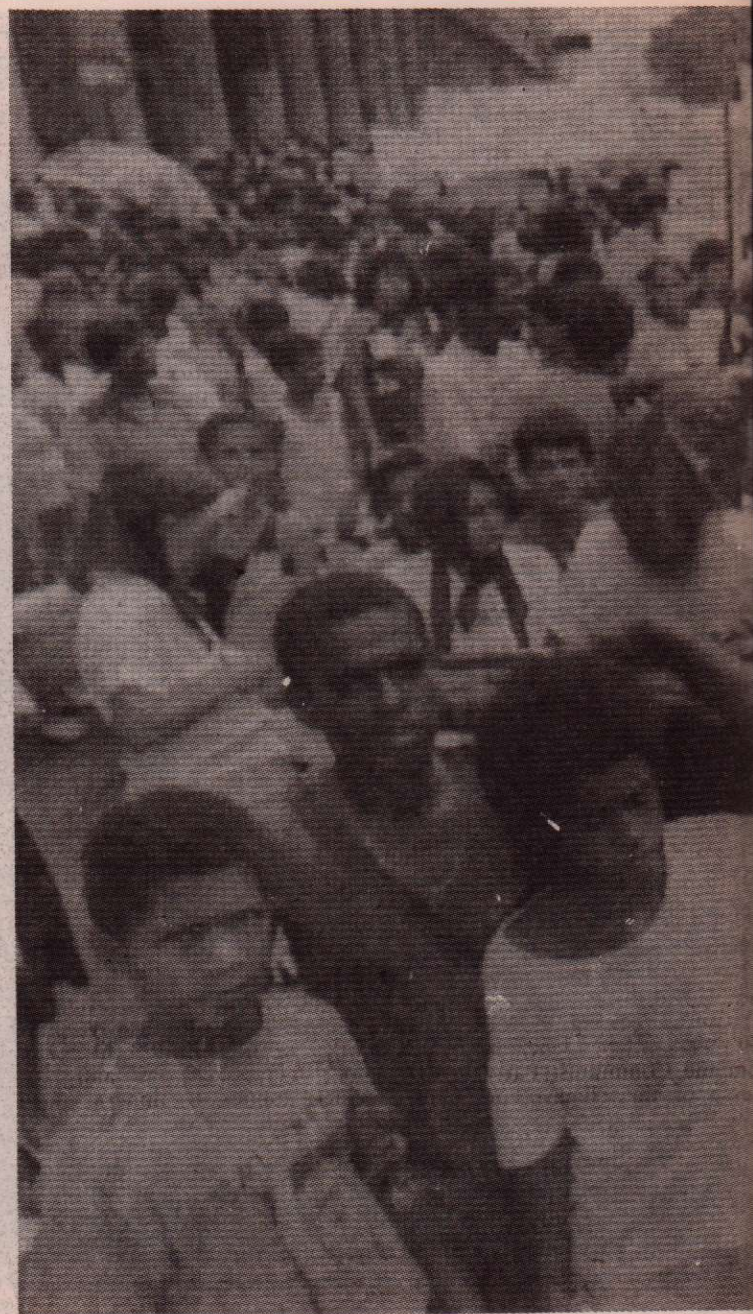
In capitalism there is only *formal* democracy and formal equality: formal equality before the law where some people are a lot more equal than others because they have property, and therefore, *in fact*, massively greater rights.

Without qualification, it is a good thing there are formal rules. The rule of law means that, most of the time, there are certain rules and certain rights. This is good and worth defending. Democratic socialists will defend these conquests and achievements of bourgeois society (which were often achieved through mass action). We will defend these democratic gains against people like Mr Scruton! Nevertheless, those who are serious about liberty and democracy must realise that capitalism has failed to deliver what is possible.

Right now you have a situation in Britain, after ten years of Thatcher, where a vast number of people sleep in doorways in central London.

Capitalism has the possibility to create a real abundance on the basis of real self-rule. But what do we get? We get the rule of savages! This is a savage system. An elite rules on the back of the mass of the people and exploits the people. The bourgeois intellectuals act as shepherders of the people, defending the official ideological lies which lubricate the rule of the moneyed in the interests of the moneyed.

I do not know if Roger Scruton would say this, but certain critics of democracy from the right say that there are certain in-built features in bourgeois democracy which inevitably make it a system of lying. I think they are right. This system needs to lie. "Democracy" is its of-



This is the system where street children are murdered in Brazil. The children fight back

ficial ideology, in some ways now its religion; but democracy — real self-rule — is not its day-to-day reality.

It is to a serious extent based on falsification. It has to be. It can only survive on the sort of trickery we have seen lately where the Tory government has, in the last few days, exempted students from the council tax because students form a sizeable part of a number of key marginal seats. This is blatant bribery!

Our political world is comprehensively corrupt. It must depend on lies because it cannot deliver the democracy it promises, or be what it says it is.

Within British democracy we have the actual rule of the minority through their control of the means of production.

Socialism says: this is wrong. Socialists have said that for 2000 years. Marxist socialists say it is now *unnecessary*. We do not need it. The people who do need it are the ruling class and their intellectuals, who defend their system and accept its unavoidable spiritual and cultural corruption.

This is what it comes down to. One of the most awful things about modern Britain is the cultural exploitation and degradation inflicted on the people, by some of the tabloid papers, for example.

Stalinism's fall changes none of this! And the collapse of Stalinism allows real socialists, at least in the medium term, to be more likely to receive a hearing.

For a long time it was a legitimate response to ask many socialists: what do you think of Russia? Do you want to create a Russia? That is no longer a question which, after this current burst of bourgeois triumphalism dies down, will dominate political life.

So, the short answer to "Is socialism dead?" is no, because capitalism is not dead. Socialism is a reaction to the realities of capitalism that I have talked about.

It is a reaction rooted in the class struggle of the workers; and that struggle will go on as long as capitalism goes on.

One of the reasons why we now ask "Is socialism dead?" is because for ten years the workers have been defeated in the British class struggle.

**"The labour movement will revive! It may revive initially by way of the election of a Labour government and what happens afterwards. When it revives, the possibility will exist for the spread of a renovated socialism, a socialism which has purged itself from the statist encrustations taken from bourgeois liberalism and Stalinist totalitarianism".**

We have been defeated before. There have been downturns before. The labour movement will revive! It may revive initially by way of the election of a Labour government and what happens afterwards. When it revives, the possibility will exist for the spread of a renovated socialism, a socialism which has purged itself of the statist encrustations taken from bourgeois liberalism and Stalinist totalitarianism.

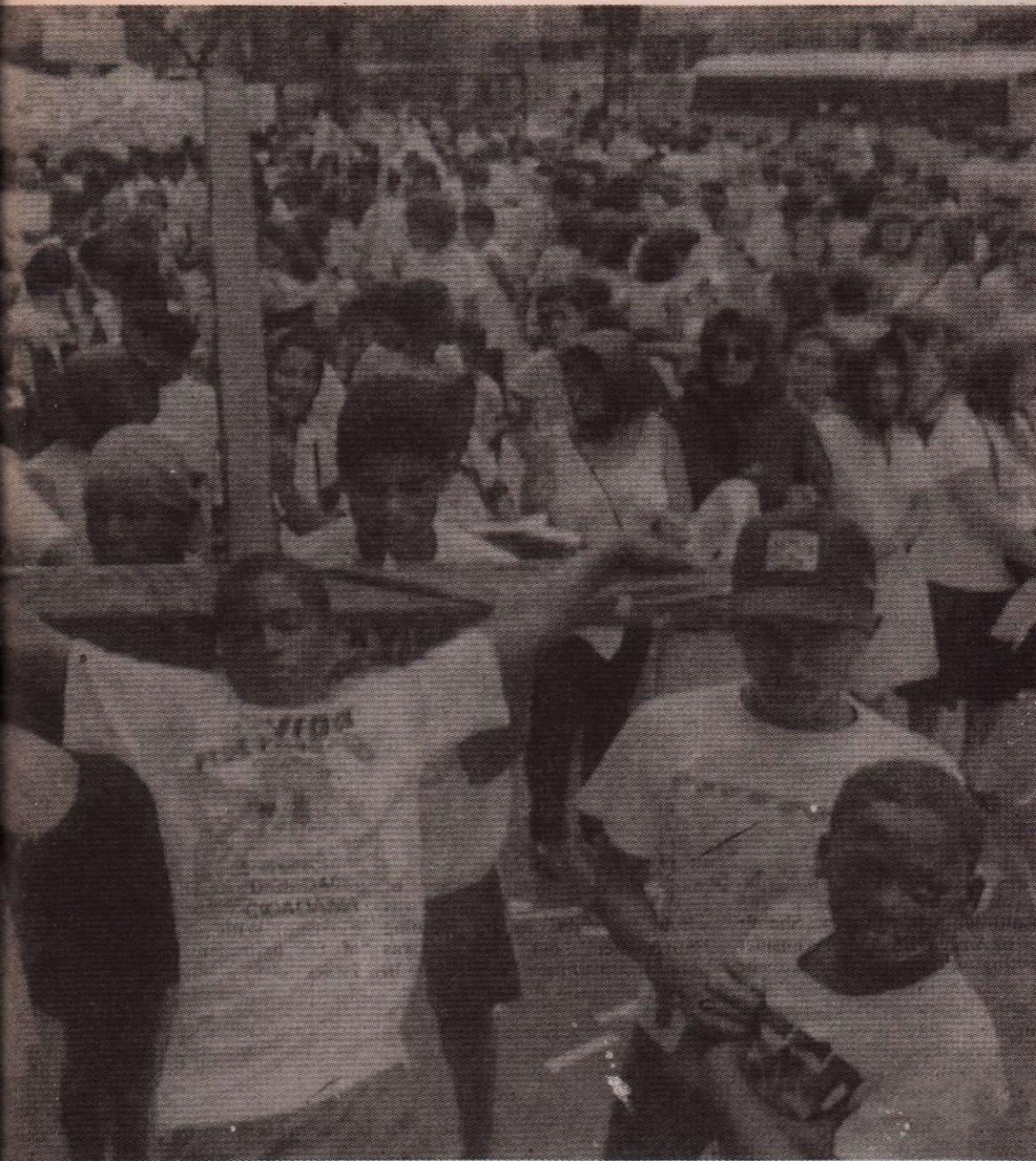
Socialism will revive. Despite the pressure socialists feel now, and all the fashionable talk about the "bankruptcy of socialism", what we are seeing is the beginning of the rebirth of socialism. Roger Scruton knows that, I think, and he fears it.



The police very often act in the interests of the ruling class. There is only formal equality before the law



# Has socialism a future?



The easiest thing to think in the light of this experience, of seeing people lose out, is that the underdog is a victim of the "overdog"; that wherever there is an underdog there is also an overdog that is doing him down. The ubermensch, or uberhund, rather.

This overdog is a person who gets the good pay-off, the successful member of society, perhaps someone like myself, who, having started out in life as an underdog, has now enough money to drink a bottle of wine with my dinner.

So, if one can believe that the fate of the underdog is somehow caused by the overdog, one has a political programme unfolding before one. Namely, to get rid of the distinction between underdog and overdog. Somehow, by whatever means, introduce a condition of equality, so there is no underdog any more, because there is no overdog ruling over him. Equality, then, becomes the primary goal.

**"Of course, one simple way of making everyone equal is to deprive everyone of everything. It is no exaggeration to say that this was the method adopted in the Soviet Union under Stalin".**

Now, of course, one simple way of making everyone equal is to deprive everyone of everything. It is no exaggeration to say that this was the method adopted in the Soviet Union under Stalin. Almost everybody, as Mr O'Mahony rightly said, not the elite who were doing the depriving. But even they were unsafe. From day to day they risked falling into just the same trap that they had built for the rest of mankind. Even Stalin himself never felt wholly secure — and rightly.

So, we all recognise that there are ways of aiming at equality that threaten us all. I would simply say, without arguing for it, because this is a debate about other things, that I believe that the goal of equality is unachievable and that it would not be worth achieving if you could achieve it.

I actually think, and Mr O'Mahony rightly accuses me of this, that elites are necessary. They are also, in my view, the peaceful by-products of human society. They are not necessarily the evil and repulsive things that he believes they are.

I want to talk about the future of socialism, in particular this "left wing attitude" that I have identified.

It is obvious that the idea that the misery of the underdog is caused by the triumph of the overdog has a peculiar tenacity — not just intellectually. It has survived ever since the French Revolution, and of course had its origins long before that in medieval thinking. It is not just an intellectual tenacity, it is a moral tenacity.

People believe that if you deny such rights you are condoning the situation of those who lose out. You are part of the machinery of oppression which has caused them to be sleeping in that tin shed in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

As a result, as all of you know, it does become very difficult to be open and honest about this very matter. If you are open and honest and say human equality is not achievable and not desirable, you can be the target of abuse. It is thought morally wrong even to think this. However, in my view, this is self-evidently true, as long as you clear your mind of the emotional need to think the opposite.

This emotional need will survive because of human sympathy with the situation of those who lose out. I believe one *should* have that sympathy. But one should not take it to the extent of destroying the possibility of elites emerging. Because, in my view, it is only by the emergence of elites that the situation of everyone gets better.

But elites have to emerge in the right way. Not by imposing themselves on others, but by the process once called by Adam Smith "the invisible hand".

Marxism, to which Mr O'Mahony gave a very neat and elegant introduction, appeals not just because it conscripts this feeling of sympathy for the underdog, but for reasons he stated: it seems to give a scientific account of how that condition arose and how it will be bettered. It will be bettered by the natural processes of history, passing through capitalism to a socialist future. As he rightly said, that socialist future turned out after 1917 to have been betrayed. Well, he would say betrayed, I would say that was what it actually really was. At least it was not what was expected.

Ever since 1917 people on the left have been exercised by what happened in Russia. They have wanted to explain it in a way which would enable them to maintain their own system of beliefs. The usual way out is the way out taken by Mr O'Mahony, namely, that this was not real socialism. It was not real

Continued on pages 10 and 11

**"Elites are the peaceful by-products of human society."**

## Roger Scruton replies

Mr O'Mahony was eloquent and forceful, covering a great deal of ground. I can not reply to everything he said, but when he spoke of "the cry of triumph" from the bourgeoisie which we have been hearing for the last ten years, I thought of my own childhood.

I asked myself, not for the first time, whether I am a member of that class or not. When he spoke about the ruling class, in my father's accent and with all the venom it was said to me when I was a child by my father, I once again ask: do I really belong to that class? The answer, of course, is that I do not know.

I thought then that I heard a voice from my own past, from my father, lecturing me, as he always did, on the injustices of the English class system. How he himself had been a victim and how I was destined to be a victim too — not having the money and the opportunities which only the upper class could enjoy.

I have always borne in my heart the little thought that I am a member of the proletariat after all, despite all the accidents of circumstance which have followed. It is with that authority which I speak to you.

I do not accept the title of this debate, in the sense that I do not accept the phrase "collapse of Stalinism". What I think has collapsed in Eastern Europe at least,

and in the Soviet Union too, is Leninism. I agree with Ken Minogue, insofar as I understand what Ken Minogue said to Mr O'Mahony in a previous debate, that the roots of the evil we have seen are not in the personality of Stalin, but they go deeper into a project which Lenin himself introduced into Russia in 1917.

**"I am not sure whether socialism has a future. But I do believe that there is something which does have a future... That is the left wing attitude... it is a part of human nature, it will always exist."**

This project has been introduced into many other parts of the world, by others unconnected with Lenin, and almost always with the same results. I am thinking of Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot and a whole series of other people whose names perhaps one should not mention quite in the same breath as Lenin, but nevertheless had the same project in mind.

I am not sure whether socialism has a future. But I do believe that there is something else which does have a future which I want to define

before beginning. This is: the left-wing attitude. I do not want to disparage it because I think it is a part of human nature, it will always exist. I was brought up in a family in which it was dominant.

I would like to say psychologically what I think this attitude is, and why I think it will persist. I believe it is founded in sympathy for the underdog. Everyone recognises that there are people who lose out. The sight of them losing out is always heartrending and in decent people it gives rise to the question: what shall I do about it?



Capitalism brings war. It is the rule of savages!



**"Whatever else we think about the revolutions of 1989, the demand for private property was at the heart of them."**

From page 9

socialism because it was taken over (in his language) by a counter-revolution of Stalinist bureaucrats.

Now, I am not a historian, but I think if you were really interested in what went on in 1917 — most of you have socialist leanings, you ought to be — you should read the book by Heller and Neffs, *Utopia in Power*. It will prove to you, if you have an open mind, that the things that are normally blamed on Stalin had been consciously initiated by Lenin.

In particular, the founding of the Cheka, which was to have all-encompassing power over the social processes. That is the sort of think which was the most sinister development of the Russian Revolution. But it happened before Stalin and it happened in Lenin's thinking as part of the process of seizing power from the remnants of the bourgeoisie — from people like me, I suppose.

Now, people on the left ought to feel some conscience about this. As I have said, the left-wing attitude is natural, and will always remain, but it is also necessary to feel some conscience about what has been done in the name of it.

If people like myself start saying of any particular conservative or reactionary regime which you disapprove of — perhaps it's not real conservatism, you would all be, rightly, disapproving. You would say, come on, take some responsibility for things done in the name of your philosophy; show how you would separate yourself from it. You must give concrete historical detail and show you are aware of the evils and the dangers.

If anything should be learned from Stalinism, as Mr O'Mahony called it — what I refer to as Leninism — it is that, whatever the future of socialism, whatever it is that you socialists think you should be doing, you must look at the past and take some responsibility for it. At least for having sympathised with it, for feeling it is going along the right lines. See how things went wrong and how you, seriously, would avoid the errors.

I believe that many on the left, in Britain at least, have gone through this examination of conscience. I feel people, on the whole, agree about certain conclusions about the Great Socialist Experiment, as it was called.

First, and I think Mr O'Mahony would probably agree with this, most people are sceptical about centralised planning. But their scepticism, I believe, does not go far enough. In particular, we should ask ourselves the question as to why centralised planning was thought of in the first place. It was instituted by Lenin as an instrument for equalising people, for destroying that old class structure and giving opportunities at the lower end of society.

Is centralised planning in itself wrong, or is it only wrong when it is not used for the purpose of equalising people? If you can plan to equalise, how far can your planning go? What liberties would you allow

yourself to trample on in order to achieve human equality? This is the real question. I think all socialists — or rather all those with the left-wing attitude I have described — should ask themselves.

Most on the left have come to see that state control in itself is not a good thing. As Mr O'Mahony said, what socialists, and in particular Marxists, have always argued for it not for control of the economy by the state but rather something else — collective ownership, what the 19th century Marxists used to call social ownership, ownership by the people, not by the state.

**"To the people who constantly manifest their desires for something which has the form of a capitalist economy, do you tell them that they are wrong and that their votes should be cancelled, or do you go along with it and accept the result?"**

The problem, I think, is that the onus falls on you to define just what you mean by that. Is, for example, a modern capitalist form, in which the workers can all acquire shares, social ownership or not? I see, from vibrations on my left, no.

This is the kind of question you need to discuss. Just how do you bring it about? At a certain period people thought that Yugoslavia was an ideal of social ownership, one that combined social ownership with a market economy. No-one would want to wish the destiny of Yugoslavia on the rest of the world. But, alas, the economic and social facts of Yugoslavia do not give a good record to that type of socialism either.

Let me say one thing further. I do not, again, want to give a definite view because it is for you, in your hearts, to decide. Mr O'Mahony said that for him the idea of socialism was collective ownership, not state ownership, but ownership by the people or workers, based on political democracy. This raises for me the major question which all socialists have to confront in the post-Leninist world.

Suppose it came to a choice between socialism, or collective ownership, and democracy — which way are you going to go?

To the people who constantly manifest their desires for something which has the form of a capitalist economy, do you tell them that they are wrong and that their votes will be cancelled, or do you go along with it and accept the result? I think this is a paradox?

All socialists I have known, not only my own father, believe that their doctrine, if understood, would have the spontaneous consent of all the people. But suppose it had the spontaneous dissent of all people, what then? Which way do you go?

Nevertheless, as I say, the left-wing state of mind will remain because it comes from a force in human nature which is a force we



The right to private property would be welcomed by the homeless. But capitalism cannot deliver!

should try to understand. My own view is that it is a type of residue of religious feelings surviving into a secular age. But these are feelings which all of us share to some extent. The socialist way of conscripting them will always be with us.

But what are the lessons which must be learned from the collapse of Leninism? The first, and the most important, I think is this.

What Lenin did in Russia was to destroy all the Russian institutions which made it possible to recognise their mistakes and to correct them.

He destroyed parliaments, he destroyed law, he destroyed open discussion and opposition. This process was initiated by Lenin and brought to fruition by Stalin. But it is only through these sort of things that people can come to see that they have made a mistake and take measures to correct it.

In my view the greatest mistake that humanity can make is to destroy the means to rectify mistakes. That is the mistake which was made. Therefore we must remember that we need institutions which enable us, collectively, to come to see where we have gone wrong. That means we need parliaments, above all, legal opposition and free opinions.

Another point, and Mr O'Mahony agreed, the rule of law really matters. Lenin in November 1918 issued a decree on courts which abolished the entire legal system of the Soviet Union. All the consequences which we see flowing from that are too horrendous to relate. We know that, whatever else we do, we must maintain the rule of law — a continuous structure of legal authority and impartial courts, insofar as we can achieve them. All human institutions are imperfect,

and there will always be mistakes, nevertheless, just to abolish law is one of the primary errors of revolutionary socialism in the Leninist mould.

Another lesson we should learn, although I think Mr O'Mahony would disagree with this, is that private property is a primary right of the individual. I do not know the Soviet Union very well, but I do know Eastern Europe. I know from the experience of my friends there that the one thing that would have helped them more than anything else was the right to be able to shut their door in someone's face, particularly the face of the secret police. The right to have that piece of territory of your own. Without private property it seems to me there is no such right.

**"Another lesson which you should draw from the collapse of Leninism... [is] human institutions are more easy to destroy than to create. In destroying them you do not always know what you are losing. It was very easy for Lenin to destroy the rule of law in Russia..."**

Private property is the thing that gives someone control over his own life. Whatever else we think about the revolutions of 1989 the demand for private property was at the heart of them. And anyone who knows

Poland and Czechoslovakia will recognise this. You might think people were wrong to demand that right, that there is some ideal socialist world where it would not be necessary, but in the actually existing situation private property is one of the best institutions which has ever evolved, to protect us from the bullying of others.

Another lesson which you should draw from the collapse of Leninism is slightly more philosophical. It is: human institutions are more easy to destroy than to create. In destroying them you do not always know what you are losing. It was very easy for Lenin to destroy the rule of law in Russia, to destroy the principles of a free economy, to destroy all the old academic institutions, the Orthodox church and so on.

All these things crumbled immediately. You only had to breathe on them. But what came in their place? In my view, *nothing*, organised nihilism. A moral, political and spiritual vacuum in which only *power* could reside. I believe we should learn that lesson. We should remember that even if we want to reform things — and reform is very different from destruction. Until we understand the function of an institution — be it parliament, a school, a university, or whatever — we should not arrogate to ourselves the right to cast it down. We should try to find what it does and try to reform it in the direction we want.

Finally, the last lesson from the collapse of Leninism is that they ought to inform themselves a little bit better about the history of our century and what has actually happened. Many, many millions of people have paid with their lives, freedom and happiness to the Great



# Has socialism a future?

## "Perhaps we are all workers. The question belongs to the 19th century."

Roger Scruton sums up and replies to the floor debate

**I will address the points made in the discussion one by one. Firstly: has socialism come to an end?**

I don't believe socialism has come to an end, because I believe that the moral and emotional roots of socialism will always be there.

Socialism will take a different form, and I entirely agree with the point made from the floor that the rhetoric of socialism in our day is outmoded. It must be amended, but once amended it will channel once again the emotion which Rousseau called "compassionating zeal". I think this is what we have heard from several people here today.

One of the pieces of rhetoric which should be amended is that of socialism versus capitalism.

One gentleman, on behalf of social democracy, said absolutely rightly that this is an anachronistic debate. Nothing in the modern world is recognisably capitalist if you mean by capitalist that system that was described in *Das Kapital*. Certainly the opposition which exists is no longer socialism as then defined.

For a start, capitalism has never been a system of beliefs. It was mainly used to describe an economic system. The Marxist assumption is that economic systems determine the whole social superstructure. I believe that assumption is wrong. I would never use the word capitalism to describe the conditions of any actually existing order. Let us just remember that this language comes from 19th century debate.

Several people have said: why have I not explained what is good about "the rotten corrupt system"? Someone said it has been cheeky of me to avoid what capitalism has done to the world and asked why I did not defend "my system"? Well, I was here to debate the future for socialism after Stalinism, not to defend what I believe. If asked to do so, I would have done so.

As I said in the course of my talk, I do recognise the imperfections of human institutions, and I will defend nothing as an idea. I will defend certain established historical compromises as the best that we have got.

One gentleman has said that this is just a cop-out, and that I am just taking Burke's line that because of human imperfections all we can do is to sustain the given things. He said that this is not going to appeal to anyone. If this is what the Right believe, then the Right has no future.

Well, I would say that it is true that the Right's future will always be precarious so long as it believes something as unexciting as the truth.

That is the problem for us. You on the left have this great advantage that you can propagate exciting myths which appeal directly to emotions and which we will never see, but nevertheless will always inspire a following. I am not in that happy position. I will only be able to rely on decency, common sense and scepticism.

I agree with you that perhaps on the those grounds the Right does not have much of a future. We have had a lucky run, but maybe we will have to go under. But I am a philosopher. I am only interested in the truth, not what the future may bring.

Someone said: why do I talk only about individuals whereas Mr O'Mahony was talking about social groups and classes? Do I not believe that there are classes? Are they not economically determined? Do they have contradictions? If so, how are they resolved? This is straight from the heart of Marxist theory.

I do not believe that classes are the most important form of association between people. I believe that there are other forms of association that come about in completely different ways — such as this, a debating club, a corporation, a church, a school, a university. All these bring people together and establish their collective and social nature a lot more firmly than classes do.

I do not know what class I belong to. But I do know something about clubs and discussion groups and other things I belong to — not all of which some of the people in this room would approve of. And the same is true of most of you. Many people here have

spoken loudly of their situation as workers, but I wonder how many here are really confident that you as opposed to me are the genuine item when it comes to being a worker or not?

Perhaps we are all workers. Perhaps none of us are. I sit in front of a VDU, just like the lady here, for quite a bit of the day too.

This question also belongs to the 19th century. It has a dusty air to it. The most important question for us today is not the question of what we are as individuals, but what groups, clubs, social units, we would like to belong to. My only point is this: whatever we belong to, we ought to be free to belong to it, or not. We should not be blamed for belonging to things which it was never our choice to belong to in the first place.

Perhaps I am, objectively speaking, as the Marxists used to say, a member of the bourgeoisie. But that does not mean I am a fat spiv as one gentleman referred to that class. I know a lot of people who you could classify as owners of the means of production who are neither fat nor spivs.

**"...[Private property]... is not sufficient for introducing the ideal order. But it is a necessary protection for the individual against the state."**

Put on one side all this myth-making about class and talk about real social entities! I agree that if conservatism as a philosophy confines itself to advocating the rights of individuals, as Mrs Thatcher and her ideologues used to do, it dissolves into another kind of 19th century nonsense, a John Stuart Mill-type of individualism which also, today, has no credibility.

All of us are anxious for some type of social belonging. This goes as much for people on the Right as those on the Left. This is what we must try to define and identify. All this talk about classes is a myth and an illusion.

Now, the lady here accused me of believing that sympathy for the underdog was misguided, recommending me to read Hume. I do not think it is misguided. I think it is a natural human instinct.

Again, one person said this feeling made him into a socialist. It made me into a socialist too, for a short while, admittedly under some fairly severe tuition. If I had confessed something else, I would have been out on my ear.

Nevertheless, I also believe it is quite possible to be like me and think there has to be an underdog, because there has to be an overdog, and yet also feel sympathy for the underdog.

I am just sceptical about the socialist plans that have been propagated for rectifying the situation of the underdog.

Someone said, quite rightly, that Marxist sympathy for the underdog was irrelevant to the argument. Marx was presenting an objective, scientific description of the material basis of society, its basis in human labour. From that description certain things followed. I agree that this is what he said he was doing. But I disagree that it was objective and scientific.

The proof of its wrongness comes from the disasters of the attempts to implement it. I know that this is a deep question, and that we were not assembled to discuss it, but all that I would say is that for me the division between material base and social superstructure is untenable, the labour theory of value is untenable. The idea that certain social forms succeed each other according to the laws of motion declared in *Das Kapital* is also untenable. I reject all these three crucial theses. So I do not accept that there is anything remaining of an objective theory to replace what I described as the instinctive feeling we have for the underdog, which will always remain.

Someone went on to say that democracy takes priority over socialism. She said it is what people want that matters. You rebutted my suggestion that socialists are in a quandary as to whether they should have democracy or socialism. I think her very language went on to reveal exactly why I am worried. "The majority of the working class will take power for themselves. That will show that socialism is achieved by democracy".

Firstly, you use a violent language of "taking power", not the language of constitutional process, where people vote and display their wants. You talk about a particular class, the working class. What about the rest? They have no say.

What if it turns out that the majority are middle class, as in my view they may well be? Do you say they have no rights?

You go on to defend Leninism, saying the invention of the Cheka was a tactical, short-term measure designed to protect the workers' revolution against people like me. I was specifically cited as the type of person who does need to be dealt with quite severely in these transitional periods.

I fully agree. If you go in that direction you will have to deal severely with people like me. But I think there are a lot more people like me than you think. I think you may find that there are 20 million of them. You have to make the moral choice: what to do with them? This is a choice that Lenin made, and we are living with the consequences.

Someone said I should look at Eastern Europe — the gentleman from Pakistan, or somewhere like that; oh, I am not allowed to say things like that — before the Communist takeover. Well, I agree. But we should look at what was possible in Eastern Europe. Eastern Europe is very important. They have been through what we have not been through.

They suffered Nazism and Communism in rapid succession. It is a big question why that happened, and what went wrong with the settlement after the First World War. Maybe that settlement was in itself wrong. But everyone knows that at least the Austrian part of the Austro-Hungarian empire had introduced some kind of democracy, at least universal adult male suffrage, in 1903. That was working quite well.

Something went wrong. What went wrong is something, fortunately, we have escaped in this country. So we do not know all the forces that went first of all to make Nazism and then Communism in that part of the world.

We must concentrate on the actual history of these events and try to see whether they are relevant to us at all. Maybe they went through this tragic succession of events because of the peculiar circumstances they were in after the First World War. Maybe we don't have to think about this in the same way. Maybe we don't have to worry about whether Marxism contains anything relevant to our condition at all.

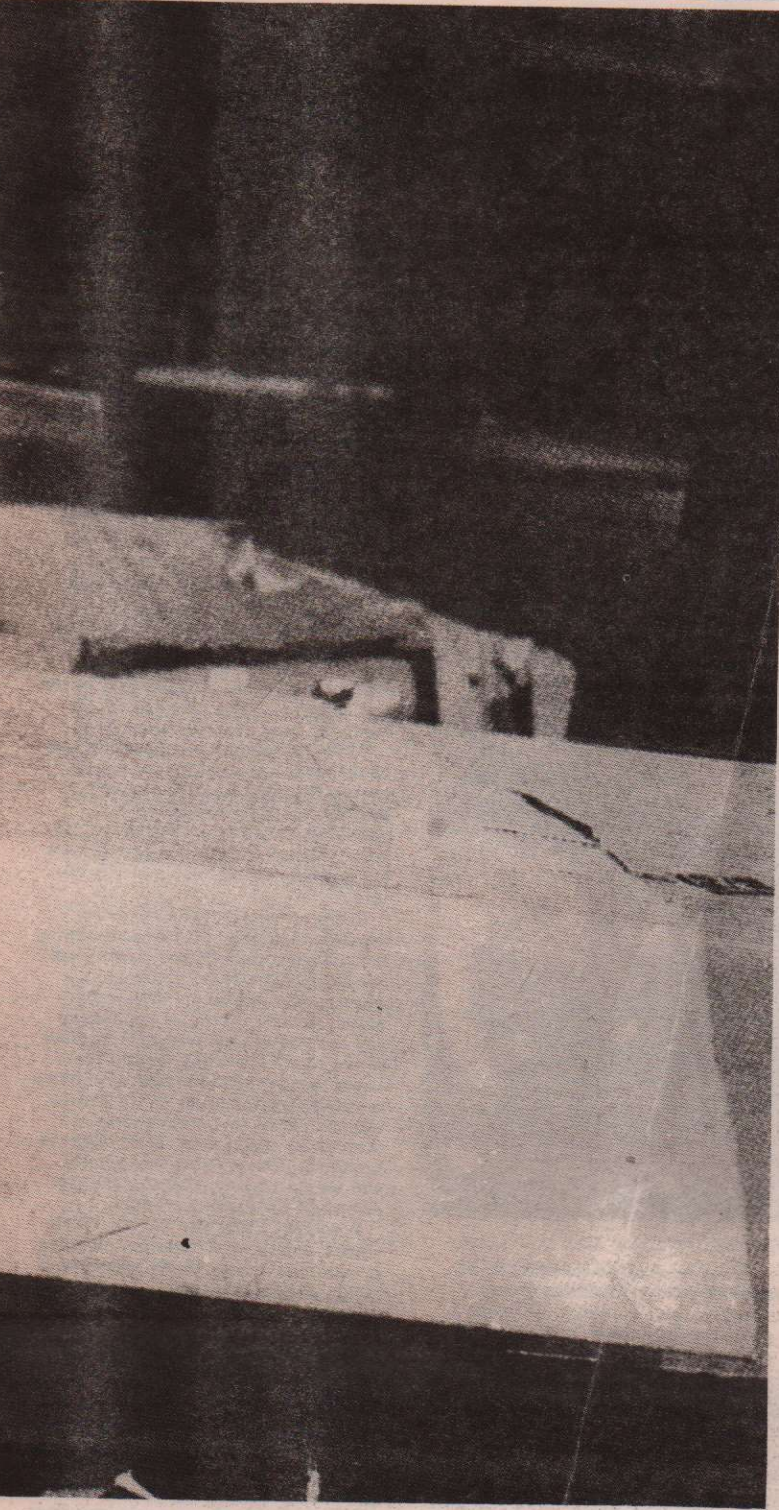
Why did I say so many positive things about private property? Someone mentioned Chile under Pinochet. Surely, private property does not guarantee democracy, it was said.

It is not sufficient for introducing an ideal order. But it is a necessary protection for the individual against the state. It is one thing which defines for the individual some sphere of sovereignty of his own, something he can give away if he wants, something he can exchange.

Marx himself said that the condition of the proletariat was miserable because the proletariat has nothing to exchange but his own labour power. Surely you would want the proletarians to have something more than that to exchange if you want to liberate them. That "more" must be their own property.



Marxism: based on sympathy for the underdog?



Socialist Experiment. It is not good enough to wash your hands of it, you must understand what went wrong.

Mr O'Mahony talked about bourgeois democracy which, apparently, we all live in, as a system of lies. But I suggest that if you really want to know what it is like to live in a system of lies you do a bit of reading about the systems actually obtained in Eastern Europe. I am not talking about the Soviet Union, but about Eastern Europe.

These were capitalist economies which should have developed into socialism, and which the Communists were only giving a helping hand to, after all. Read Vaclav Havel's essays and come to see just what it means when truth is completely marginalised in everyday life.

We can have this discussion. At least it helps us to clear the air of unnecessary lies laying too long in our opponent's conscience. In that part of the world, until 1989, such a discussion would have led to the arrest of all the people in this room.

I think that when history is examined it is much more complex than the simplified schemes that appeal to you because they seem to make sense of it. One of these schemes was given to us by Mr O'Mahony.

A Marxist scheme where history proceeds from feudalism through to capitalism, on to socialism by necessary and logical steps. In which, until the final stage, there is always a ruling class against which the rest are struggling. I think this is all myth.

If you look at our country and the rule of law which he says the

workers struggled to institute, often against great resistance. The rule of law existed in this country, existed since the reign of Edward II, in one form or another. It was not introduced by workers' struggle. Nor was it anything to do with capitalism. It was part of feudal England.

**"Is Mr O'Mahony a worker? Am I a worker? Are any of you workers? What does it mean to say that workers are going to rise up once again and take possession of their birthright? This language belongs to the 19th century, and was even wrong when applied then!"**

England, even then, was not really feudal. It had a money economy and so on. If you look at the facts all these simplifications become unacceptable. Along with them comes the unacceptable idea of "the workers". Is Mr O'Mahony a worker? Am I a worker? Are any of you workers? What does it mean to say that workers are going to rise up once again and take possession of their birthright? This language belongs to the 19th century, and was even wrong when applied then.

You should revise your rhetoric to something more appropriate to the days in which you live.



# Has socialism a future?

## "Roger Scruton, in terms of where he stands in history, has more in common with Stalinism...than we socialists have."

John O'Mahony sums up

The last speech by Mr Scruton was hypocritical. If Stalinism in the Soviet Union really was socialist and working class, then you can reasonably go on about the massacres.

In actuality, the massacres have largely been massacres of our people. The history of capitalism has been a history of massacres of our people. In Paris in 1871, something in the region of 10,000 of our people were murdered in cold blood after they had been captured. There are many, many other examples.

It is not a matter of whether we are willing, if we had the chance, to murder 20 million Roger Scrutons. It is matter of a struggle which goes on.

No Marxist socialist would seriously argue you can get socialism without the majority of the population wanting it. The whole idea that socialism can be imposed by a minority is absurd! The attempt would lead to all sorts of convulsions.

The argument is whether or not, if socialists have a majority, the ruling class will submit to that majority. The evidence of history is that if we came anywhere near to a majority the ruling class would disrupt bourgeois democratic procedures.

Take Chile in 1970-73, for example. A left-wing government — not particularly left-wing, in fact — but a left government was elected; and then it was smashed by a military regime backed by the CIA. This military regime had many of the features of fascism.

The issue is not properly posed in terms of the massacre of the ruling class or of Roger Scrutons. It is posed in terms of the fact of history: they massacred us.

What do I mean by "democracy"? I mean real, collective self-rule of the essential features of the lives of the people making the decisions. In reality you do not have this under capitalism. For example, much of what happens in Britain is determined by a stable civil service. Most of what happens in the lives of ordinary people is determined by capitalist monopolies who are not subject to any sort of democracy at all. They are like the petty kings of the Dark Ages, the big capitalists now, ruling their economic kingdoms as autocrats!

I would not say that democracy for shareholders is any type of democracy where a company employs a vast number of people who have absolutely no say in what happens. So democracy is not real, except within certain narrow, formal, political limits. It is not what it promises to be.

In America, for example, less than half the people vote. A vast number of things are decided by the Supreme Court. In reality, democracy in America or in Britain is very, very shallow. We want to deepen democracy. We want to give political, social, and economic substance to the bourgeois shadow of democracy.

I do not know about whether human nature is evil or not. If you look at what the Nazis did, when normal family men — some of whom were vegetarians for humanitarian reasons — went home to their kids after organising the gassings, then you can argue that human nature is capable of awful, awful things when the internal and social inhibitions break down.



The whole notion that Lenin created totalitarian planning is not true to history

What socialists want to do is to create a set of social institutions and conditions where human beings — who begin as animals with all the possibilities of animals, and who are capable of relapsing into bestiality — can rise, and rise on a stable basis and continue to rise above that level.

It is irrelevant how you define basic human nature. It seems to me you can define it very negatively, but that is an argument for better social institutions. After all, the good family men who murdered people in the Nazi concentration camps only did these things in conditions where German capitalism licensed a legion of savages to take control. These savages took control to such an extent that when the German bourgeoisie wanted to stop what they were doing in the early '40s they could not stop them. They brought Germany down to complete disaster.

We want to change the sort of conditions where the bestiality which sometimes emerges in people can emerge in that way or to that extent.

Now, should we drop being called socialist? Well, in a way, yes. But that is the desire to escape from a whole series of associations which really are very difficult to escape from. What do we call ourselves? The best thing I can think of is "democratic collectivists". But then people would not know what we were talking about, or where we came from politically.

We have to fight our way out of the situation we are in. So I agree, socialist is a lousy word, so is communism; but therefore let us try to define the ideas we are talking about.

Social Democracy, has it vanquished Leninism? Well, it depends on how you evaluate what Social Democracy has achieved. Nowhere has Social Democracy achieved anything better than a welfare state. It may have alleviated, over time, the conditions of rampant red-in-tooth-and-claw capitalism. That is good. It did not achieve the socialist goals of eliminating capitalism and going on to something higher. Therefore it is not vindicated.

Classes don't exist? Again, you can take every given thing, break it down to all its particulars and its components, and deny that any whole greater than those components exists. Does society exist? Thatcher says, no — only individuals exist. You know the old argument: is a river the same river as it was five minutes ago? It is not, it is flowing. Yet we work normally on the assumption that the river exists.

If you de-structure everything around you, it becomes impossible to make sense of anything. When you do this ideologically, as Roger Scruton is doing, you do it to avoid facing the fact that there are classes.

Fundamentally, there are groups of people, whatever the differences between them as individuals — and there are many — with a similar relationship to the means of production. For example, there are a vast number of people in this country who can only live by selling their labour power.

According to Roger Scruton, private property is a good thing. Well, on a certain level that is true. But if workers have houses as well as labour power, they can not live on the sale of their houses. They have to continue to sell their labour power.

Classes do exist. Some people live by selling their labour power; other people own the means of production. Again, there are divisions within this categorisation, but the categorisation tries to make sense of society. Breaking things down to atoms is simply an ideological evasion of thinking about the composite reality.

What about Roger Scruton's own identity, his "upwards" migration from class to class? It's become relatively easier to do this in Britain in the last 40 years. Other countries have a far less structured class system — Australia and America, for instance. Individuals can change place. But at any given time there is a vast and stable number of people who have to sell their labour power and who can not and will not escape from that condition. There is an inherent limit to the number of individuals who can migrate as Roger Scruton says he has.

People can change their classes, but that does not tell you anything. In ancient Rome people could go from slaves to being very rich. One even went on to become emperor. But it did not alter the system of slavery. Most slaves remained slaves.

Lenin did found the Cheka. I agree with the comrade who argued that the



The struggle does continue

Russian revolution was right to defend itself by whatever means it found necessary.

In a calm, friendly discussion you could discuss whether the setting up of a lawless Cheka, which on a day to day basis was out of political control, was the right thing to do. You could ask whether or not, in retrospect, it really was the right thing to do, and whether it was not a serious mistake.

But before I would discuss that in an argument with Roger Scruton, I would insist on discussing the reality in which the Cheka was created. The Bolsheviks did not begin by starting the terror; the Bolsheviks began by abolishing the death penalty. Then the Bolsheviks were faced by the revolt of the old ruling class. They were faced with the invasion of no less than 14 states, including Britain. One of the consequences of this was that a society which was backward to start with was driven much further back.

A large part of the working class was destroyed. They were physically destroyed and driven back into the countryside. You can not talk about the Cheka or condemn what Lenin and company did to defend themselves without taking all this into account.

This is an example of what I started out with: the ruling class resists. Lenin did not decree that there would be civil war. The first thing the Bolsheviks did when they took power — on 8 November 1917 — was to produce an appeal for peace. It was a sane, sensible, reasonable document in a world gone mad, where millions of people were being slaughtered in a mad capitalist war.

The Bolsheviks did not begin as people who recklessly killed Roger Scruton's adopted class in Russia, they began as people who wanted a peaceful revolution. They were stopped, not by their own ill-will or their own evil natures, but by the nature of the resistance to them, and by the nature of serious political struggle in class society.

Are elites necessary? Much of what Roger Scruton said here about elites and private property is largely sophism. What are we talking about in terms of elites? Well, of course, there are and always will be differences among human beings. You will almost certainly get elites in particular fields. You will get people who are an elite in terms of knowledge, for example. I am prepared to accept that this is so and that it should be so, and I am prepared to pay due respect to someone who has a great deal of knowledge. There are all sorts of ways people can be elites. No-one with any sense is going to tell you that you can equalise people on that level.

What we want to do in terms of equality is to get rid of a system whereby there is inbuilt inequality, grotesque inequality, rooted not in the special human qualities some people may have but in their ownership of the means of life, and where others have to work to live, submitting to the exploitation of the owners.

I don't have any objection to people owning houses. If Mrs Thatcher's selling of council houses had not meant the destruction of the social housing stock there would not have been a particular problem from a socialist point of view. Under a socialist system perhaps they would not want to own houses, but if people did then that would have little bearing on the socialist project.

But we are not arguing with you on this level about property. We are arguing against the right to own, and exploit, other people's labour power. That is what is wrong here. Yes, and the prohibition of such property rights — in the means of production and in the buying and exploiting of labour power — is the limit we would put on "freedom" in order to achieve equality — equality as I have defined it, not as Roger Scruton has defined it.

**"The rule of law is a good thing, other things being equal. But the rule of law is frequently developed through disruptions of the rule of law. The question is: whose law?"**

There are constraints on robbery. I think a society could exist in a condition of liberty which placed all sorts of basic legal, constitutional restraints on the right to exploit other people and the right to own the means of production. I mean large-scale production, I am not talking here about artisan workshops or the corner shop.

No Marxist advocated the sort of wholesale, pauperising collectivisation that Stalin carried out. Trotsky criticised him. This was no Marxist programme. It actually corresponded to the drive of the Stalinist bureaucracy to become the sole master of the surplus product. This was the way Trotsky described it.

No Marxist is in favour of barrack-room equality. On the contrary, the whole point we make about bourgeois society is that bourgeois society, having created the possibility of a high degree of individualisation of people,

actually limits the realisation of that possibility to a very small number. We are the individualists here, in the proper sense of the word. If you like, we want mass individualism!

We want to create a whole, stable social system in which there will be a vast increase in individualism in the sense I have defined it. The whole argument here, in terms of what Marxists say, is skewed by Stalinism and utterly confused.

Marxists never advocated the sort of things the Maoists or the Khmer Rouge did. That is not and never has been our programme. It was not the programme of Marx, nor the programme of Lenin either. If someone who has read Marx and Lenin pretends to believe that Marxism and barrack-room Maoism are the same thing, I take that as proof that they can not deal with the arguments of the real Marxists. They hide behind Stalinism from real Marxism.

So we are against private ownership of the means of production and against the right to exploit people. Beyond that there are all sorts of possibilities for the ownership of property. We are not against people owning property — the whole idea is absurd.

Lenin at various times tried to organise planning, for instance, during the civil war under War Communism. Lenin in 1921 created a system whereby they allowed a limited but quite extensive revival of capitalism and the bourgeoisie under the control of the state. The whole notion that Lenin created what has become known as totalitarian planning is not true to history. All of that was carried through by Stalin after 1928, when he broke with the reviving bourgeoisie and the bureaucracy became the sole master of the surplus product.

It was then that you got the whole absurd notion of totalitarian planning. It would have been pretty absurd in a highly advanced country with a developed civilisation. It was utterly harmful in the USSR, and was said to be so at the time by Marxist critics of Stalinism, many of whom were in Stalin's jails and camps.

What about the rule of law? I did not claim, did not mean to claim, that the workers created the rule of law. If you look at the evolution of the rule of law in England you can't just place it back in the Middle Ages and present it as a continuous, flowing, evolutionary development — and then forget about the 17th century bourgeois revolution! You cannot talk about the stable evolution of the rule of law without revolutionary disruption. It would not be true.

What I claimed was that the workers, by their struggles, expanded the possibilities of democracy. They forced acceptance of this on the ruling class.

The rule of law is a good thing, other things being equal. But the rule of law is frequently developed through disruptions of the rule of law. The question is: whose law? Right now the law of this country is very different from the law at the time of Cromwell, not to speak of the time which Roger Scruton mentioned.

We are in favour of the rule of law. But the rule of better law — law which, for example, outlaws exploitation — must be established. We are in favour of breaking the law of the bourgeoisie, if necessary to achieve that. For example, Yeltsin and the Russian parliament went against the legalities of the system when they opposed the coup. Yeltsin broke the rule of law when, for instance, he banned the Communist Party. Was it right to do that? Of course, it was right. But Yeltsin did not act as someone who represented the naturally evolving, growing, expanding parliament-based rule of law. He was someone who acted as a revolutionary. And he was right to act as a revolutionary.

Finally, I repeat: between Roger Scruton and Stalinism there is a great common bond, a common acceptance of elites. He wants a civilised elite, but he wants an elite. We do not want elites; we want self-ruling democracy. And you cannot get self-ruling democracy unless you have some form of collective ownership of the basic means of production, otherwise you get gross inequality under formal equality.

Roger Scruton, in terms of where he stands in history, has more in common with Stalinism — I make all the necessary qualifications here — than we socialists have. Much more!



# Times of deception and cowardice

## Cinema

Belinda Weaver reviews  
*Uranus*

**U***ranus* is a very curious film. French films that don't glorify the Resistance are pretty few and far between, so it's interesting just for that. But it's muddled and its message is ultimately rather cynical.

It's the story of a bombed-out French village in the south west after the Liberation. The Communists are on top, and they've turned the tables on former collaborators, rounding them up and executing them.

It's a bad time, not just for collaborators, but for anti-Communists in the Resistance and for do-nothing people who just sat tight until it was all over. The atmosphere of rumour and denunciation makes everybody nervous, and anxious to rewrite the past, as those on top can always use politics to settle personal scores.

That unlucky fate befalls Leopold (played with inexhaustible gusto by Gerard Depardieu), the former fairground strongman who runs the local cafe. Leopold, a boozier, and quick to anger, throws out of his cafe the mealy-mouthed Rochard, who is taunting another of Leopold's customers for collaborating. Rochard, a railway official, is a pipsqueak who joined the Communists to be on the winning side for a change; when Leopold humiliates him, Rochard denounces him to the authorities, claiming he is hiding a notorious fascist sympathiser, Maxime.

What merely seems to be spite on Rochard's part turns into something more, setting in train a set of events that will lead, despite his innocence, to Leopold's destruction.

For Maxime is not with Leopold; he is hiding in the home of Archambaud, an engineer, who takes pity on the outcast, though he doesn't share his views. Archambaud is risking his neck, especially as he is sharing his house with other bombed-out families, one of which is headed by another keen Communist.

The film is good on what must have been a very fraught, witch-hunting time. It captures the petty self-deceptions of those who twisted first one way, then another, and it is savage about the monstrous



Gerard Depardieu as Leopold

selfishness and greed of the master collaborator, Mogliat, an old man, half-extinguished, who yet clings to life, gloating over his money and glorying in the deaths of his enemies.

Less good are the film's conclusions. It contrasts the collaborationists with the Communists and finds them both repellent. It poses the choice as either getting something for yourself (as Mogliat did) or getting something for Stalin and Russia. Neither offer much appeal, but the film's sympathies seem to lie more with Mogliat (despite his loathsomeness) than with the Communists, who are also pilloried.

But the choice was wider than that; the Resistance was made up of all sorts of people. The Communists were not the main part of it. The fact that they used their time on top to settle old scores doesn't change that, though it does explain why the film is so hard on them. With their arbitrary justice, their regime of terror, their network of spies and snitchers, they wreaked misery on the towns they controlled.

Contrasted to them are the two men, Archambaud and Watrin, the schoolteacher, who between them protect the hunted Maxime from the Communists. Being weak and cowardly themselves, and having no firm or fixed beliefs, they cannot bring themselves to judge Maxime. His support for the Nazis is excused

or explained away as if in the name of some spurious humanity.

They shrink from handing him in, not because they are noble and forgiving, but because they are feeble.

*Uranus* is about the vacillations of petty bourgeois people like Archambaud who, when faced with moral choice, throw a cloak over their vacillation, as if to dress it up

into something finer and grander. In the opening lines of the film, we are told that some French people collaborated while others fought back, but that the majority of French people did neither. This film seems to be saying that that was the wisest course, because moral choices are to be confused and so hard to make. As Watrin says to Archambaud: It is easier to be a

hypocrite.

But it isn't. Archambaud and Watrin wear spiritual hair shirts; they're always examining their consciences. The happiest character in the film is Leopold, no hypocrite, who stands up and denounces the guilty. Some issues are difficult to resolve, but that is no excuse for ducking them. There's no lasting comfort in cowardice.

## Seeing and believing

### Book

Steven Holt reviews *The Unseen* by Nanni Balestrini

**T**his vivid novel about the political struggles in Italy in the seventies is the first of Balestrini's novels to be translated into English.

It was written in exile in France after Balestrini had been forced to flee Italy to escape arrest and imprisonment in the Italian state's crackdown in 1979 on those associated with the Autonomy movement; at this time Italy had more political prisoners than any state in Europe except the USSR.

The narrative is divided into two strands that alternate throughout the book; one strand tells the story of the increasing politicisation of a young working class militant during the growth of the Autonomy movement in the '70s; the other describes his imprisonment and the brutal suppression of a prison riot.

The text is presented as unpunctuated paragraphs written in a terse direct style, like this passage describing the police attack with speeding police cars and tear gas, on an anti-fascist march:

"...I can't see what's happened there's a group of comrades standing in a semi-circle some are weeping it's not with the teargas some are sobbing one girl shouts something I don't understand then further on I see the bloody body on the ground I see the reddish mass of

brains the wheels of the jeep have splattered out of it out of the head splattered out"

Mass demonstrations, strikes, factory occupations, and the like occurred with increasing regularity in Italian cities from the late '60s onwards, with the aims of the movement being:

"...to exercise our destructive creativity against the society of the spectacle to sabotage the machines and goods that sabotage our lives to promote indefinite wildcat general strikes always to have mass meetings in all the separate factories to elect delegates who can be recalled by the base to keep continuous links between all the places of struggle to overlook no useful technical means of free communication to give a direct use value to everything that has an exchange value to occupy permanently the factories and the public buildings to organise self-defence of the conquered territories..."

Balestrini's narrator in the above passage is talking very much in the language of May 1968 in Paris, which seems very strange and unrealistic to us now. But it is true that during revolutionary upheavals as in 1917 in Russia and the near-revolutions of France 1968 and Italy 1968-79, as increasingly many workers become involved in struggle, possibilities open up that would not normally be conceivable.

In France in 1968 de Gaulle was able to threaten the striking workers with the French Army, and the Stalinist PCF urged the workers to give up power. In Italy it seems that very many workers lost faith in the

PCI in the period of the "Historic Compromise", when the Communist Party and the Christian Democrats formed a coalition government with anti-worker policies. The Italian government responded to the growth of the far-left by increasing state violence to the point of producing a terrorist backlash (and hence splitting the Autonomy movement into the vanguardist Red Brigades and those who argued for democratic mass revolutionary action, and intimidating most of the workers into political inactivity).

*Socialist Organiser* has consistently and correctly denounced the brutalities of the Stalinist states; we should not forget that, when seriously threatened, bourgeois "democratic" states are capable of resorting to a similar level of state terrorism, as graphically described in *The Unseen*.

Balestrini's novel ends with the narrator still in prison, having seen some of his demoralised and frustrated comrades resort to individual terrorism, and others drop out of activity or become reduced to prostitution or drug addiction. The title of the novel comes from the narrator's feeling of isolation, marginalisation and loss of collective solidarity following the repression of the Autonomy movement.

I think that the British left probably has a lot to learn from analysing the achievements and eventual failure of the Italian left of the seventies. *The Unseen* is the best novel about revolutionary activity that I've read, and I strongly recommend it.

## A message from our past

### Radio

By Les Hearn

**T**he 1991 Reith Lectures on Radio 4 are about us. They are about what makes us — our genes.

The lecturer, Dr Steve Jones of the Genetics Department of University College, London, explains simply and interestingly how our genes have been handed down to us from the first stirrings of life some 3,000 million years ago, and how the little mistakes in co-

pying them cause evolution.

He shows how genetics has moved on from the crude racist fantasies of the 19th century to show how similar to and different from each other we are — this is one of the strengths of our human species.

I will be dealing with Dr Jones' ideas in greater detail in the New Year. In the meantime, readers may like to ponder the meaning of maleness, courtesy of Steve Jones. The gene that makes men runs "GAT AGA GTG AAG CGA..." and so on for 225 more letters. It doesn't seem that significant!

• Radio 4: Sat 7, 14 and 21 December; 10.30pm; Wed 11 & 18 Dec, 8.45pm. Summaries in the Independent: Thu 5, 12 & 19 Dec. SAE to me at SO for photocopies of the first three lectures.



Socialists must take sides

# Hands off Croatia!

The editorial on Yugoslavia (SO 507) and Stephen Holt's report in SO 508 are out of touch with reality and politically off beam.

The editorial places great stress on potential dangers for Serbians within any independent Croatian state, without addressing the realities of the current conflict.

Stephen Holt's article refers to what is going on but without directly passing any political judgement on it.

Neither article addresses the question "Whose side are we on in the current con-

flict?" In fact, Holt, by concentrating exclusively on the possible rise of Croatian fascism, and its threat to minority Serbs, implies that we should side with the Serbians.

His title, "Yugoslavia: federal army wins Vukovar" confirms this impression.

The title of the editorial, "Yugoslavia: bloodbath after the thaw" is little better. The title and the editorial itself suggest a neutral approach to the current conflict.

Titles in tune with current realities should read "Defend Croatia", and "Yugoslavia, federal army destroys Vukovar". The editorial and

Holt's article are stuck in a time warp. Federal Yugoslavia is dead. The Serbian Federal Army, armed to the teeth, effectively the entire state machine of old Yugoslavia, is crushing Croatia. Our politics should start from that reality.

We should, as the editorial does, point to the potential dangers for Serbs in an independent Croatia, but for now, as in every other nationalist case, we should side with those that are currently being oppressed. Defend Croatia; for Croatian self-determination.

Liam Conway  
Nottingham

## Dialogue with the JSG:

# Anti-Zionism and anti-semitism

It does not seem helpful to pursue the recent disagreement between Socialist Organiser and the Jewish Socialists' Group.

There is however, one major point in Sean Matgamna's reply to David Rosenberg's letter (SO507) which cannot go unchallenged.

That is that "the anti-Zionism of the left is currently the most important form of anti-semitism in Britain".

Attacks on Jewish cemeteries and synagogues and the distribution of anti-semitic literature are carried out not by the left, but by the far-right.

The far-right are also involved in physical attacks on Jews, black people and other minority groups.

At a time when support for fascist parties is growing throughout Europe, we should not underestimate the threat posed by the far-right in Britain.

This is not to ignore the fact that there is also anti-



Workers' Liberty on Le Pen, May 1988

semitism in the mainstream of our society, including of the Press and, indeed, parts of the political left as well.

However, it can only help the cause of the fascists if groups like Socialist Organiser and the Jewish Socialists' Group get caught up in disputes.

Of course we value debate

**New waves of old-style Jew-baiting are now washing across Europe.**

The cemetery dauber, the synagogue burner, the thug who attacks Jews — these pose the immediate threat, and if I seemed to imply otherwise, that was clumsiness and I regret it.

But would Myra Woolfson

on all these issues, but when a short letter from one of our members is answered by a full-page condemnation of our organisation by you, we feel that the energy spent in this way, is not progressive.

Myra Woolfson, Jewish Socialists' Group National Committee

contend the coverage in Socialist Organiser and in Workers' Liberty, our magazine, has underplayed the danger from the new wave of anti-semitism? She couldn't, not seriously.

The new wave of open anti-semitism is a relatively recent development. The demonisation of Israel and the comprehensive 'left wing' hostility to Jews that goes with it, have been with us for a couple of decades.

Even the anti-semitic thugs — those of them who can do other than grunt — now often disguise themselves as "anti-Zionists".

Whatever is "most" important, that is very important still. The left's anti-Zionism could easily merge with the old-style anti-semitic agitation.

Below a certain level of political awareness — that is, to the degree that the propaganda of a group like the SWP succeeds in reaching raw, politically uneducated people — it is not at all easy to distinguish one from the other.

The good intentions of the left — which is not racist, but "anti-imperialist", albeit with the "anti-imperialism of idiots" — will count for very little here.

The sustained anti-Zionist polemics of the left and the demonisation of Israel — including, it should be said in the interests of truth, by Socialist Organiser for a long time — have created a widespread political culture that may well ease the way for the new fascist anti-semitic right — just as Stalinist "National Bolshevism" in 1930s Germany helped ease the way for the Nazis to win over left wing workers.

If Myra Woolfson's letter is the JSG's reply to my article about the JSG and the WRP, then it is a throwing in of the towel. Progress!

S. Matgamna

# SWP: no democracy, no programme and no party

## EYE ON THE LEFT

Tom Rigby concludes his examination of the Socialist Workers Party's internal life

For well over twenty years now the SWP and its forerunners have maintained a deeply contradictory attitude to the Labour Party. As the years have gone by this has led to their politics getting more and more inconsistent so that now the SWP effectively has two policies on the Labour Party.

There is the 'normal' attitude which amounts to defining themselves as a single issue campaign with the object of getting disillusioned people to leave the Labour Party.

Then there is the 'election time' policy of making a great fuss about being 'pro-Labour' best summed up in Paul Foot's immortal prose during the '79 General Election campaign: "During the next few weeks I will be a very strong Labour supporter" and absolutely cynically outlined in their recent conference documents:

"Labour may very well lose [the election]. It would then be very difficult to intervene in arguments amongst the best Labour voters as to what went wrong if we were seen to have abstained".

This is advertising agency politics.

In both cases, what the SWP does is tail-end passing moods presenting themselves as the militant embodiment of these moods rather than working out a consistent policy.

Thus you get the ludicrous situation of calling on people to quit the Labour Party and then calling on workers to elect the same party! [Presumably minus as many class struggle socialists as possible, thus weakening our ability to force Kinnock to concede to working class demands.]

This confusion has been deepened by their latest con-

**"What the SWP does is tail-end passing moods, presenting themselves as the militant embodiment of these moods rather than working out a consistent policy."**

ference document which moves towards an understanding of the Labour Party as fundamentally no different from, say, the US Democratic Party.

"Historically, Labour was a bourgeois workers' party, not simply in the sense that it got workers' votes, but also that it had a cadre of working class activists".

But this is beside the point. The US Democrats have a considerable amount of working class electoral support and some working class activists, but this doesn't make the party a "bourgeois workers' party".

On the basis of this reasoning, if the SWP are to be consistent they would call for a vote for the Democratic Party in the US and for the ANC in a future South Africa!

But of course they won't; that would not be seen as radical enough.

In reality, what defines the Labour Party as a "bourgeois workers' party" is its organic link to the unions.

But this is only brought up as an afterthought by the SWP leadership in the context of explaining to their more naive comrades that no matter how

hard they huff and puff, they won't blow Kinnock's house down. "None of this means the Labour Party is going to disappear... it has an organic connection with class organisations."

Thus the two lines continue to co-exist in an unstable compound resulting in no coherent policy for the political wing of the mass labour movement.

This brings us to the question of programme. Several resolutions made it into SWP head office calling for the party to adopt a programme. There then followed a very stilted 'debate' in the pages of the pre-conference bulletins.

In essence, a party programme is nothing more nor less than a given tendency's relationship to the class that it would aspire to lead. In addition to immediate perspectives that is providing an answer to the question "What next?" A fully developed programme must include an understanding of the working class as it exists and how it must change ideologically and politically to become fit to pursue the goal of working class self-rule; of the relationship between working class power and the final goal of communism; and an understanding of the nature of the world around us from the Labour Party under Kinnock to the collapse of Stalinism and the "triumph of capitalism".

In this sense, the SWP's lack of a programme is nothing more nor less than its refusal to try and make sense of the real world.

Neither side in the SWP discussion seem to be properly aware of this.

One 'faction', with support in the Liverpool and Hornsey branches at least, wants a programme and called for the SWP to set up a special 'programme' commission.

The 'Central Committee' opposed this — but not in their own name. They got Gareth Jenkins to argue for them: "The possession of a formal programme guarantees nothing" [true, but irrelevant].

"We do have a programme. In addition to 'What we stand for' in the paper, there are also the perspectives that flow from our concrete analysis... on fighting the Tories, reacting to the Gulf War etc."

So Gareth tells the comrades: "We don't need one but, just in case we do, we actually have one". Ingenious, but not very convincing. He'll have to wait longer for his seat on the CC, I think!

Gareth then shoots himself in the foot by attempting to insert some 'theory' to justify his stance:

"Trotsky was at his strongest when putting forward concrete perspectives in response to developments like the rise of fascism in Germany". Precisely!

But try and find a 'concrete perspective' other than hate Kinnock but vote Labour in the pages of Socialist Worker.

You won't. The SWP has no programme because they have no policy for the mass labour movement as it actually exists... just the desire that it be different.

Poor Gareth also had to take on the onerous task of defending the Central Committee's proposal to abolish what remains of the SWP's severely limited internal democracy — the National Committee.

The CC announces: "This year we have abolished the branch committee structures which ran the branches for the best part of ten years... In the

past year, the National Committee has been largely irrelevant... activity has been pushed by the Central Committee, by the organisers and by the activists inside the branches". Hence good bye National Committee.

So the SWP has now adopted a structure which consists of a handful of full-time organisers [the Central Committee], branch leadership 'teams' [arguably a new word for the old 'abolished' branch committee] and... nothing else, except what ad hoc meetings the Central Committee may feel like calling.

The idea of what in Leninist theory a National Committee should be — a politically selected forum that combines and balances seasoned cadre with the best fresh organisers with the aim of checking, developing, reassessing and testing the organisation's activity — has been totally lost.

In its place, you have an arguably less democratic structure than the Bolsheviks were forced to employ under conditions of Tsarist illegality.

A structure that would delight Joyce Gould. As one recent ex-SWP'er commented: "I

**"The tragedy is that the SWP have now adopted an internal structure which confirms exactly what an anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist bourgeois academic or journalist would say is Leninism."**

left the Labour Party to join the SWP because the Labour Party was becoming bureaucratic. But the SWP was no different. In two years I got just one vote and that was just to rubber-stamp a branch committee slate."

To justify such centralisation, you get the kind of crass caricature that I thought the SWP reserved for their opponents on the left, but it seems they employ amongst themselves. Gareth again:

"Saying the CC has too much power, is to misunderstand what democratic centralism is about... spending time consulting the members as to whether this or that initiative is correct would inevitably mean missing opportunities and turning the organisation into a debating club".

Presumably the CC will make the trains run on time as well.

The tragedy here is that the SWP have now adopted an internal structure which confirms exactly what an anti-Marxist and anti-Leninist bourgeois academic or journalist would say is Leninism.

They are a living caricature, the exact opposite of what they used to be in the dim and distant 'anti-Leninist' past of the early '60s Cliff group.

Back then they spent most of their time attacking Gerry Healy's Socialist Labour League for displaying exactly the same characteristics as they do now.

The only reason this can come about is that the SWP leadership has never digested or understood what a revolutionary party is all about.

For them, "Building the party" simply means, first and foremost, building an organised machine. Politics comes a very poor second.

But a 'revolutionary party' is not the poses, badges and slogans of the SWP. On the contrary, to build a revolutionary party, is to take part in the concentrated organised effort of a Marxist tendency directed to the purpose of fighting the class struggle on the industrial, political and ideological fronts.

That is the task that the Alliance for Workers Liberty sets itself.

## WHAT'S ON

### Thursday 5 December

"Ireland: is a solution possible?", Sheffield SO meeting, 7.30, SCAU, West Street  
"Where we stand", Plymouth SO meeting, Bearmont Hall, St Judes, 7.30. Speaker: Mark Osborn

### Saturday 7 December

Demonstrate in solidarity with the Palestinian intifada. Assemble 12.30, Embankment, London. Called by the Joint Committee for Palestine  
Left Unity fringe meeting at NUS conference. After the close of conference, Winter Gardens, Blackpool. Speakers include Janine Booth (NUS Women's Officer), Steve Mitchell (VP FEUD), followed by SO meeting, "Where we stand".

### Monday 9 December

"What we stand for", Lancaster University SO meeting, 1.00. Speaker Mark Sandell

### Tuesday 10 December

"The future for the student

movement", London Left Unity meeting, 7.00, LSE, Houghton St. Speaker Steve Mitchell. Demonstrate against student debt organised by Tyne Tees Area NUS. Assemble 1.30, Civic Centre, Newcastle.

"How to fight student hardship", Left Unity meeting, 4.00, Newcastle Poly. Speakers Mark Sandell and Alice Sharp (NUS NEC)

### Wednesday 11 December

"The Sarah Thornton case", South East London SO meeting, Speaker Liz Dickinson. Details 071 639 7965  
"Ireland: what's the answer?", Manchester SO meeting, 8.00, Bridge St Tavern. Speaker Pat Murphy  
"Why we need Left Unity", Left Unity meeting at Shiny Row Centre, Monkwearmouth College, Philadelphia

### Thursday 12 December

"Fighting racism and fascism", Brighton SO meeting, 7.30, Great Eastern pub

### Monday 16 December

"The politics of Socialist Outlook", SW London SO meeting, 7.30, Lambeth Town Hall. Speaker Tom Rigby.



INDUSTRIAL

# Tubes — all out war!

By a London Underground worker

With a huge media fanfare, tube bosses launched their "Company Plan" on 26 November.

Workers and passengers alike are promised a new dawn for the Underground. Vast improvements in safety, quality and efficiency of service.

This is to be achieved by cutting the 20,000 workforce by at least 5,000! If they get their way, no-one will escape. 650 traincrew would go, 850 station staff, 1300 depot staff, 400 cleaners, 300 workshop staff, 250 lifts and escalators, 200 permanent way (track), and 850 white collar staff.

Make no mistake — this is unprecedented; it is a massive and fundamental attack on us all. The changes proposed are staggering. Start with the traincrew: there's flexible rostering, so instead of working a fixed 8-hour day you work longer or shorter as required. This is coupled with more split shifts (ie. 4 hours in the morning, and 4 in the evening). Also, remote booking on, so we won't get paid travelling time any more.

Some train depots are to close. There's also salaried status, which may sound harmless, but would make it extremely difficult to swap shifts. Working shifts is bad enough, but without the flexibility we now have, it would be like a straitjacket.

Station staff face a complete regrading. There are to be only two grades, supervisor or assistant, you'll have "skill licences" for different jobs, and be paid accordingly. This will mean you can be pushed into doing any job they want you to do.

Depots lose over half their jobs. Many jobs are being amalgamated with "multi-skilling", ie. doing two jobs for the same pay, "all restrictive practices" are to be ended, and a bonus scheme based on work groups will set worker against worker. Even worse, on one line, at Stonebridge Park depot, train maintenance is to be tendered out, pointing the way ahead to privatising all the depots.

Signals and permanent way are to be completely devolved to individual lines. On signals, all installation work (more than half the total) is to go to tender, and on the permanent way, all work will go to tender.

Lifts and escalators will lose 250 out of 400 jobs. In Workshops, 3 out of 6 are closing. Cleaning services will be privatised with all in-house staff gone. White collar staff face huge job losses, e.g. 75% if payrolls are to go.

While there are specific proposals for each section of workers, there are the same underlying ideas and proposals.

Privatisation: of cleaning, depots, signals, and permanent way — and the figure of 5,000 jobs does not include those lost to contracting out! How many more will that mean?

Flexibility: management's dream is a worker who can be ordered to do any job anywhere on the Underground at any time for as long or as short as required.

Salaried status: all staff are to be salaried; this is only the first step, to be followed by performance pay and personal contracts!

Seniority: no more — management will decide on the basis of "suitability".

Much has been made of the claim that all jobs will go through natural wastage and



Tube workers have the power to paralyse London's transport system

"generous" voluntary severance. In fact, management have clearly threatened compulsory redundancies if the don't receive full cooperation and the severance will only go to hand-picked individuals.

Accompanying the media blitz, managers have been holding briefing meetings with staff which have been long on vague promises, lies and distortion but short on facts. RMT is now mobilising members to boycott all such meetings to deny management an audience for their propaganda.

So what happens now? There is to be no negotiation with the unions, only "consultation", and even this is at great speed: it is all to take place before 1 April 1992, and that is when the plan will be implemented.

One thing is for sure: unity is absolutely vital — RMT, ASLEF and TSSA must stick together. This attack affects everyone; no-one has the banal excuse that they're not affected. All 3 unions are meeting this week to discuss the way ahead and things look promising at this stage.

While district councils and branches will be producing leaflets the vital work must start now. Activists putting the facts to people, arguing and convincing them of the need for a massive yes vote in a ballot for action. We must hammer home again and again, the plan is not inevitable.

As we know, the general election is coming up soon. We must key into this with a political campaign. The Labour Party must be made to oppose the plan and to commit itself to reinstatement of anyone sacked if the plan is implemented.

We need 5,000 more jobs on the Underground, not 5,000 less! That's the kind of policy we want to see a Labour government implementing. We also need to go out to the passengers, the millions who use the Tube every day, and convince them of our case.

If we can combine all this, we can stop management in their tracks and defeat this plan.

# Stitch up in Nottingham

By a Nottingham East Labour Party member

"It's a show trial. The decision was politically motivated and decided in advance".

Who said that? The Birmingham 6? The Tottenham 3? No, it was Hassan Ahmed, a leading member of Nottingham East Constituency Labour Party (CLP) who has been under investigation for 18 months and has just been suspended for 3 years by the National Constitutional Committee (NCC) of the Labour Party.

The story of the investigation is worth telling.

Nottingham East CLP has been suspended since March

**"There is only one conclusion — the decision was determined in advance."**

1990. Hassan was the left front-runner to be chosen as a Labour candidate for the General Election (the selection process has still not been started).

He was therefore the main figure for the right wing. Hassan had also been central to building up a core of black activists which threatened the right wing and the 'old guard' in the local Asian community.

The CLP was suspended, and Hassan was investigated on a series of trumped up charges, innuendoes and downright lies.

Eight weeks before the City

Council elections (Hassan was a city councillor and due for re-election in May 1991) Hassan was suspended and therefore debarred from standing.

His NCC hearing was held in October. The "prosecution" lasted for eight hours.

The "defence", in November, also lasted eight hours.

Hassan submitted 200 documents which totalled over 110 pages. A lot of the "case" collapsed at the NCC where the prosecution proved to have been "economical with the truth".

The NCC then adjourned to discuss their verdict.

They took ten minutes to find him guilty of some of the charges.

Ten minutes discussion on 16 hours of verbal evidence and a 110 page document is a disgrace!

There is only one conclusion — the decision was determined in advance.

Hassan asked which of the ten charges were proved and the NCC refused even to give him that information.

Hassan now feels he has no option but to go to court to clear his name.

Some of us will advise him against this course of action, though others locally feel he will get a fairer hearing in court than he did at the NCC.

Suspending Hassan for 3 years keeps him out of the parliamentary selection which many now expect to take place.

Whilst continuing to press for justice for Hassan, the left in Nottingham East also urgently needs to discuss who to put up should the CLP be re-instated and the selection process started.

# NUJ leaders sack staff and cross picket lines

By an NUJ member

NUJ officers, Jake Ecclestone and Bernie Corbett are defying a national executive decision to reinstate a sacked member of staff after earlier deliberately crossing an APEX picket line.

Ecclestone — acting General Secretary of the journalists' union since the dismissal of moderate Steve Turner in June — fired financial controller Daniel Stafford last month for "gross industrial misconduct" in failing to respond to demands for detailed financial information by an impossibly tight deadline.

The NUJ's finance department currently employs just 3 staff, despite a nominal complement of eight.

Staff union APEX held a series of stoppages demanding reinstatement, during which Ecclestone and Corbett — a member of both the Labour Party and NUJ Left — crossed the picket line.

The national executive council convened an emergency session last week, voting 9-7 to reinstate Stafford.

In an arrogant circular to NEC members before the meeting, Ecclestone explicitly stated that the matter was a confidence vote and added: "You either support my attempts and those of the national officers to bring some sort of financial control and organisational efficiency to [NUJ headquarters] Acorn House, or you will have to remove me and them".

But rather than resign, Ecclestone has ordered security guards at the union's Kings

Cross HQ to deny Stafford entrance.

The NEC meets again on Friday. The reinstatement must stand and Ecclestone and Corbett be severely disciplined for ignoring basic labour movement principles.

The NUJ Left must expel Corbett and dissociate itself from his actions as soon as possible.

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# Socialists and the trade unions

A weekend school organised by Socialist Organiser and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty Saturday and Sunday 8-9 February, Manchester Town Hall.

Sessions include: Strike strategy • How to fight and how to win • How to deal with "Japanese" working methods • Public service strikes and emergency cover: the case for and against • Effective workplace and branch organisation • Arguing socialism in the workplace • The case for a workers' charter • Karl Marx and the trade unions • Organising the rank and file: the history of the Minority Movement • Where now for the left in the unions • The state of the movement and the coming General Election • and much more.

For more information contact Tom, c/o AWL, P O Box 823, London SE15 4NA, or phone 071-639 7965.

# CPSA: rally to the ES strikers!

By a London civil servant

The strike by CPSA (Civil and Public Services Association) members in the Employment Service (ES) against the removal of protective screens continues.

After the one-day national ES CPSA strike on 1 November, members in Glasgow, Bristol and London are still out on strike. Forest Hill Office in South London has been on strike since April. The other two offices have been out for some months, too.

The strikes have been beset by a number of problems from day one: an aggressive Agency management using casuals to strike break, a leadership without a coherent strategy, and often having to be forced to call action every inch of the way by the strikers — "Broad Left '84" on the Section Executive committee, and Militant supporters on the London Regional Committee — and an issue which does not unite members (workers in some offices do not mind not

having protective screens).

With threats of compulsory transfers, sackings, and the use of casuals keeping offices open, the strike has reached crisis point. Strikers must get together, develop a bold strategy on the way forward and spread the dispute.

A call from Socialist Organiser supporters at CPSA Broad Left conference for an ES activists meeting called by the striking offices was defeated by Militant. But such a meeting is necessary to thrash out a way to win.

Agency management are not just removing screens — they are forcing workers to wear uniforms and bringing in fixed-term contracts for workers. Their ultimate goal is to totally undermine the effectiveness of the union and lower the wages and worsen the conditions of the workers.

This is the first real test of the union's effectiveness in fighting Agency management. To lose will mean greater and further attacks. The strike should be broadened to include other issues.

An activists meeting could also look at other ways forward, such as occupying the offices to

prevent the offices from staying open. Such a move would severely up the stakes. ES strikers should also look at bringing in fellow workers in the DSS who face similar attacks.

All CPSA members must give their support to the ES strikes.

# Newtown DSS: Vote yes for solidarity!

"Newtown isn't the only DSS office with staffing problems. Everybody has got problems of their own. It is just that we've decided to stand up and say enough is enough".

That's how Lawrence Chapple from the low-paid civil servants union CPSA described the situation as the Newtown DSS staffing strike entered its 11th week.

Right now, the strikers are working round the clock to ensure a big yes vote for strike action across the DSS in Wales on Friday 13th December.

Lawrence underlined the

The attacks they face are faced by all of us under Agency management. The right-wing National Executive Committee who allowed Agencies into the civil service without a fight have a lot to answer for.

significance of getting a good vote for action on the 13th:

"I don't know of any other dispute where management have refused to negotiate about the issues involved. It is vital for the future of the union that we get a good response and force the Area Director to intervene. Remember, Newtown is speaking up for all the other offices".

Success for the Newtown strikers will boost the CPSA's DSS section's National Staffing Campaign.

Every trade unionist must support this fight for jobs. Contact: Newtown DSS strikers, c/o Strike Office, TGWU 2, Commercial Street, Newtown, Powys, SY16 2BL. Phone: 0689-626300.



# SOCIALIST ORGANISER

## Socialist Organiser at Christmas

Occupations spread against debt and cuts:

# Students: pile the pressure on the Tories!

By Alice Sharp (NUS Executive)

As we go to press (Tuesday 3 December), more colleges are voting to take action against the Tory cuts and student poverty.

Goldsmiths College (in London), Brighton Poly, Middlesex Poly, Newcastle Poly, Nottingham Poly, Nottingham University, Essex University, and Luton College of Higher Education students are all either in occupation or about to be.

Many more colleges have started to plan action for the beginning of the new term, in January.

Rent strikes, occupations, shut-downs, demonstrations and pickets are the tactics being used, as mass student action pushes aside calls from the leaders of the National Union of Students for "lobbies of Parliament and MPs' surgeries".

From the first week of next term, colleges should have rent strikes organised.

Preparation for such action has to start now: passing motions at Union General Meetings; sending out notices to all students; making sure that rents are collected and saved (interest gained from rent money can be used for court costs should college administrations take a tough line).

Occupations with wide-ranging demands involving as many students as possible should start a second term of fighting back, and prepare for the long-awaited NUS national demonstration on 12 February.

The Tories' attacks, carried out by college administrations, leave higher education institutions overcrowded and under-resourced, with a shoddy, second-rate service in the majority of colleges.

Classrooms, lecture theatres, and libraries are full to overflowing. In many colleges, students have to book a seat in the college library!

The Tories plan to increase student numbers, but do it by cramming many more in to already overcrowded colleges. There will be no extra cash for accommodation, books, teaching staff, or student financial support.

The Vice-Chancellors and Directors look set to call for the introduction of tuition fees next term. On



10,000 march against student debt, October 1991

top of loans, abolished benefits, and extortionate rents, tuition fees will be a major burden, so far not experienced by the majority of students in Britain.

The National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), dominated by Kinnockites, has once more been left standing by rank and file students.

Its "Target 70" campaign (for 70 marginal constituencies) has been shown up for what it is — an irrelevant and useless campaign that consciously steers away from mass participation by students in favour of passive voting in the forthcoming General Election.

The General Election is the most important event on our political agenda in the coming months. We want the Tories out, and Labour in. But we also need to mobilise students now, on the ground, to take action such as occupations.

Students actively angry with the Tories are less likely to stand for any messing from a Labour government. Left Unity is organising around the slogan *Students for a Labour Victory — vote Labour and prepare to fight!*

Stephen Twigg, NUS president and a member of NOLS, has played

an appalling role, along with his colleagues Lorna Fitzsimmons, Sam Peters, and Mary Wimbury.

For years now they have been decrying direct action such as demonstrations and occupations as "old-fashioned". With their "new times" strategy, lobbies of Parliament have become the cure-all.

For a short while last week, Twigg decided that "occupations

**"The General Election is the most important event on our political agenda in the coming months. We want the Tories out and Labour in. But we also need to mobilise students now, on the ground, to take action such as occupations. Students actively angry with the Tories are less likely to stand for any messing from a Labour government."**

are an effective way of doing it" (*Observer*, 24 November). Within a day he had begun to waver. "Where there are local reasons for occupations we are supporting them...but... we do not consider a campaign of

occupations appropriate" (*Times*, 25 November).

Lorna Fitzsimmons (NOLS candidate for NUS president 1992) has suffered no such confusion. Last week at Durham University she made perfectly clear her position on the current wave of action. "Occupations are anathema to the culture of the student movement".

In a recent interview with the University of London Union's newspaper *London Student*, Twigg was asked if NUS emphasised Parliamentary campaigning too much. He said: "I think your point is a very strong one. With the benefit of hindsight, that was one of the most legitimate criticisms of our work against the Student Loans Bill.

If the lesson was learned as far back as the Student Loans campaign, then why have the NOLS leaders been content to use the same "strategy" over student debt?

We have an opportunity this weekend (NUS conference, 7-9 December) to take the NUS leadership to task over their irresponsible behaviour this term. The student hardship debate is an opportunity to pass a fighting policy that can end student debt and help kick the Tories out.

Socialist Organiser needs Christmas presents too — lots of them!

We need £10,000 for new equipment, and so far we are nearly half way, at £4902.52.

Thanks this week to Manchester readers (£156.41 from a social), Nottingham readers (£50 from a jumble sale), Matthew Davies (£15), and many others, making a total of £826.28 for the week.

The alarming growth of fascism all across Europe makes our task more urgent. If the left does not organise the millions of youth in present-day society, then the fascists and racists will.

The official leaders of the labour movement will not organise those youth. The Labour Party leaders have effectively wound up the Young Socialists. The trade union leaders are indifferent or hostile to organising the unemployed. The Marxist left needs to fill the vacuum — and to do that we need resources, and to get them we need money!

As well as the £10,000 drive, we also need new contributors to our "200 Club", making a regular donation each month, and, as an added incentive, getting a chance in a draw for a £100 prize each month.

The winner of this month's draw is Samantha Lloyd in East London.

You can contribute by standing order (to "WL Publications", account no. 50720851 at the Co-op Bank, London N1), sort code 08-90-33), or by paying in cash each week or month. Contact your SO seller, or write to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

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