

# Socialist Organiser

No. 232. June 12 1985. 25p. Claimants and strikers 10p.

Keep our  
unions  
**LABOUR**

**LABOUR  
PARTY**

## Labour councils

# WHAT WENT WRONG?



Neil Kinnock gave no support to Labour conference policy

## Hilda Kean

talked to Mick O'Sullivan

The defeat of the local government left by the Tories has been defeat without a fight.

The Livingstones and the Blunketts and the Hodges postured and pretended, orated and promised to fight the Tories — and then they slunk away, shamefully deserting those still standing out in Lambeth and Liverpool.

The left must learn the lessons from this experience. Here Hilda Kean, who resigned as leader of Hackney council when the council decided to knuckle under to the Tories, analyses what happened.

A RECALL Labour Party local government conference was held in Sheffield last summer before it was known which councils would be rate-capped, and we discussed a national policy there.

A very good policy was passed at the Labour Party conference last autumn.

It emphasised non-compliance with the Rates Act and the need to defeat it in its first year.

The problem was not the policy but how it was implemented.

There was just no support

from Neil Kinnock for the policy that was agreed at Labour Party conference.

Neither Kinnock nor trade union leaders had actually campaigned against that policy at the conference. So a lot of people — particularly councillors — went along with the policy at the beginning without recognising that they would get no support from the national leadership.

As soon as the list of rate-capped authorities was announced, it was clear that it would be very difficult to have total unity. Apart from political differences, there were also real differences in their economic situation between councils like Basildon and Thamesdown, and those like Hackney and Lambeth.

Then there were councils and councillors who saw themselves very much in the traditional mould of Labour local government — just looking towards protest and publicity campaigns — and a min-

ority who have seen ourselves as campaigning in a different way, not within the framework simply of the council chamber.

There were lots of reasons for the campaign petering out.

The first thing, of course, was the miners' strike. The decisive phase of the campaign against rate-capping took place after the defeat of the miners' strike.

The particular tactic adopted by the councils also led to problems — the tactic of not setting a rate, or rather deferring a rate.

### Ambiguous

Hackney Labour Party had had the view — and I agreed — that we should go for a deficit budget, a policy of no cuts, no rent increases, and no rate increases above the level of inflation. That would have brought things to a head very early on.

We, however, dropped that in the interests of unity and under considerable pressure from London Bridge and the Hackney Joint Shop Stewards Committee.

We argued that the 'no rate' tactic was very ambiguous, and unfortunately that has proved to be true. Many councils only agreed to defer making a rate; they did not say that it would be impossible to make a rate until the rate support grant was returned to the borough, which was what we did in Hackney.

'Deferring' was done on the basis of legal advice — which was thus allowed to dominate and determine the political tactics.

The Government did not intervene as it had done last year in Liverpool, but rather stood back and let the district auditor and the courts entangle councils.

The courts were unwilling to get involved, and therefore councils were trying to maintain momentum where there was no open and obvious intervention against them.

Continued on page 5

## Liverpool and Lambeth fight on

# STAND FIRM AGAINST THE TORIES!

Liverpool and Lambeth Labour councillors have been given an ultimatum to make a rate or face imminent surcharge. Both councils have yet again refused. Liverpool and Lambeth are now the only councils left defying the government. Cheung Siu Ming reports from Lambeth.

LAMBETH Council now stands alone in London in refusing to set a rate within the May 31 deadline. As we go to press the District Auditor may already be issuing certificates to surcharge the 32 Lambeth Councillors for wilful misconduct and financial losses of £300,000 or more.

At the council meeting on June 5, two renegade Labour councillors again voted with the Tories and Alliance. But, curiously, two Tory councillors were absent, and the new mayor, Lloyd Leon, did not have to use his casting vote.

At previous council meetings from March 7 onwards the defection of Labour councillors Boston and Cakebread meant that the mayor Pat Williams had to use her casting vote against setting a rate.

The May council meeting only narrowly failed to set a rate because Boston and Cakebread



did not vote for a rate-making budget proposal from a third Labour councillor, Vincent Leon.

So despite the slenderest of majorities, Lambeth seems set on a confrontation with the Tory

Continued on page 5

# WORKERS AGAINST APARTHEID

See  
centre  
pages



# Support the Tamils



## Jeremy Corbyn MP

DURING the last week there have been horrendous stories coming from Sri Lanka about massacres. While the government of Sri Lanka has done its best to try to suppress this news, it has nevertheless leaked out and demonstrates that much of what we've been saying about the dangers facing Tamil people in Sri Lanka has been completely justified.

During the last week one major scandal has hit the headlines. We discovered last Thursday morning that one Tamil person had been wrongly returned to Sri Lanka by immigration officials at Heathrow Airport. After much persuasion we were able to raise this in the House of Commons and the Home Secretary admitted that the person had been wrongly returned.

A panic ensued in the British High Commission offices in Colombo. They raced around the city looking for this poor, unfortunate refugee-seeker.

He eventually presented himself to the British High Commission and is understood to be safe at the present time.

What this underlines is the incompetence of the Home Office in dealing with the Tamil refugee crisis and the appalling dangers to which Tamil people are subjected by the policy of demanding a visa for Tamil people to leave Sri Lanka and of deporting people back to Sri Lanka from Britain.

There has been a growing campaign in support of the Tamils, but the labour movement can and should do much more. If we allow the government to get away with imposing these restrictions and controls on refugee-seekers in the way they have done with the Tamil crisis, they will do it with any other future crisis in any other part of the world.

There are a number of rallies and demonstrations planned in support of the Tamils in the next few weeks which I hope SO readers will support.

Last Friday morning, a nicer thing could not have happened to a nastier man.

Enoch Powell, with the help of extreme right wing Tory MP Andrew Bowden, the member for Brighton Kemptown, tried to move a procedural device which would have given a private member's motion the opportunity of running the whole weekend, in order to debate and get through the repressive Powell Bill.

Dennis Skinner discovered that it is possible to debate the moving of a writ for a by-election and accordingly launched a 3½ hour debate on the reasons why there should be a by-election in the Brecon and Radnor Constituency.

This was followed by a large number of Labour members introducing petitions to Parliament, all of which were read out with due ceremony and at great length and we only reached Andrew Bowden's motion at 2.15. The Speaker adjourned the sitting at 2.30.

This Parliamentary ruse

has been successful on this occasion in stopping the Powell Bill, and congratulations are due to Dennis Skinner and others in attaining that and to Jo Richardson for her determined leadership of the campaign against the Powell Bill.

However, there is an enormous danger in this because there has not been the sort of campaign outside Parliament that the Powell Bill should have attracted and as the White amendments to the abortion laws or the Benyon Bill in the past have done.

There is no doubt that Powell will try again, possibly very soon, or the government themselves will try to introduce their own - restrictive - legislation.

It is crucial that the labour movement recognises that we have to mobilise opinion against this legislation, because in its wake will follow limitations on the abortion laws and on women's rights in general that come from the Gillick ruling.

There is much evidence of money coming from the extremely well financed "moral majority" in the United States to finance these campaigns: the labour movement ignores this at its peril.

The Fowler "Benefit Reviews" have recently been announced. While they are predictable in their harshness, they are evil in their intent. It is essential that the labour movement does not campaign against them on the basis of defending the existing, largely indefensible system, but campaigns against them on the basis that we want to see a genuine anti-poverty programme from a future Labour government, and a genuine guarantee of minimum living standards for all people in this country. There is an opportunity, never presented before by the Tories, of uniting the unemployed, people at work, people of pensionable age and young people.

We have to do that. Local Anti-Benefit Review Campaigns must be formed as rapidly as possible so that it is the labour movement that takes the initiative on this and we use it as a major plank in the run up to the next election.

We must never fall into the trap that we may be led into unwittingly of using the government's economic performance as an excuse for the level of benefit payments. These should be something entirely separate from a government's economic performance.

# Discussing football violence: The people's game?

Last week's article on football violence provoked quite a response from SO readers. Alan Fraser continues the discussion.

TOM Rigby's and Clive Bradley's article on the Brussels disaster and football violence identifies the root causes - i.e. patriarchal capitalist society.

But it is not enough just to denounce the system that perpetuates the violence. We have to extend, discuss and develop our views on sport.

From my experience as a socialist who participates actively in sport, I think the demand that we should ban competitive sport is totally unrealistic.

Socialists who argue this may well be correct when they say that certain sports encourage rat-race behaviour and violent attitudes. But nevertheless millions of working-class people are involved in sport, either as spectators or by participation.

Most working-class people look to sport as a means to free themselves from the daily grind of our society - mundane jobs and unemployment. It seems to me that socialists who talk about banning sport, perhaps because of their social background, are completely failing to recognise that sport, and football in particular, are not only rooted in the working class but also have a complex culture despite its weaknesses.

It is true that under capitalism the emphasis is on winning and proving yourself and your team superior. However, I think socialists make a mistake when they think that competition in sport is the property of capitalism.

For example, when I played street football on the streets of Glasgow, it was important to win, but it was just as important to be highly skilful and athletic. There was no compulsion to win at all costs.

### Skill

The games we played were thoroughly enjoyable, and usually lasted for four to five hours. Most of us felt then that developing our skill and athleticism was an exciting and invigorating experience.

I think the reasons for that are pretty clear. Street football was ours. It was us who made the rules. It was us who decided who should play - and that usually meant everybody.

There was no referee, no hierarchy, no organisation dictating to us. We felt that these games were ours, and on those long summer nights our parents would find it impossible to prise us away from our beloved game.

Sometimes we would stop for a brief rest to juggle with the ball and to show off to each other some new-found skill. There was an enormous amount of inventiveness and creativity. No-one told us how. We just did it.

Although there was competition, there was also a tremendous feeling of achievement, unity and social cooperation.

The example of street



Chauvinism on the terraces

football shows that perhaps it is not the competition that is decisive, but the way in which the competition is controlled and who controls it.

On the night of the Brussels disaster, Terry Venables, manager of Spanish league champions Barcelona, proclaimed on TV: "I can't understand why they commit these acts of violence. It's their game. It belongs to the people".

Terry, who incidentally also heads the consortium that owns Queens Park Rangers, could not have been more wrong.

### Profit

Football is not the people's game, it's the directors' game. And that's a big part of the problem.

The structures, organisation and values of sport are not controlled by the people who play or watch, but by

businessmen such as Robert Maxwell, who use their position as football directors to gain power, prestige, and in some cases profit.

The football club is now a commodity in the hands of a few businessmen. Ordinary working-class people are completely excluded from taking part or having any say in how their team or sport is run.

The controlling bodies are hierarchical and have no connection or involvement with the community.

Socialists have to take the politics of sport, both nationally and internationally, more seriously. The hypocrisy and double standards come not only from Thatcher and the Tories but also from the so-called working-class kids who pull themselves away from the gutter.

Scottish captain Graham Souness, commented on the Brussels violence: "They should be locked up for ten years. They are not people

but animals".

Of course, butter would not melt in his mouth.

The night before, playing for Scotland against Iceland, he maimed an Icelandic player, who was carried off injured and is now unable to play for a few months. Graham sees nothing wrong with putting the boot in from time to time. It is all part of the game. Some times you have to give stick, and other times you have to take it.

### Winning

That type of violence on a football field is OK. Why? Because your boss tells you that the game is about winning, and sometimes you have to take people out to do so.

Rather different from street football for a bottle of lemonade which, if we ever won, was shared by all who played anyway.

At present the Labour Party has no policy on sport - who controls it, who funds it, what facilities should be available. Gary Whannel in his highly readable and interesting book, 'Blowing the Whistle: The Politics of Sport' argues for a basic socialist policy which might contain four elements:

1. An egalitarian intention. Genuine sport for all with positive discrimination to counter existing structures and attitudes.

2. Adequate facilities and funding to make sport for all possible.

3. Social ownership of stadiums, sport centres, recreation land, and the subsidiary leisure industry.

4. Democratic control of sports facilities at all levels of sports organisation.

Sport, despite what many socialists say, does have its positive sides.

The London Marathon and similar events are a clear example. They smashed that you have to be a winner. They smashed the myth that only strong athletic men and an elite few run marathons. Many women who until a few years ago were not allowed to run long distances have competed and finished in marathons without any problems.

We need a socialist alternative that will make sport fun, encourage social cooperation, and give the game back to the people.



Kenny Dalglish





Edinburgh miners' gala. Photo: Rick Matthews, IFL.

## Labour at the pits

THE first pit-based workplace Labour Party branches have been set up by miners in the South Yorkshire coalfield — at Manton and Shireoaks pits.

Both branches were launched after a lot of discussion among activists in the year-long miners' strike, and there was keen interest from both established and newly-recruited Labour Party members.

### Newsletter

The Manton branch will be meeting fortnightly — after NUM branch meetings, and plans a newsletter at the pit.

The new branches are part of a still-growing movement to establish workplace Party organisation that grass-roots activists have carried out without much help from the Party nationally.

To draw these branches together the Federation of Labour Party Workplace Branches is holding its fourth national meeting on Saturday July 13 at the Birmingham Labour Club, Bristol St., Birmingham from 10 am to 5 pm.

For more details of the Federation contact: Nik Barstow, 165 Liverpool Rd., London N1 0RF.

# NCB OFFENSIVE

"The pit closure programme announced by the National Coal Board over the last few weeks indicates clearly the Board's determination to butcher the mining industry.

"The scale and viciousness of the closures and job losses revealed by the Board prove that — just as the NUM warned all along — the NCB and the government have misled not only the miners, but the British public."

Such was Arthur Scargill's immediate response to last week's announcement that the NCB wanted to slash 2800 jobs in South Yorkshire by the end of this year and to close Cortonwood.

The NCB is now boasting that, a bare four months after the strike, it has already achieved its pre-strike target and cut out four million tonnes of capacity, destroying 20,000 jobs. It is now rumoured that "MacGregor will take a one year extension to his contract to enable him to see the job of turning the Board into a profit maker through to its conclusion." (Financial Times).

The details of NCB plans and of its strategy to smash possible resistance by miners, are clear:

### By John Bloxam

\*The government's new Coal Industry Bill 1985 gives the NCB until just 1987 to break even. At least 50% of the financial support earmarked in the document is for redundancy and severance payments — covering up to 50,000 jobs.

\*The NCB's post-strike Area 'reviews' have slashed thousands of jobs this year alone. In the last few days 3800 jobs in the North and South Yorkshire areas and over 1800 jobs in South Wales have been publicly marked down for the chop. The planned closure of Horden in Durham immediately threatens 3000 jobs in the North-East.

### Cuts

The cuts are clearly just the first round. The manpower reductions and mergers of pits are designed to bleed pits to death.

In the North-East, the immediate closure of Bates, Whitburn workshops and Horden will soon be followed by the closure of Sacriston, Herrington and Brenkley being in the second

phase of the closure programme. It makes the predictions in the NCB secret document, published by Arthur Scargill during the strike, look conservative. That document projected the loss of about 10,000 jobs within eight years, leaving the area with three pits.

\*Side-by-side with this the NCB announces new 'super-pits' on the model of Selby, which is expected to produce as much as the whole North-East using only 25% as much labour. Last week a new £440 million pit in South Warwickshire was announced, with a meagre 1800 jobs and a target productivity of double the UK average.

As if to emphasise the threat of such pits to the so-called 'peripheral coalfields', the NCB announced on Monday the total 1985 investment for the South Wales coalfield, where nearly 20,000 work. Just £27 million!

\*But open-cast mining — worked mainly by private contractors — hasn't suffered the same fate as deep-mined production. Current open-cast output is now 13% of national coal production.

\*There is a major attempt to rebuild coal stocks to strengthen the NCB and government's hand against the miners' action they fear their programme might still provoke. With production back to 75% of pre-strike levels, pithead stocks are reported at 18 million tonnes: still the CEEB is quoted as saying it is taking all the coal it can get. They are aiming to have 25 million tonnes at the power stations by winter.

In addition three more nuclear power stations have been brought into full service (Dungeness, Heysham, Hartlepool), with a capacity equivalent of eight million tonnes of coal per year.

\*The NCB continues its brutal policy of blatant victimisation, little deterred by the bad publicity. Their basic attitude was clearly revealed on Monday, when the Scottish NCB sent the "tea-boys" to meet a delegation led by the Scottish NUM.

Some miners have been reinstated, but over 700 still remain sacked. And sackings are still

going on — a week ago Scottish miner David Hoggan (Comrie pit) was sacked as well as being fined for "obstruction" on the picket line. There will most likely be other sackings after the verdict is given in the present Orgreave trial now going on in Sheffield. The Mansfield trial starts in Nottingham on Monday.

\*The government and courts are keeping up the financial pressure on the NUM. Last Thursday the receiver announced that he was thinking of bankrupting the NUM national officials for the legal costs spent by the courts in trying to get hold of the union's money, much of which is still abroad.

## Brookhouse threat

Brian Hallows, Brookhouse NUM, spoke to Socialist Organiser.

The closing date given by the NCB for our colliery is December 31. I supposed they've picked us since they've stated that the travell-

ing time to the workings from the pit bottom only leaves 4½ hours cutting time.

In one sense it is true, but exaggerated. We have got a lot of travel, but there is coal nearer. They could invest in new faces.

It would not be a matter of shortage of reserves if they modernised the pit. But they

do claim Brookhouse is losing money.

As regards redundancies, all over 55 are meant to be going anyway. Our pit is one where they have offered it down to 50. We don't know how many are over 50.

Manpower is meant to be over 700. But now it is only about 650, because many left during the strike. We don't know, therefore, how many are going to have to move.

As regards a fightback, we are going through the procedure but we don't know what action will happen. We will have to talk to such as Taylor.

The mood? Some want it. That's mostly the young ones who say they can then get a more secure job at another pit. Most of the old ones don't want it.

## Horden: mobilise against closures

By Gary Scott

THE COAL Board has confirmed that Horden pit will close later this year, but now the union will have the option of appealing under the colliery review procedure.

The decision was announced at a meeting between NCB officials and Durham NUM leaders on June 4. In the next few weeks, area NUM officials will be preparing their case for keeping Horden colliery open.

Teams of engineers and accountants are being recruited to check on the coal reserves and the NCB's facts and figures.

The area NUM will be basing their case not only on financial and geological arguments but also on the social effects a closure would have on the Horden community.

This will be presented as the most important reason

to keep Horden pit open. Plans are being drawn up between the Save Easington Area Mines campaign and Horden NUM to mobilise the whole community to fight the closure.

## Yvonne Gilfoyle

THE working class tragically lost a new class fighter on Monday June 10. Yvonne Gilfoyle (33) died of a heart attack, leaving behind a husband and two small children of 5 and 10.

She also left behind many friends and comrades from Rhodesia pit village, as well as from much further afield — friends that she made during the course of the miners' strike.

Yvonne was the treasurer of the Rhodesia Women's Action Group during the course of the strike and stuck with the dispute right till the end. She travelled round the country for the last few months to speak about the

strike, despite the fact that she had never done either before. She showed tremendous courage, telling meetings of supporters how the strike had changed her life; how, since the strike, she had so much to live for.

Yvonne grew in confidence and strength every step of the way and did her best to pass it on to others who had been politicised by the strike. She will always be remembered by them for her steadfast work for the class to which she belonged, during the last year of her life.

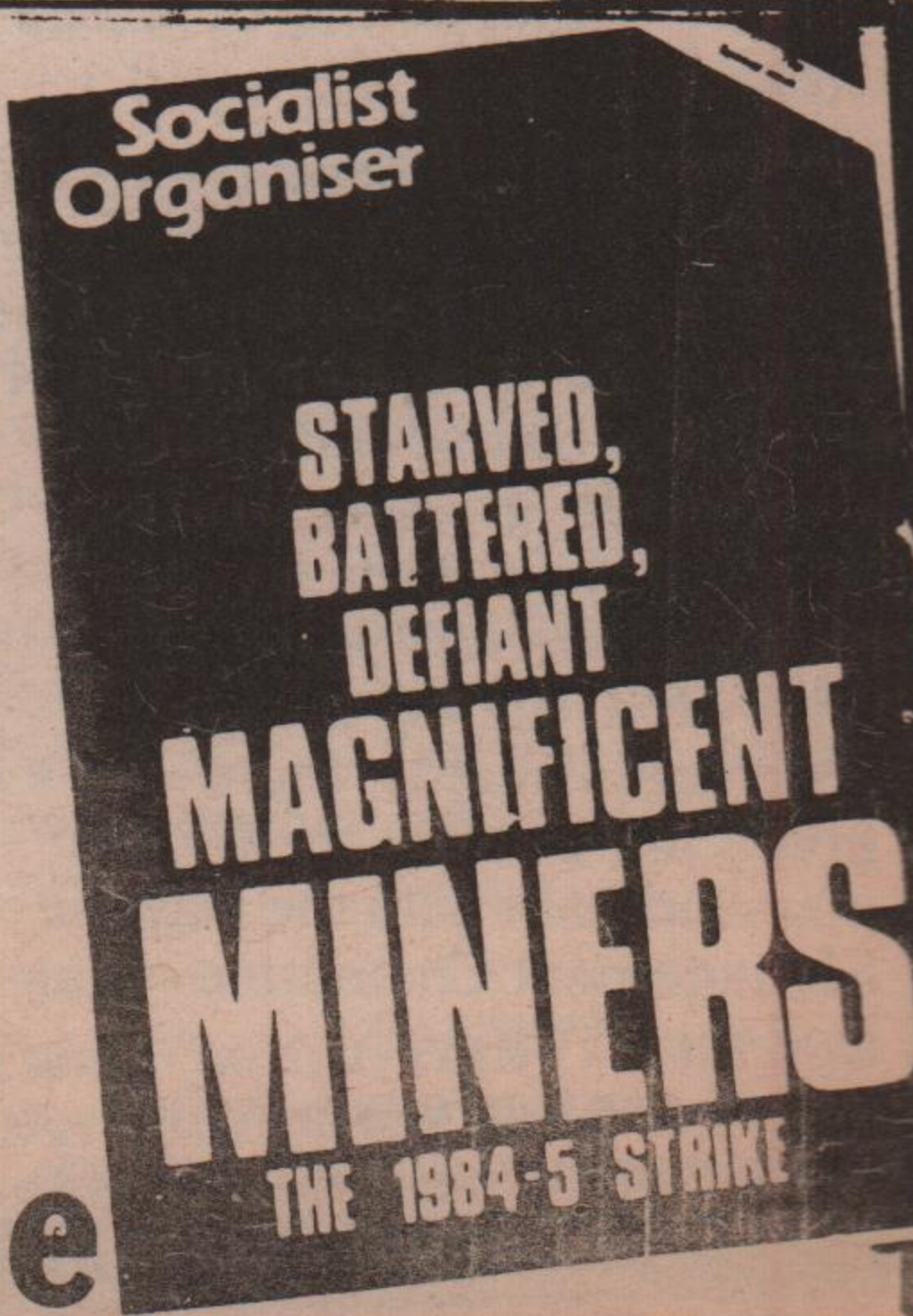
Socialist Organiser sends condolences to Yvonne's family and her comrades in Rhodesia village.

### In print again

"The pamphlet is an important and interesting record of the strike... it underlines the enormous importance of the struggle."

Tony Benn MP  
75p plus 22p postage from:  
SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

## The story of the strike





## JACK CADE'S



## Spies

When I was little, spies were all James Bond figures: handsome, macho, dauntless, patriots, the sort of man you might want to pretend to be. But not any more. The spy profession has gone right down the drain and into the sewers. After all the Guy Burgesses and the other sordid betrayals by bent public school boys, we get, this week, a most unmanly tale of homosexual corruption in Cyprus — on a mass scale!

An entire barracks, for God's sake, was blackmailed into giving away state secrets — "not just in snippets, but literally by the bagful" — because they had been indulging in homosexual orgies, where they all dressed up as girls and did who-knows-what to each other and were caught at it by Enemy Agents.

Enemy Agents (Arabs, of course) had lured them into this activity in the first place.

### Abolish

According to Mr Michael Wright QC, they gave away top secret information "in part, at least, to save their own skin, rather than risk exposure as homosexuals".

The corrupt, dirty, cowardly, snivelling, worm-like, miserable, traitorous, lilly-livered cads!

This is what our country has come to! And they are everywhere — in the armed forces, at GCHQ... All our security forces have been undermined by this dreadful — and nowadays often fatal — disease.

There is only one solution. Abolish the armed forces, before it's too late...

## Who's rigging what?

The Chaterites have held onto the Morning Star. All their five candidates for the Management Committee of the People's Press Printing Society were elected, each with majorities of more than 1000 votes, at the PPPS AGM last weekend.

So now what do the CP executives do?

A strange business: the recent EC-organised CP congress gave the CP a big majority against the Chaterites; now the PPPS AGM, organised by its Management Committee, gives them a big majority against the EC.

The Chaterites protested loudly that the CP Congress was rigged against them — it's a pretty fair bet that the CP will now find fault with the way the Management Committee organised the PPPS AGM.

Perhaps the lesson is that when two bureaucratic appara-

DR JOHN Gilbert, the MP for Dudley East and a former Labour defence minister, has always been very worried about unrepresentative minorities taking over the Labour Party.

He refuses to be bound by the unilateralist policy of the party, and during the 1983 general election he put out an anti-unilateralist leaflet, only to find himself censured by his local party.

But the good doctor fought back. He is particularly keen to build support for his moderate policies (and for his reselection as an MP) among trade unionists.

Thus the number of trade union delegates to the constituency has grown magnificently over the last year, from seven to nearly 40.

You would think that would please rank and file activists, wouldn't you? But no: the churlish lefties on the Dudley East Execu-

tive Committee have suggested that 36 new delegates who appeared at meetings in April, are not genuine trade union representatives and have called on the NEC to launch an inquiry.

Amongst the honest trade unionists being slurred in this fashion are a local deputy headmistress, who is the GMBATU Hotel and Catering Branch delegate; a TGWU delegate who told the local paper "I know I'm a delegate but I don't know from which union"; Mr George Blackham, a Sandwell deputy headmaster, who naturally enough represents the electricians' union; and the delegate from the quarry workers' section of the GMBATU, who turns out to be one G. Gilbert, a London-based interior designer, who happens to be married to the MP. Can't understand what all the fuss is about.

tuses clank into battle, neither can win on the other's home ground.

Of course the Chaterites mobilised labour movement support from far outside the ranks of the CP. In the run-up to the AGM a stream of trade union leaders, like Moss Evans, appeared in the Star to praise and laud it and by implication those who now run it. Arthur Scargill was top of the bill, appearing on the morning of the AGM (and speaking for the Management Committee at the Manchester leg of the AGM).

Others, like Tony Benn, have supported the Management Committee, seemingly believing that the Morning Star can be developed into an independent labour movement journal.

One of the strangest things in the strange story of how the Communist Party has been

## Treasure

THE future Lord Redken says he wants to be Labour Party Treasurer.

He announced it last Thursday with a House of Commons press conference and a front page slot in Tribune, where he said that his candidature was about "building a mass party". Apparently, we already have the

"socialist policies" — the problem now is that "we are a long way from having the right machine".

But things will be just about right if we elect Ken to his proper place up there with Neil Kinnock and Larry Whitty, so that together they can form a leadership "firmly resisting witchhunts, personality clashes and leadership challenges."

The news caused not a little surprise. Livingstone has no chance of winning. The Campaign Group of MPs had already announced their support for Albert Booth, the left's candidate for the last two years. Booth lost very narrowly to Sam MacCluskie last year. Hearing about modest Ken's intention to stand, they decided to stick by Booth. The CLPD will almost certainly do the same.

The people most shocked were the members of Ken's new Party, Brent East, who recently selected him as their parliamentary candidate. The champion of accountability had, according to Party members, not bothered to consult them officially. He had just rung around a few individuals and that was that. Outrage is such that there is talk of the next GC mandating him to withdraw his candidature.

The press said Neil Kinnock was surprised.

Like hell he was! Kinnock probably put Livingstone up to it.

Who — apart from Ken's ego and career — will benefit from Livingstone standing? Sam MacCluskie! Livingstone will take votes from Albert Booth and thereby destroy any chance the left has of winning this year. Neil Kinnock, along with the right wing, is MacCluskie's most ardent supporter.

The signs are that Livingstone is doing a dirty little job for Kinnock.

## Love

THAT man again. Last Sunday's Telegraph carried a long feature on the future Lord redken-Gobshite in which journalist Sebastian Faulks asked the chameleon socialist "where the quintessence of his socialism lay". "It lies in the loving and trusting of the rest of humanity", replied the man who never was. The week before he gabbily told a Time Out interviewer about his feelings for John McDonnell:

"I feel more bitter about John than I ever have about any human being in my life. The political fracture with John was more vicious and more painful than my divorce. I can think of nothing in my experience like it. When I've lost my temper with someone before, had a row, I've come in the next day and I couldn't give a bugger, it's gone. With John, I had this almost physical loathing and hating of what John was and what he'd done, right the way until he got the chop at the group meeting the other day."

Probably Livingstone's most truthful and candid definition of his socialism appears in the June issue of Cosmopolitan magazine (yes, that's right). Reporting that he "claims never to have read Marx or any other socialist theory" Gill Pyrah quotes pink Ken: "Last time my IQ was measured it was 105 (just above average). But incredibly brilliant people with original ideas make lousy politicians. I'm for manipulative politics. To see further than anyone else you have to lead the people from just in front." (Emphasis added).

## Doctor suspended

WENDY Savage, the only female consultant obstetrician in Tower Hamlets, has been suspended without warning by the local Health Authority. She has been accused of malpractice in five cases.

But the real reason for her suspension has nothing to do with malpractice. It is to do with cutting a vital service in the area and cutting health care generally. Suspending Dr. Savage is just the first step.

The difference between Dr. Savage and other consultants, apart from being the only woman, is that she allows more choice to mothers as to how, where and when they have their babies, refusing to see childbirth as a condition requiring medical attention, with lots of new technology and less choice for mothers.

She was the only consultant not to have a private practice. Other consultants spend less time with NHS patients and are keen to set up a private fertility clinic which, of course, will serve only those who can pay.

Her removal will hit community based maternity care, antenatal clinics in doctors' surgeries and urgent access to the day care abortion clinic. Wendy Savage also taught at the London Hospital Medical College. Her suspension is an attack on the methods that she introduces to new doctors.

Local people fear that her removal will clear the way for

the further run-down of Mile End Hospital where she worked. There are plans to move all its obstetrics to Whitechapel Hospital and to reduce the number of beds. Mile End casualty is also under threat of closure.

Dr Savage's suspension must be seen as part of a general run-down of the service at the hospital and in the area as a whole.

While she is suspended, Dr Savage's work in the community is effectively frozen. No locum has been prepared for, nor is likely to be. Women will have a change of consultant but even that has not been thought out.

The campaign for her reinstatement is demanding an enquiry into the whole department and into maternity care and the needs of women in the area. Under the slogan "Wendy is Best. Investigate the Rest", they have collected thousands of signatures from local women and have planned a protest march from Mile End Hospital to the London Hospital on Thursday June 13, when they will hand their petitions into the DHA.

For more information contact the Wendy Savage Support Campaign, c/o Tower Hamlets Community Health Council, 23 New Road, London E1. Tel: 01-247 7858.

\*March from Mile End Hospital, 2.30 p.m. on Thursday June 13. (Nearest Tube: Mile End).

## Women's health conference

The first Northern Women's Health Conference will take place on the weekend of July 6-7 1985 at Manchester Polytechnic.

We are expecting about 1000 women to attend, both users of health care and women working in the health services at all levels.

The conference weekend will consist of a Health Fair which will include stalls, videos and demonstrations and lots more... and workshops.

These are arranged into eight strands, each containing 6-8 workshops. The eight strands are: reproductive rights, birth rights/motherhood, women's bodies/women's lives, life changes, sanity and mental health, international issues, the NHS, and alternative therapies/new initiatives. There will also be space for extra meetings. There will be live entertainment on Saturday night and the two lunch time sessions.

Full creche facilities will be provided. There is good access for women with disabilities. Signers will be available for women with hearing difficulties and some translation into Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu, Chinese and Spanish depending upon demand. Registration costs for the weekend are: £15 (high waged and organisations), £5 (medium waged), £2 (low waged), and 50p (unwaged). Food and accommodation will be available.

In recent years there has been an upsurge of activity on Women's Health issues, particularly in the North of England — Well Women Clinics/Centres, campaigns, self-help groups,

etc. This conference will highlight these and provide a platform for women to meet and swap ideas, information and skills.

Obtaining effective health information, advice, treatment and care can be a problem for all women but especially if we are disabled, black or elderly, for example, and this will be a very strong theme throughout the conference. We hope the conference will provide a focus for the very wide and diverse range of women's health needs in order to consider future strategies and ideas.

## Miriam Rodgers

LAST Thursday Miriam Rodgers, a member of York Labour Party and the University Labour Club was killed in a road accident. Miriam was helping to set up North Yorkshire Briefing and was about to get involved with the LPYS.

During the miners' strike Miriam regularly attended picket lines and was a mainstay of the food collections. She will be greatly missed in the University and the York labour movement has lost a young comrade who was certainly committed and moving towards revolutionary socialism.

Our condolences go out to her friend Luke, and to her close friends and family.

York Socialist Organiser



# WHAT WENT WRONG?

continued from p.1

There were then two possibilities. One was to up the ante — which had to be done through motions in the council chamber, since it was difficult to get trade unionists to take industrial action when there were no cuts taking place. The other — which I argued for — was simply to stand firm.

The problem was not simply that the councillors were not willing to go illegal. For example, the motion we put to the Hackney council meeting was declared illegal before we actually put it to the council.

Yet all but nine of the Labour councillors voted for that motion. They had received legal writs before they went into that council meeting cautioning them about their action.

Against that background of legal threats before anything had happened, Hackney councillors still voted for a position that the borough solicitor had told them was illegal.

I think you have to judge people by what they do rather than what they say, and in this context you have to judge people by the way they vote.

There is a danger of getting into psychological arguments about why did somebody vote for that and so on. I'm not sure this is always the clearest way of working out what the best strategy is.

I'm not sure at present what particular tactics one would talk about in future campaigns. It seems to me that the major problem will be a great deal of cynicism amongst working class organisations, including trade unions, about the councils' willingness to be involved in any serious campaign against the government's policies.

In Hackney, we believe that the right wing has to take responsibility for the cuts they have pushed through, and be seen to be doing this by the people of Hackney.

**"Most councillors have reinforced Kinnock's position by saying that when it comes to the crunch, you just act in an extremely traditional way, albeit you have a women's committee and an anti-racist committee and so on."**

But there is not a mood of despondency or demoralisation. Everybody is committed to continuing the fight against the cuts, be it inside the council chamber or outside.

## Reselection

Reselection has to be discussed now so that next year none of the right wing councillors will be selected. Next week all the organisations involved in the Hackney campaign will be meeting to get the campaign off to a new start.

down. Vindictive and gleeful speeches from the Tories indicate that they would dearly love to see Lambeth Labour councillors surcharged.

Nationally, the Tory government may or may not make such a move. On the one hand, they have succeeded in isolating Lambeth, and can take heavy punitive action and make an example of them.



Hilda Kean

Unless there are large-scale resignations in the councils that were rate-capped this year, you will have essentially the same councillors going into a campaign next year.

There needs to be an assessment, particularly in the local Labour Parties, of what particular tactics you employ. What I am worried about is a basically syndicalist response to the situation, saying "Well, councils always let people down. There's no role for the councillors. Everything should be left to the unions". Although I can understand why people would feel that way, I don't

think that is the most constructive way forward.

I think that as socialists, we have to discuss how to build up an alliance between different sections of the community, including socialist councillors, and the Labour Party, for future campaigns.

What we have managed to do in Hackney is to bring about a great deal of solidarity between different sections of the labour movement in the campaign this year.

This solidarity is not only important for the rate-capping issue, but for any campaigns we are waging against this government's policies.

Because the rate-capping campaign did not succeed in Hackney, it would seem to me a great pity to go back immediately into the traditional ways of organising that the left has done in recent years.

## Angry

People here in Hackney are angry rather than demoralised.

The collapse on rate-capping is quite significant in relation to what is happening in the Labour Party nationally.

Until the 1981 GLC elections, the left had not really taken seriously the question of local government. This has begun to change since then.

What has happened over the last couple of months and the view that Ken Livingstone has taken after the setting of the rate at the GLC, is that while on ideological issues, councillors like Ken Livingstone have taken a progressive stand, when it has come to key economic and financial questions, there has been a real absence of left strategy.

If, for example, you look at the GLC's campaign against abolition, it has not centred on a close working with the unions, nor did their campaign against rate-capping. It was centred far

more on propaganda aimed at the population of London in general, rather than at the labour movement bodies that are capable of organising people in trade union action.

You cannot take a socialist stand in relations to issues like women's oppression or racism without at the same time taking on board the economic factors that materially affect people's lives.

How can the GLC on the one hand make all this propaganda about having a GLC Women's Committee and supposedly taking notice of the interests of women in London while at the same time it draws back from the fight for adequate resources for such facilities?

That is to miseducate people about the nature of women's oppression, which is seen on the level of ideas in people's heads rather than the economic way in which women are discriminated against.

Most councillors, in the campaign against rate-capping, have not seen their role going beyond the traditional role of councillors in the council chamber, despite the left rhetoric that has been put about.

They have reinforced Kinnock's position by saying that when it comes to a crunch, when it comes to a question of illegality, that you just act in an extremely traditional way, albeit that you have women's committees and anti-racist committees and so on.

## Left

What should the left be doing now? There have recently been calls for left regroupment.

I believe there is a need for the left to organise on a broad basis, with different currents on the left working together far more closely.

It's important to take note of what the gains have been, not only on rate-capping but also on the miners' strike and the lessons these hold for the way the left should be organising over the coming period.

Labour Briefing, as a publication, seems to have concentrated — to my mind wrongly — too much on the internal workings of the Labour Party and on issues of reselection per se, of black sections and the constitutionality of black sections per se, rather than seeing itself as an instrument for broadening the Labour Party's appeal generally and actually campaigning for socialist policies within the working class as a whole.

The left has in recent years tended to focus on internal Labour Party issues which are seen by many non-activists as totally esoteric, rather than concentrating on the type of organisation that you actually need to carry out policies.

## Organise

There is also a strong tendency for the left to regard the passing of motions by GCs as the be-all and end-all, rather than looking at how to organise on the basis of those policies within the wider community.

Any regroupment that takes place in the Labour Party left has to look at those wider issues of how you make links outside the Labour Party.

## Paul Whetton's diary



## Don't sit back

WE'RE back where we began, with the announcement of the closure of Cortonwood.

It must now be clear to everybody what the Coal Board intends to do. They consider themselves to have won a clear victory over the miners and therefore to have a mandate for mass pit closures. I think it'll probably get worse unless there is an answer from the rank and file.

Many of the miners and some of the leaders are saying that now is not the time: the lads are not ready, and all the rest of it. But if we sit back and wait until such time as the lads are ready, then the Coal Board will carry on from the more than 4 million tonnes capacity they've already taken out.

There'll be a rapid run-down, with the ultimate aim of privatisation. The new colliery near Coventry will probably be sunk with Coal Board money and then handed over to private owners.

There's only one answer to this: the members have got to be ready, and industrial action has got to be initiated fairly soon.

The Coal Board's strategy now is to go in hard at the militant areas, but also wholesale throughout the British coalfield, including Notts, where two pits are to shut and there may be more to follow shortly.

The campaign for an amnesty has to continue. It's not just an issue for the miners, it's an issue for every trade unionist, that people are put in prison for fighting for jobs.

A firm commitment by the leadership of the Labour Party is needed now. I'm sure it would give heart to those that have lost jobs or are in jail. And it mean the Labour Party acting as the champion of the working class. That would bring a lot more support behind the Labour Party than the half-promises we've had so far.

We can't wait until the next general election. Something has got to be done now. It's got to come both from the leadership of the TUC and the leadership of the Labour Party.

I hope the question of the scab leadership in Notts will be sorted out at the annual conference. It's a matter of strategy. Perhaps now the issue of expulsion has gone on that long that it has become a dead duck. Steps are now openly being taken for a breakaway. It may well be best to let them break away rather than to expel them.

Paul Whetton is the former secretary of the Notts miners rank and file strike committee.

# Stand firm!

continued from p.1

government, unless the District Auditor holds back from surcharging.

The absence of two Tory councillors and the fact that the Tory group has not rushed forward to requisition another council meeting suggests that they want to make it impossible for the Labour Group to back

However, the Tories are worried about their rapidly diminishing electoral popularity and they do not know how strongly London Bridge and the trade union movement would respond.

Once the certificates are issued the legal process of appeal would take months, and give the campaign valuable time to mobilise support on a national level.

A voluntary collapse by Lambeth would be far preferable to Jenkins and Thatcher than an open-ended situation which surcharge would initiate. conference on June 22 is being organised by Lambeth to rally support from trade unions, community groups, Labour Parties and from left Labour councillors in other rate-capped boroughs who fought against making a rate.

Prior to that, the Lambeth Council Labour Group is meeting on Wednesday June 12. It is vital that they are lobbied and asked to stand firm against the anticipated letters from the District Auditor.

## Subscribe!

Get SOCIALIST ORGANISER each week delivered to your door by post.

RATES: £8.50 for 6 months. £16 for one year.

Name .....

Address .....

Please send me .... months' sub. I enclose £ .....

To: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sickert Court, London N1'2SY.



# WORKERS AGAIN

**Bob Fine analyses the crises and contradictions in the apartheid regime which lie behind the current explosion in South Africa**

INTERNAL resistance against the apartheid regime in South Africa has been growing apace. There are almost daily reports of strikes, boycotts, sabotage and riot by the oppressed majority.

The state's response so far this year has been to shoot dead over three hundred blacks, to murder at least three in custody, to arrest thousands and to expel thousands more back to the so-called "homelands". South Africa has entered a new period of intensified struggle.

Closely allied with the South African Communist Party, the African National Congress is a leading wing of the national liberation movement. It is now planning the first Consultative Conference since its Morogoro conference in 1969. Things have changed dramatically since 1969.

Then the liberation movement as a whole was at a low point. Internal resistance in South Africa had all but disappeared since 1961, the turn to armed struggle having proved to be a terrible failure. The campaign for international sanctions had made no headway against the lures of lucrative foreign investment in South Africa.

Today the situation is entirely different and far more hopeful.

## Trade unions

An independent trade union movement has arisen out of the ashes of the movement defeated in the 1960s. Organising black workers in the industrial and commercial heartlands of South Africa and now well entrenched within the mines, the trade union movement has become a major force for change.

Numerous community and student groups have been reborn and formed themselves into two national organisations.

The one, the United Democratic Front, is a multi-racial grouping in the tradition of the old Congress Alliance and now with the politics of the ANC, Mandela and the Freedom Charter.

The other is a black-consciousness movement called the National Forum, whose most important component is AZAPO, the Azanian People's organisation (Azania is the 'African' name for South Africa). This movement has picked up a large number of black socialists.

In addition, there are organisations like the Cape Action League, which has inherited the mantle of the old 'Trotskyist' Unity Movement. Radical literature, meetings, slogans and campaigns abound in South Africa in a way that must stretch the credulity of those whose image of South Africa was formed in the dark days of the 1960s.

For South Africa's rulers there have also been great changes. Economically, South Africa is caught within the constraints of world recession. Profits are down. International

markets for primary and manufactured consumer products are more intensely competitive and difficult. An underlying balance of payments deficit caused by the import of capital goods and new technology has been offset only by banking loans. The strength of the dollar has caused the value of gold to drop. Inflation is high, lay-offs are common and unemployment (stated to be around three million for blacks) is rising.

The multinational monopolies which dominate the South African economy are putting pressure on the South African state to contain the black unrest and restore profitability. In response, a state policy has evolved that combines highly significant 'reforms' with increasing authoritarianism.

In 1981 a labour law reform was initiated which extended the legal sphere of operation of black trade unions. The state intended to control and incorporate trade unions by subjecting them to an official framework, but the result of these reforms has been the considerable strengthening of the movement.

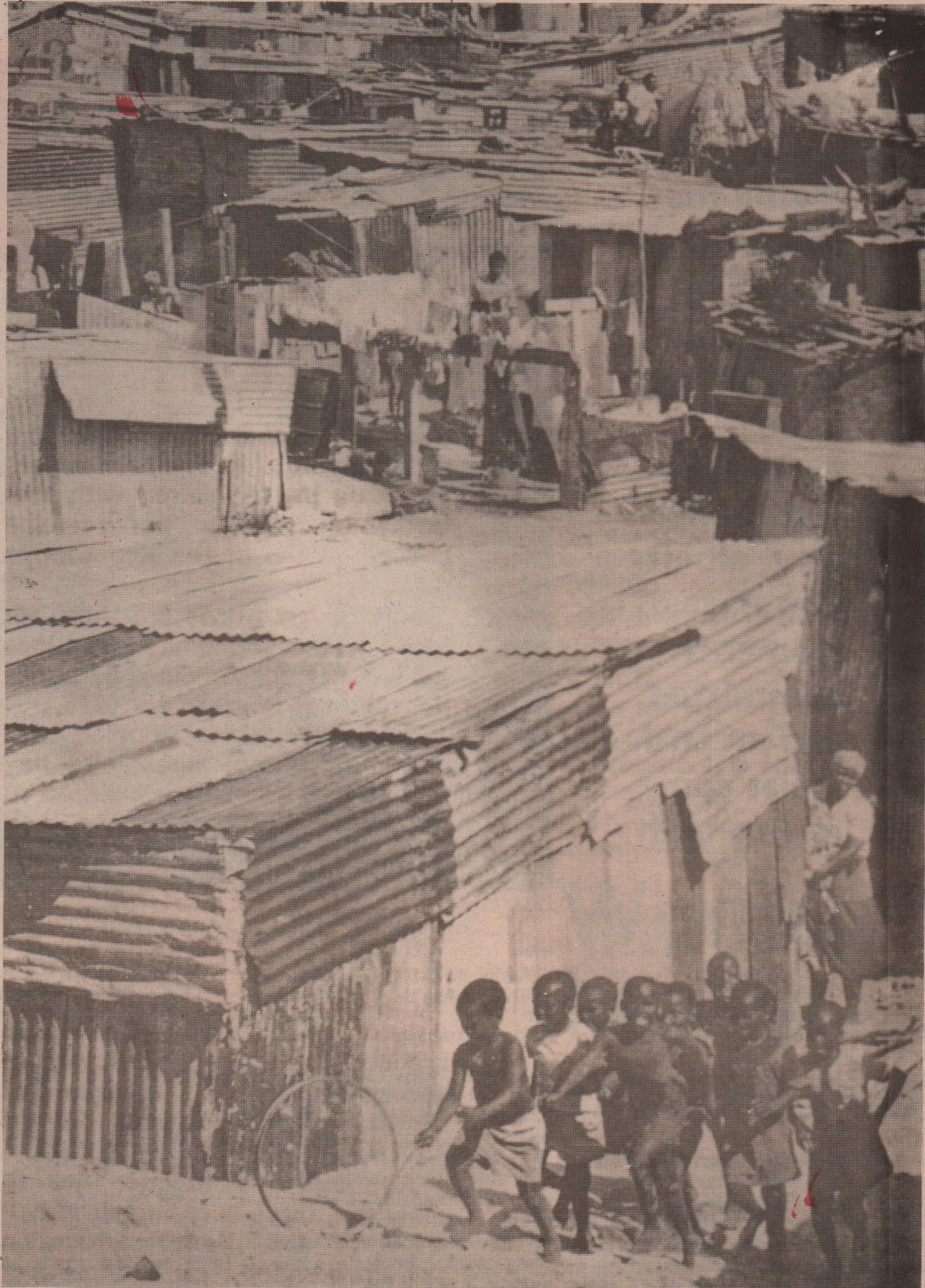
In 1983 the government announced its constitutional reforms. It set up a tripartite parliament, one house for whites, one for Asians and one for Coloureds. Africans were not included on the ground that Africans already had their own self-government in the Bantustans. At the same time, the government consolidated the power of the state executive and military and put off the next general election at least until 1989.

The elections for the Coloured and Asian assemblies were successfully boycotted, although enough Coloureds and Asians voted to lend the new arrangement some credibility.

The government also extended its scheme for black local councils, which include Africans. These too were boycotted and collaborating black councillors have been a major target for demonstrators during the recent unrest. Several have been killed, many have been driven to resign.

The first group of 120 black 'peace officers' graduated in Soweto in May to serve under and protect the councillors. Considerable financial and patronage incentives have been put in the way of black councillors as inducements to volunteer. But the government is not finding it easy to find candidates.

More recently the Mixed



Marriages and Immorality Acts, which banned marriage and sex between individuals of different 'races' have been repealed. The pass laws have been relaxed, to allow for easier movement for qualified blacks within the white urban areas, and to allow for easier access for blacks to the black urban townships.

## Reforms

A right to hold freehold tenure in urban areas has been conceded to Africans. There has been a temporary halt to all forced removals of black people from zones designated as 'white' and a permanent halt to forced removals for about 700,000 potentially threatened blacks.

South African citizenship is to be granted to Africans living in the Bantustans. The law banning representatives of one 'racial' group from interfering in the political affairs of another

(which, for example, meant that Asian representatives were not permitted to discuss white affairs, etc.), has been repealed.

Reforms like these have been accompanied by terrible acts of state butchery. The worst was at Langa in March of this year when the police opened fire on a peaceful funeral procession commemorating the 25th anniversary of the 1960 massacre at Sharpeville.

According to official figures, they killed 19 blacks, but the unofficial count was around 45 dead.

An executive member of FOSATU (the Federation of South African Trade Unions), Andries Raditsela, died one hour after being released from custody, from severe head injuries. A student leader, Siphso Mutsi, died in custody shortly after. A thousand soldiers and police sealed off Kwanobuhle, a black township in the Eastern Cape on May 6

and killed three more black people. And so it continues.

In the face of conflicting pressures, the white polity itself has split apart. Although the ruling Nationalist Party under Botha has strengthened its grip on government and continues to win support in the white polls, for several years now it has been faced with opposition from a right-wing breakaway movement called the HNP, led by a man named Treurnicht.

The HNP has been gaining support among whites disenchanted with a policy of concessions, and squeezed in a declining economy between black workers below and the monopolies above. It seems that this right-wing movement has won a considerable following within the police and the army.

It would be a mistake, in my view, to pass off the government's reforms as a mere deception covering up the unchanging reality of apartheid. So keen



Clockwise from left: Crossroads sq funeral in the Eastern Cape; Gold: School students' revolt, Soweto 1976; Durban.

have militants in the liberation struggle been to dissociate themselves from reformism that they have sometimes been blind to the very real changes in the terrain of struggle that have been taking place.

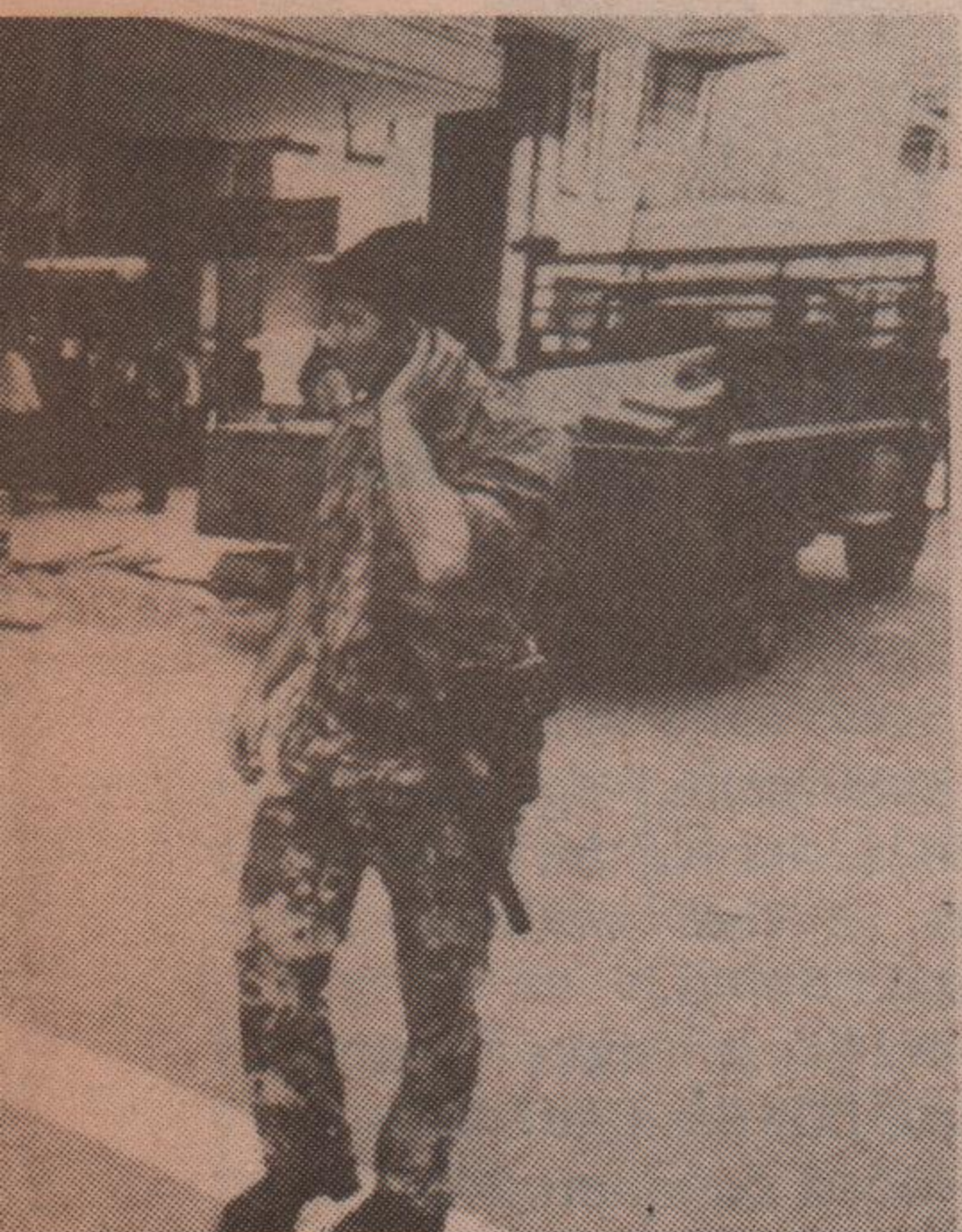
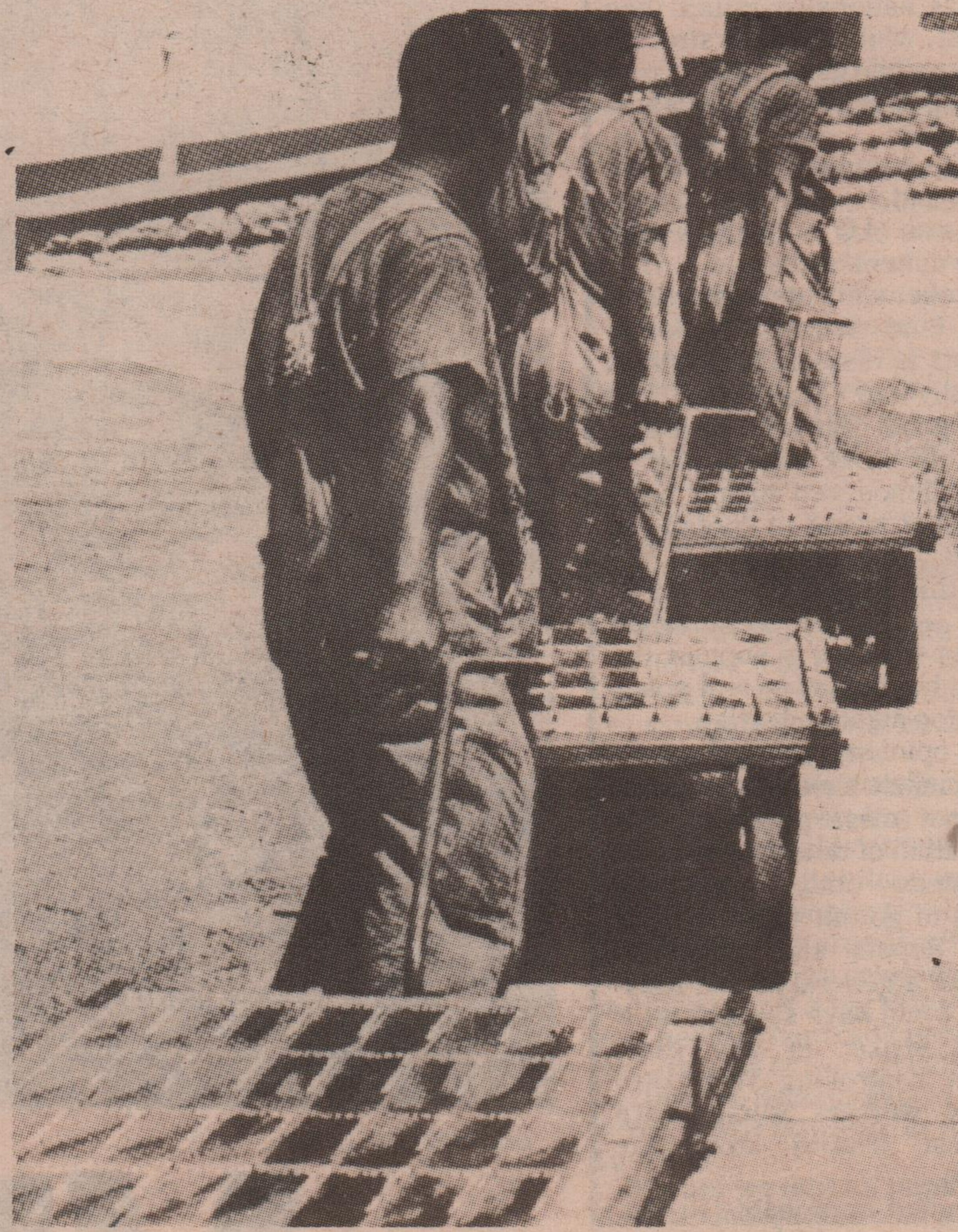
## Change

One example out of many: Tribune commented: "Sharpeville 1960. Uitenhage 1985... nothing has changed in 25 years... Progress... liberalisation... are nothing but a sham" (29/3/85). Certainly, apartheid continues to be a brutal reality, but it is also true that black struggles over the last decade or more have brought about significant changes and opened up new opportunities for the movement.

# "A new period of struggle"



# AGAINST APARTHEID



matter town outside Cape Town; central to South African economy; 6; Police arrests on the streets of

The image of apartheid most often portrayed by the anti-apartheid movement and still most common within popular consciousness is that of absolute power directed to the oppression of black people with such efficacy that no resistance is possible. The socialist version of this image portrays apartheid as playing a central and essential part in capital accumulation and the exploitation of labour in South Africa. What both these images miss, however, are the contradictions which run through apartheid, just as they run through every capitalist order.

These contradictions are coming to a head with the growth of internal resistance, with the world economic crisis and with the changing demands of

capital. The apartheid state has not remained static in the face of these major shifts. The 'reforms' are not a mere sham, but part of a serious attempt on the part of the South African rulers to adapt to the new situation.

## Fraught

As the ruling class are well aware, any programme of reforms is fraught with danger, in particular the danger that black workers will take advantage of these tinkering to fight for fundamental change. That, in essence, is what is now taking place.

If we simply deny that there is a process of 'liberalisation', we will obscure reality and fail to comprehend what is happening, how it is happening and precisely why it is now happening in this particular way.

Beneath the political surface of reform and repression, the state is attempting, none too successfully so far, a programme of restructuring aimed at restoring conditions of profitability. The Financial Times recently summed up some aspects of the economic problem

facing South African capital:

"In every one of the last five years government spending has overshot its budgeted target, frequently by a large margin. Over-reliance on gold to bail the economy out, a plethora of control boards, over-restrictive building regulations, subsidies to farmers, 'strategic industries' and consumers, and the costs of administering apartheid in all its forms, have saddled the economy with a mass of distortions... These have raised costs and reduced productivity to the extent that inflation at 16% (and still rising) is three times the average of South Africa's partners. The low dollar price of gold and the three year drought, which this year broke in the nick of time, have proved two straws which nearly broke the back of the economy and contributed to the 40% depreciation of the rand in 15 months." (FT, 10/5/85).

## Manoeuvre

This is roughly how the problems look to the ruling South African capitalist class. The solution which it seeks follows the familiar road of monetarism,

at least as far as cuts in public expenditure are concerned.

The new Finance Minister, Barend du Plessis, has imposed restrictive budgets to cut state expenditure. But he has very little room for manoeuvre. White workers, especially white women workers, are beginning to feel the pinch of unemployment.

## International

Cuts in food subsidies aggravate the anger of black workers. Cuts in central government spending force black councillors to raise rents and thus undercut the government's policy of incorporating a small black middle class. Spending on the army and police can only expand.

The international front is a major dimension of the South African picture. In the USA an energetic Free South Africa Movement has gripped the black and radical imagination and posed a challenge to Reagan's inherited policy of 'constructive engagement' with the apartheid regime.

While Reagan has established an investment office in Johannesburg, backs IMF loans to South Africa, supports continued US training of the South African coast guard and endorses the export to South Africa of 2,500 US made electric shock batons, US opponents of the apartheid regime have been demonstrating and mobilising for sanctions against South Africa.

Congress has passed legislation banning all further bank

loans to South Africa, banning new investment by new US companies, and banning nuclear and military computer sales.

At the time of writing it is not clear whether the president will veto this legislation. In over 44 US state legislatures proposals have been introduced demanding disinvestment from banks involved in South Africa. Manufacturers' Hanover Bank has refused to grant any further loans to South Africa. When we consider that in 1984 the USA was responsible for 20% of all foreign investment in South Africa — over \$15 billion — big money is at stake.

We don't yet know how effective such moves will be. Some people are treating it as window-dressing. Why, after all should the conservative Foreign Relations Committee support such a bill? In part this is doubtless a reasonable objection. But the disinvestment campaign also links in with a US trend towards protectionism.

Take US steel for example. The New Statesman (5/4/85) showed how US production of steel declined by 50% between 1974 and 1982. In 1983 the seven largest steel producers lost \$2.7 billion. The result is high redundancy at home and high investment abroad. Steel imports now amount to over one-fifth of domestic production.

## US labour

Since 1975 US imports of South African steel have gone up 5000%, albeit from a very low base. Chicago's Southworks Steel (owned by US Steel) laid off several thousand workers while Chicago's new state office bought its steel beams from ISCOR, the South African steel company. This purchase was funded by loans from the Illinois Bank which itself operates in South Africa.

Perhaps — and this is speculation — it was protectionist fervour which excited US labour movement support for sanctions against South Africa — the AFL-CIO favours sanctions — and from Senator Lugar, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, representing capital.

Whatever the motives, US sanctions can only aggravate the economic difficulties already faced by the apartheid regime. The refusal of San Francisco longshoremen [dockers] to unload South African cargo represents a real step forward in international solidarity, even though the spirit of nationalist protectionism probably played a part in generating it.

## Ireland

In Ireland a similar act of solidarity has taken place. May Manning who works for a supermarket chain in Dublin, refused to cash up South African fruit, in line with instructions from her union (the Irish Administrative and Distributive Trade Union). She was suspended by management and all 18 full-time workers at the shop have been on strike for over six months demanding her reinstatement.

gle”

To be continued

Next week: the liberation movement, the black trade unions, and political strategies



# 40,000 at Trotskyist fete

Every year in large fields outside Paris, the French Trotskyist organisation Lutte Ouvriere (Workers' Fight) holds a three-day fete. It is a carnival of music, food, drink and revolutionary politics.

In between the restaurant tents, drinks tents, jazz and rock bands and children's games, socialists from different countries sell their literature, hold meetings, discuss and argue.

This year the fete was organised jointly by Lutte Ouvriere with the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR), the French sister-group to 'Socialist Action'. It attracted its biggest attendance to date — about 40,000 people — and filled a bigger area than in the past.

The general situation in France is not good: the miserable record of the Socialist-led government has demoralised workers and created fertile soil for the growth of the fascist National Front, which now gets a vote as big as the Communist Party's. But there is obviously a minority which — given tenacity and hard work — can be won to revolutionary ideas.

Dozens of discussion 'forums' took place over the three days. Some of the best-attended debated current differences between LO and the LCR.

LO is an impressive organisation. Most of their work is organised around individual factories, where they produce regular bulletins. The bulletins take up day-to-day issues in the workplace, as well as big political issues.

Sometimes, however, they seem sectarian in their attitude to other movements. For example, very much in evidence at the fete was the badge — "Don't touch my friend" — of SOS-Racisme, a movement set up to counter the National Front and a recent wave of racist killings.

The movement could become something like the Anti-Nazi League in Britain, though as yet it has not had the same impact among youth. Like the ANL, too, its politics are unclear — its sponsors include members of the right wing parties, though the main force in it is the Socialist Party.

The LCR has jumped right into SOS-Racisme, endorsing it lock, stock and barrel. LO is rather stand-off-ish.

Another difference is about New Caledonia. Both LO and

LCR support the Kanaks in their fight for independence. The difference is that LO insists on criticising the Kanak Liberation Front as nationalist rather than socialist, while the LCR stresses the possibility of the Front 'growing over' from nationalism to socialism.

A big argument both in the forums and in individual discussions was LO's line on the British miners' strike.

LO vehemently denounced the LCR's (and Socialist Action's) attempts to dissolve themselves politically into "Scargillism". So far, so good. But LO's own attitude to the strike was strange.

They denounced Arthur Scargill for not trying to spread the struggle. But, we replied, the fact is that he did try to spread it. Yes — LO said — he called for other workers to support the miners, but he had no real policy to develop a general strike.

LO's opinion, it turned out, is that socialists should have advocated not mass picketing, but the creation of democratic strike committees and organising strikers to go out to all the factories, depots and offices to argue for a general strike. Maybe that could have sparked off a general strike; in any case, through controlling their own struggle workers would learn the best lessons from the struggle.

It seemed improbable to me, and I suspect LO's vision is distorted by the great differences between the French and British labour movements. Obviously this debate will continue.

Socialist Organiser had a stall, selling papers and magazines, and discussing with as many people as we could. Particularly useful were discussions with Vietnamese Trotskyists (we did an interview which will be published this week); with veteran Trotskyist Edmund Samarakody from the Sri Lankan Revolutionary Workers' Party; and with an Italian group, called the Revolutionary Socialist League (LSR), which was linked with Nahuel Moreno's PST in Argentina but broke with them over Moreno's Argentine-chauvinist line on the Falklands/Malvinas war.

The size of the fete is an indication of the comparative strength of the revolutionary left in France — largely the result of the experience of the great general strike of 1968.



The fete included debates on New Caledonia, on campaigning against racism in France, and on the British miners' strike



Liberation of Saigon, 1975

# VIETNAM:

THE economic situation is disastrous. The CP has nationalised everything, even the small traders.

We are for the nationalisation of big properties, but not of everything — because when you nationalise you have to be able to provide the means to operate better than under private ownership. The result is that people don't want to work. Since 1983-4 they've introduced piecework.

In the late '70s food production declined drastically. Now they say things are better. But there is still terrible poverty in the south.

The American comrades [the Socialist Workers' Party — US] rejoice that everything has been nationalised, and they say that's socialism. But it's not.

The working class is controlled by the party. There is no liberty. The trade unions don't really exist.

## Privileged

The CP bases itself on the working class, separating out a privileged layer in order to form a bureaucracy. For example, the child of a worker, or a party member, can get into university with a score of 10 in the exam, whereas others need 15. But the working class does not have the right to express itself freely.

To get a good job you have to be in the party. For the party functionaries, functional privileges become economic and material privileges.

They have higher salaries, special shops (which are expanding), trips abroad, free holidays, cars, chauffeurs — all that makes them a social category different from the masses.

The situation is still not like in Eastern Europe. In Vietnam the

In the late 1960s and early '70s, Vietnam's war against US imperialism was central to world politics.

Some socialists, while supporting the Vietnamese struggle, did warn that the Communist Party leading that struggle was a Stalinist party, which in 1945-6 had massacred the Vietnamese Trotskyists. Most activists, carried away by the heroism of the Vietnamese, dismissed this argument as sectarian.

Vietnam today, unfortunately, is a bitter mockery of their enthusiasm. In this interview with SO, two members of the Vietnamese Trotskyist Group in France describe the Stalinist regime and how it developed.

opposition is still not dangerous.

The CP uses soft methods towards the masses, but violence against opposition. During the resistance to the Americans, 95% of the population supported the CP. Today, if there were free elections, the CP would not even get 30%.

Everyone is discontented. People say that the CP was good during the war, but it is no good for the reconstruction.

The CP operates a dictatorship by manipulating and controlling people, not by terror. In Ho Chi Minh City, in each district there is a party member responsible for security checks on everyone living in the district, with agents reporting to him. The police can come into your house at any hour of the day.

The opposition of the population has not yet crystallised. The Trotskyists in Vietnam have not been imprisoned — though the CP knows them — but they can do nothing.

But this situation cannot last long. It is said that there were some strikes five years ago, very quickly put down. But eventually the opposition will emerge.

The CP is a Stalinist party in its programme and its ideology. Before it came to power it put forward a nationalist policy and organised the NLF to win all the sections of the petty bourgeoisie.

After the victory, there was a 180° turn. The CP abandoned its alliance with the bourgeoisie in a brutal manner. The NLF was treated as nothing at all. The northern CP took control, immediately.

The petty bourgeoisie felt

tricked and turned against the CP. Even leaders of the NLF and members of the southern CP were discredited.

The north is more tightly controlled. But the south feels as if it has been conquered by the north.

At first, after the victory, it was the collaborators who were leaving Vietnam. Now there are even members of the CP getting out.

## Saigon

When they entered Saigon, there was no mobilisation of the masses. There were people's councils, but they were organis-

# Trotskyism

FRANCE conquered Vietnam in the 1860s (the south) and the 1880s (the north). In the 1920s a movement for independence began. It was led by bourgeois nationalists, by Ho Chi Minh's Communist Party, and — from 1931 — by influential Trotskyist parties.

One group, 'October', put out a daily paper in 1939. The other, 'La Lutte', led by Ta Thu Thau, published a joint paper with the CP in 1933-37. Breaking this alliance as the CP turned to popular front politics, the Trotskyists gained control of the paper and, in 1939, resoundingly defeated the Stalinists in the Cochinchina (south Vietnam) Colonial Council elections. The candidates of 'La Lutte' got over 80%

of the vote.

From September 1939, fierce repression by the French administration drove both Stalinists and Trotskyists underground, and then, in 1940, Japanese troops occupied Indochina.

In 1945 Japanese power collapsed. The Vietminh, a front organisation of the CP, was the strongest force in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh drafted a Declaration of Independence based on the US declaration of 1776, and welcomed British and French troops into Vietnam.

The Trotskyists reappeared with the slogans: 'Down with imperialism! People's Committees everywhere! Arming of the people! Land to the





# Overthrow the bureaucrats!

Extracts from a document of the Vietnamese Trotskyists published in 1976.

The Vietnamese workers' state has been born bureaucratically deformed, and it has no internal possibilities of preventing the evolution towards bureaucratic degeneration.

The sincerity and the revolutionary ardour of Ho Chi Minh, of Tito, and of Mao, are not in question; only their integration into the world of Stalinism brought them to install mechanisms which must inevitably transform the leading layer into a privileged and omnipotent bureaucratic caste...

The fact that the VCP has successfully led a revolutionary struggle does not contradict this affirmation.

Like bourgeois democracies or fascist regimes, the workers' bureaucracies of Stalinist origin are not identical, even if they are genetically similar. To believe that a bureaucratic caste can only be cowardly and capitulatory is a narrow view, and besides contradicted by the attitude of the CP USSR during the Second World War when it was fighting for its survival...

Should we lose all hope? How to understand that a people which has given the world such a lesson of courage, of revolutionary ardour and of original initiatives, can be satisfied with a regime that gives it no free speech?

China and Yugoslavia are there to show us that in a country where the peasantry constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population, if the revolutionary party ignores the problem of bureaucratisation, the working class is incapable of opposing the degeneration of the victorious party.

Its leadership, despite its record of prisons, torture and exile, transforms itself into a privileged and uncontrolled caste.

It has the power and it will not abandon it. Its prestige due to the victory and the

gains of the revolution, and the immense exhaustion of the Vietnamese people, will give it quiet for several years.

But after that? Young people will come into political life who consider independence and the collectivisation of the means of production as an established fact. The aura of old combatants will not be able to mask the reality of the privileges and the mediocrity of intellectual life.

It will no longer be possible to black out news and to prevent the penetration of new ideas (new for Vietnam):

- the right for several workers' parties to coexist,
- right of tendency in the Communist Party,
- independence of the trade unions,
- democratic administration of the state by a pyramid of councils starting from rank and file level,
- freedom of the press,
- suppression of the privileges of the members of the party and the state apparatus...

Vietnam will not develop a socialist democracy without the ruling layer, its bureaucratic structures and its party being overthrown by force. This is what the Trotskyist movement has always called a political revolution.



Ho Chi Minh

# ten years on

ed by the army. Then there were elections — but they were fake elections. The CP are Stalinists — they fear the masses.

Now there is enormous corruption. If you've got money, you can get out. Everything can be bought.

During the war, people had respect for the members of the party — they fought bravely, with self-sacrifice. Today, no — you see people entering the party in search of privileges.

Vietnam has been isolated economically by the US. Pierre Rousset [a French Trotskyist] explains the bad situation as due only to material conditions. In fact there is much more to it.

Almost half the state budget

is given to military spending. They maintain an army of one million — 250,000 in Cambodia, 100,000 on the Chinese border, 50 or 60,000 on the Cambodian border, and a number in Laos.

## Expansion

The Vietnamese CP has a policy of expansion. It wants to establish an Indochinese federation under its rule, to play the role which the USSR plays in Eastern Europe.

Pol Pot's party in Cambodia had had differences with the Vietnamese CP for a long time. But the VCP did deals with Pol Pot. Then a border conflict be-

came a pretext to invade Cambodia, basing themselves on a minority wing of the Cambodian CP round Heng Samrin.

At first they benefited from the ultra-reactionary policy of Pol Pot. The Cambodians welcomed them with open arms, as they were welcomed in South Vietnam. The VCP thought it would be a very quick operation. But now attitudes are changing even among the Cambodian leaders. Cambodians are traditionally suspicious of Vietnamese — very sensitive about their nationalism.

Behind it all the invasion of Cambodia had a political motive. Vietnam wants to be the leader in the region.

In 1936 our comrades put forward the slogan of an Indochinese Socialist Federation, and the Stalinists were very hostile to it. That was before their victory. Now they have the victory, they want to deal with the matter in an administrative fashion. In contrast, our aim is to mobilise the masses for a clearly proclaimed objective.

Agriculture is organised in two sectors in the north — state farms and cooperatives — and three in the south — state farms, cooperatives, private plots. The state farms are the major sector. The CP says today that they went too quickly in collectivising agriculture after 1975. There is no movement for full-scale decollectivisation as in Poland, but it is not impossible that they will follow the example of China, giving much more scope to the free market.

Vietnam is now economically in hock to the USSR, but there are conflicts. The Russian technicians are very unpopular in Vietnam, even among the members of the CP. In contrast, the Cuban technicians are very popular — people see them as having come to help, while the Russians come to exploit.

Maoist ideas are still strong in the CP. The cadres were educated as Maoists. There is no real opposition inside the CP, but different tendencies are visible in the leadership.

There is a tendency, represented by Vo Nguyen Giap [the main military leader of the anti-imperialist war], which criticises the party for being too Maoist, ultra-left, too rapid in its economic measures. The opposite pole, more old-style Stalinist, is represented by the head of state, Truong Chinh. Le Duan, the general secretary of the party, occupies a middle position.

# and Stalinism

peasants! Toward the workers' and peasants' government!

For the Stalinists, this was a threat. In late 1945 and early 1946, the CP, so moderate towards French imperialism, turned on the Trotskyists and massacred them. Ta Thu Thau was shot in February 1946.

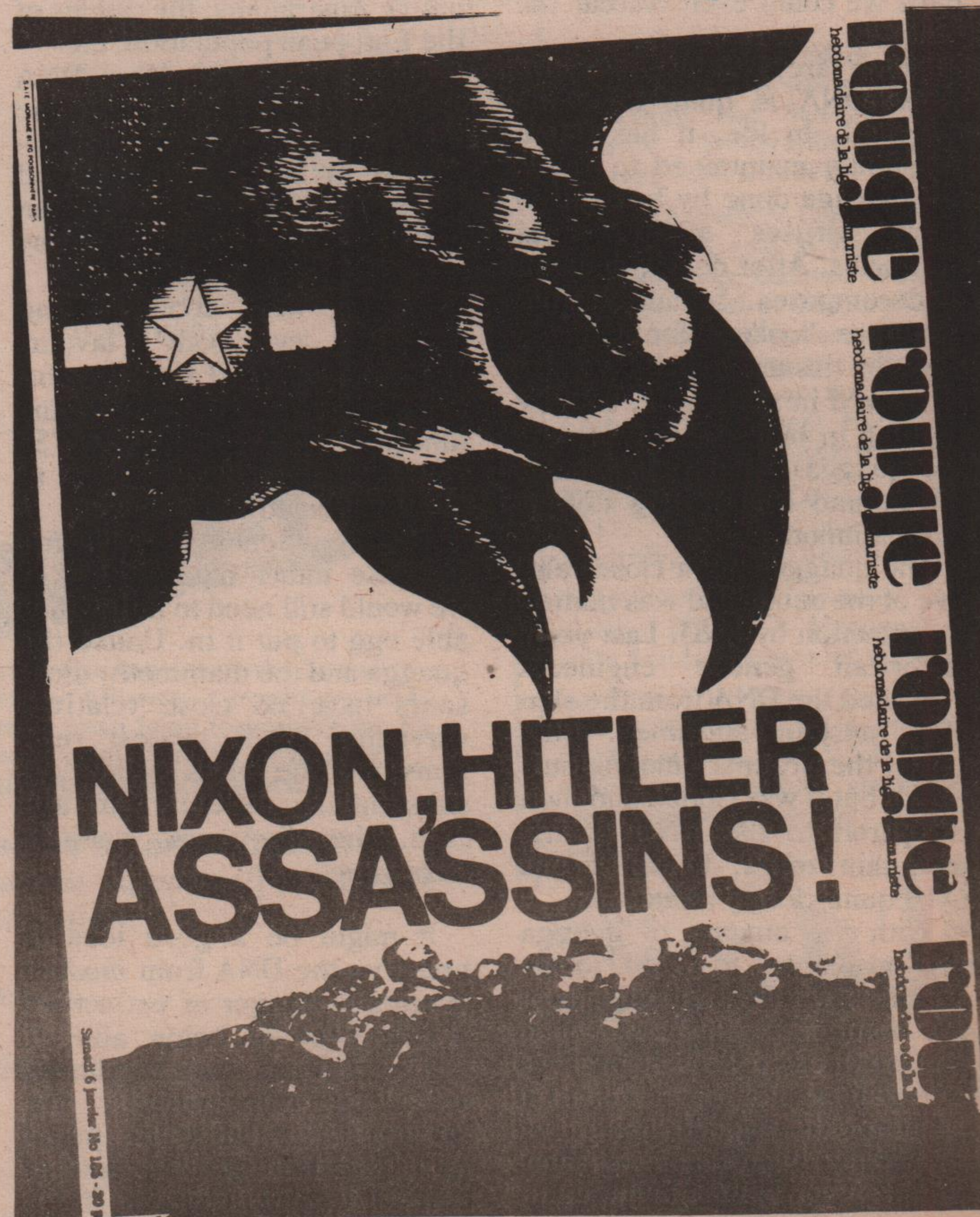
But in late 1946 friction between the Vietminh and the French turned into open war. The CP in France supported colonialism through its ministers in the government (until May 1947); but the Vietnamese CP began to fight. By 1954 it had the French on the run. The USSR stepped in and sponsored a deal at Geneva which gave independence to the north while the south had a neo-colonial regime, now under US sponsorship.

The struggle against imperialism restarted in the south from 1960, escalating into full-scale war from 1965. In May 1975 the US withdrew, defeated. At the peak they had had half a million troops in Vietnam.

Some Vietnamese Trotskyists remained after the massacre of 1945-6. The Vietnamese Trotskyist Group, which gave us the interview above, is based around comrades who left Vietnam in the early 1950s and have since been active in France. They are affiliated to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, but critical of the USFI's soft attitude to the Vietnamese Stalinists and its consequent lack of interest in developing Vietnamese Trotskyism.

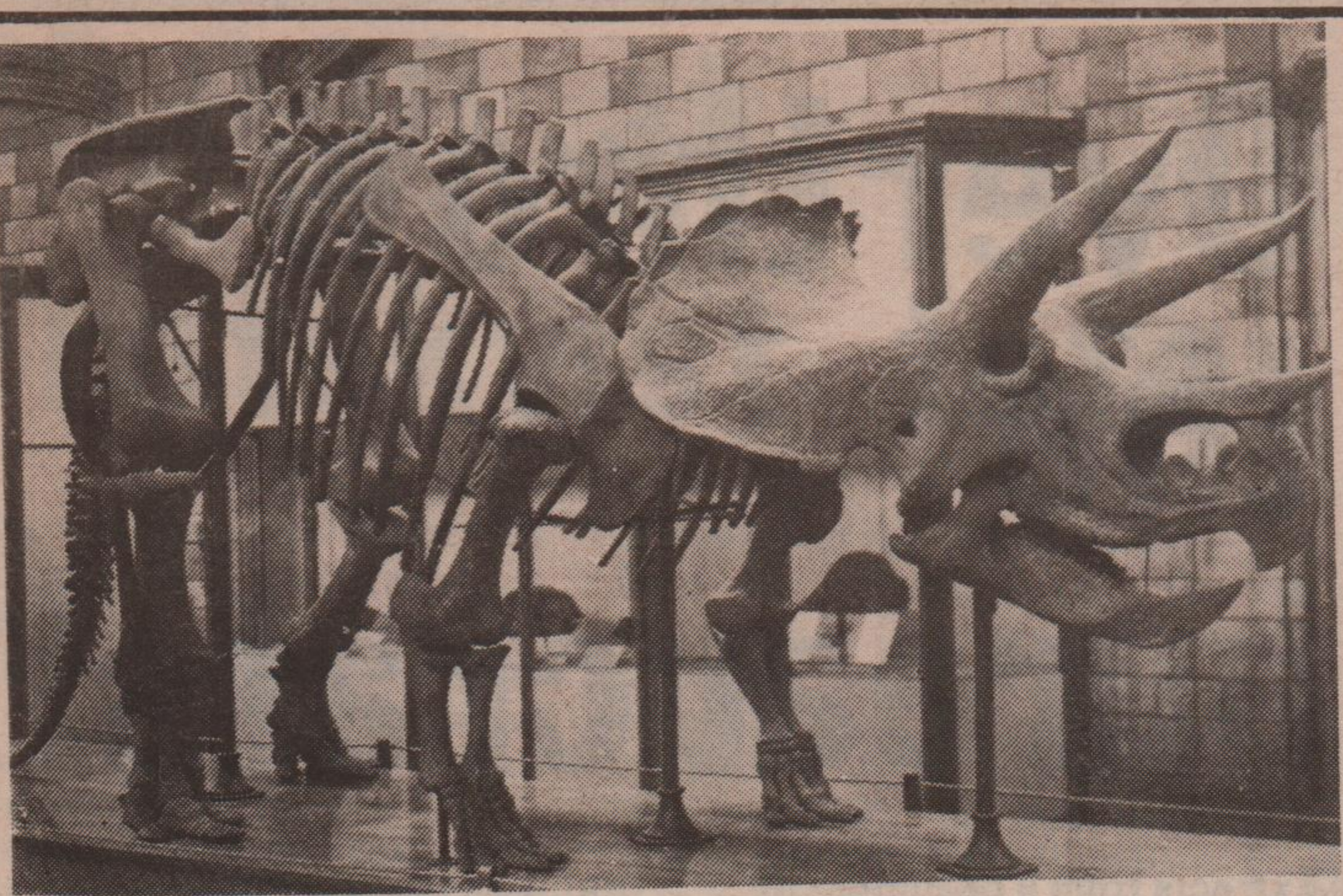


Ta Thu Thau: Trotskyist leader killed by Stalinists in 1946.



In ten days at the end of 1972, the US dropped a greater tonnage of bombs on North Vietnam than was dropped throughout the world by all the Allies in the whole of World War 2





# Clones

By Les Hearn

As the rate of extinction of living species increases, modern genetic engineering techniques provide us with the means of finding out a little about some lost forms of life, as well as allowing us to indulge in harmless fantasies about resurrecting them.

The unique information that defines a species is carried as a chemical code — long molecules of DNA. Each organism has its own unique DNA (with some exceptions) and each cell of the organism possesses a copy of this unique DNA.

Some groups of organisms with identical DNA do exist and are called clones. They arise where organisms reproduce by splitting into identical halves. Among bacteria, clones are the norm. Among the higher animals they are quite rare, being known as identical twins, trip lets, etc.

The genetic engineering technique of "cloning" uses the rapid reproduction of bacteria into clones to multiply a small amount of useful DNA. A gene which codes for a useful protein is inserted into the DNA of a bacterium and soon there are billions of bacteria with copies of the desired DNA.

Now if we could obtain as little as one complete copy of the DNA of an extinct species, we could use cloning to multiply it. Then we could analyse it easily, comparing it with existing relatives to get information about the process of evolution. Perhaps we could even recreate the species.

There are, of course, problems. DNA is quite a fragile chemical. In life, it has to be constantly maintained to repair the damage done by heat, radiation, viruses and harmful chemicals. After death, it rapidly decomposes. Scientists have therefore looked for ancient DNA in tissues that have been preserved in some way, e.g. by pickling in brine (in the case of the quagga), by drying (mummies), and by freezing (Siberian Mammoths).

The quagga was a close relative of the zebra and was hunted to extinction by 1883. Last year, American genetic engineers extracted the DNA from the skin of a museum specimen. Only 1% of the original amount survived, but it was cloned and then compared to the DNA of the mountain zebra. It was found to be quite closely related.

With the amount of quagga skin available, it ought to be possible to extract in fragments the whole DNA. If this DNA could then be reassembled and inserted into a fertilised egg of a mountain zebra, it might be possible for a baby quagga to be gestated by a surrogate mother zebra.

The same could be true for the mammoth which also has a reasonably close relative sur-

living in the elephant. However, only tiny amounts of mammoth DNA have ever been found in the frozen Siberian specimens and it would be a truly mammoth task to reassemble a full set of DNA.

The most sensational success in this field was the recent cloning of some of an Egyptian mummy's DNA. Suante Paabo, a scientist working in Sweden, reported the extraction of DNA from the mummy of a child that died 2400 years ago. 5% had survived intact and when cloned was shown to be identical to modern human DNA.

In principle it should be possible to obtain a full copy of this mummy's DNA and perhaps even clone the mummy.

However, this has never been done with human DNA (despite a claim a few years back) and would be a pointless exercise since Ancient Egyptians are not extinct. Their genes survive in many of the people of modern Egypt, North Africa and elsewhere.

It might be informative, though, to compare mummy genes to those of modern peoples to trace population movements. The evolution of viruses carried by humans could also be investigated.

Using the technique on preserved humans in other parts of the world could help answer questions about the rate of evolution amongst isolated groups of people, the origins of the native Australians, the origins of the European population, etc.

Examination of modern DNA has shown for example that the sickle cell gene has arisen separately in Senegal, Benin and Nigeria while North African sickle cell anaemia originated by emigration from West Africa.

Finally, what about cloning dinosaurs, everybody's favourite extinct animal? Unfortunately, no-one has ever detected any dinosaur DNA. After some 50 million years, it all seems to have broken down.

But even if enough was found to make intact dinosaur DNA, we would still need to find a suitable egg to put it in. Unlike the quagga and the mammoth, dinosaurs have no close relatives surviving. Their nearest relations are the birds which are substantially different. In any case, the dinosaurs' habitats have gone.

It might be a good idea to preserve the DNA from modern species in danger of extinction, in the hope of being able to resurrect them when conditions are more favourable. The present day Noah's Ark might be a collection of containers of liquid nitrogen at minus 200°C with vials of DNA in them.

Next week, I will look at what else can be learnt from ancient bio-chemicals.

# The Sandinistas against Reagan

Gerry Byrne reviews the Panorama programme on Nicaragua, entitled 'Seeing Red' (Monday June 10).

I EXPECTED to see more bodies. TV coverage of such conflicts tends to be long on gore but short on analysis.

Atrocities were touched on. A mealy-mouthed State Department spokesman dutifully pronounced that such things happened on both sides in a civil war, and while we regret it, etc...

Rather more chillingly, an American nun, Rachel Pinal, who had worked in Nicaragua for years, reported horrific mutilations carried out by the contras on civilians while they were still alive.

Overall, though, the coverage was both sober and sobering. Nicaragua was described as one of the smallest and poorest countries in Latin America, and as having the biggest army in Central America (60,000 regulars and 30,000 militia). True, but misleading.

Obviously you can't compare the size of armed forces when one side has the United States behind them.

## Assertions

Panorama attempted to sort out the truth concerning Reagan's assertions about Nicaragua. Contrary to his claims, and on the other side those of misty-eyed revolutionaries, the Sandinista government does not pretend to be Marxist or communist.

Its foreign minister described their policy as deeply nationalist, anti-imperialist, and committed to the well-being of the Nicaraguan poor. He compared them to other Third World countries favouring economic growth.

Anti-imperialism here is understood as opposition to foreign, mainly US, intervention, not class struggle against international capital.

I see no reason to doubt the government's concern for the well-being of the Nicaraguan poor, or their disavowal of class-based politics.

So how do the Sandinistas fare judged by their own lights?

The one interview done with a member of the masses was extremely brief and entirely negative. No, she didn't meddle in politics. No, she had noticed no changes in her own life. The revolution had brought her nothing.

Hardly the stuff from which to draw conclusions either way.

## Crisis

The Nicaraguan economy is in crisis. Properly speaking, it only came into existence six years ago. Before that there was little more than Somoza's private bank balances. There is runaway inflation, rationing, and a flourishing black market.

There has been a huge influx of people from off the land into shanties around Managua.

But what civil war — especially one in which the opposition is backed by the US — has not produced these symptoms of economic dis-



Contras — armed by the US

location?

The programme was short on details of how the regime has alleviated, or might have contributed to, the crisis.

We got a tantalising glimpse of a riot in Managua which began which began, we are told, as a protest against rising prices and restrictions on trade unions, and turned against government troops.

After Somoza's overthrow his lands were redistributed to peasant cooperatives. The government embarked on a massive literacy, education and health programme. But, 60% of the economy remains in private hands.

## Austerity

That national capital can continue to exploit unhindered suggests that the brunt of the austerity measures falls on the workers and peasants.

But it is only guesswork. We are not shown to what the degree the Sandinista organs of popular power can effectively express the interests of the masses, or to what extent independent alternatives are developing.

True to the traditions of bourgeois liberal journalism, Panorama was more concerned with the fate of the pro-US paper 'La Prensa' and with the ex-National Guard contras than with the workers and peasants who fought Somoza.

The censorship may not be so overt, but we're still waiting for the truth about the Falklands War.

## Penalty

One of the first acts of the government was the abolition of the death penalty. There are few people who take up arms against a state who can expect to be treated as lightly by the state as the Nicaraguan contras.

The programme made clear that Reagan has done everything in his power to overthrow the government of

Nicaragua short of declaring all-out war

## Garrison

The programme showed a US base in Honduras with a permanent garrison of 1,000 US troops which regularly plays host to 10,000 more on 'exercises'.

It is not necessary to take

the Sandinista government as a model in order to oppose the US war. It is slanderous to say that Nicaragua is less democratic than its neighbours or indeed than the bulk of the 'Free World'. But it is daft, on the basis of populist rhetoric, to give the Sandinista government, unasked-for, the leadership of the world revolution.



Songs of liberty and rebellion



# Moderation

The US anti-slavery campaigner William Lloyd Garrison wrote the following in the first editorial of his paper, 'The Liberator', in January 1830.

Garrison and his paper championed the blacks for 35 years, until 1865, when, following the Union's victory in the Civil War, slavery was at last abolished.

Assenting to the 'self-evident truth' maintained in the American Declaration of Independence, 'that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights — among which are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness', I shall strenuously contend for the immediate enfranchisement of our slave population.

In Parkstreet Church, on the Fourth of July 1829, in an address on slavery, I unreflectingly assented to the popular but pernicious doctrine of gradual abolition. I seize this opportunity to make a full and unequivocal recantation, and thus public-

ly to ask pardon of my God, of my country, and of my brethren the poor slaves, for having uttered a sentiment so full of timidity, injustice and absurdity...

I am aware that many object to the severity of my language; but is there not cause for severity? I will be harsh as truth, as uncomprising as justice. On this subject, I do not wish to think, or speak, or write, with moderation.

No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire, to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; — but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present.

I am in earnest — I will not equivocate — I will not excuse — I will not retreat a single inch — and I will be heard. The apathy of the people is enough to make every statue leap from its pedestal, and to hasten the resurrection of the dead.





# A new attack

Overnight, the closed shop in British Rail has been declared no more.

BR management has broken off its arrangement with the unions. It plans to write to 150,000 rail workers giving the green light to anybody who wants to leave the union, and still have a job on BR.

The BR Board say that the 1976 closed shop agreement does not conform with the 1982 Employment Act. According to this law, closed shops need an 80% majority vote to be legally binding.

Unions are obliged by the law

**By Rob Dawber, secretary Sheffield District Council NUR (in personal capacity)**

to hold ballots on the closed shop. The NUR is bound by conference policy not to comply with the Employment Act.

The attack on the closed shop followed fast on another management letter giving NUR and ASLEF, the two main rail unions, seven days to pay up £200,000 'damages' for strike action last year in solidarity with the miners.

The BR Board are determined to make use of the anti-trade union laws and the Tory government is right behind them.

These attacks on rail unions are only the beginning. New proposals for a further round of anti-union legislation are reported to be in the pipeline.

No serious resistance to the laws has been organised by the labour movement. Even the sequestration of South Wales and national NUM funds, which should have been met with general strike action, passed without the trade union leaders taking any action.

## Defend Bill Mullins

**By Jim Denham**

BILL Mullins, a long standing Labour Party member and TGWU activist, has been expelled from Warley West Labour Party.

The main charge against Mullins was that he was seen selling 'Militant' in Rhyl, nearly 100 miles away!

Warley West party has one of the smallest memberships in the West Midlands, and right-wing constituency secretary Bill Thomas makes sure that applicants for membership are closely vetted. When Mullins transferred from Warley East a few months ago Thomas made little secret of his intention to find some grounds to get rid of him.

Bill Mullins has received support from numerous Labour Parties including Selly Oak constituency where he was a member for many years. He is also receiving backing from T&G branches, especially those connected with the motor industry - Mullins was a well-respected shop steward at Rover Solihull throughout the 1970s.

A new round of strikes has been started by the National Union of Teachers in pursuit of their pay claim.

Schools in Thatcher's own constituency, Finchley, have been singled out for three-day strikes. The local NUT say action could continue throughout the summer.

The teachers' dispute may go on into the new school year, Fred Jarvis of the NUT said this week. And calls came from Labour education spokesperson Giles Radice for the resignation of Education Minister Sir Keith Joseph.



# Strike to defend jobs

NUJ members at the Birmingham independent radio station BRMB are on strike in defence of jobs.

Last month the management announced their intention to reduce newsroom staff from 12 to 8. This came on

top of previous cutbacks achieved by 'natural wastage'.

In the course of negotiations with the NUJ, the management announced that they intended to impose the redundancies unilaterally regardless of existing procedure

**By Jim Denham**

agreements.

In response, all but one of the NUJ staff walked out, and the BRMB newsroom is now dependent on national independent news services plus whatever local snippets the management can pick up from the police and ambulance services.

The fire service has also been cooperating in this 'scab news service', but FBU members have now been contacted and are attempting to impose a boycott on BRMB.

When BRMB's franchise was renewed 18 months ago, they gave an undertaking to maintain a genuinely local news output. The journalists

believe BRMB has flouted the terms of its franchise.

They are asking trade unionists to boycott BRMB and support their mass pickets outside the station's Aston headquarters every Wednesday.

The secretary of Birmingham Council's Labour group, Marjorie Brown, is a director of BRMB, and the GMBU has a representative on the board of the company. The journalists are demanding that these labour movement 'representatives' declare their support for the action and use their influence accordingly.

Contact: NUJ Regional Office, Daimler House, Paradise Circus, Queensway Birmingham.

# Action from NCU?

THE National Communications Union (NCU, created by a merger between POEU and CPSA P&T group) is poised to take action for the union's 12 per cent straight wage claim.

That was the decision from last week's annual conferences of both clerical and engineering groups.

It was the first annual conference since the merger between the clerical section (CPSA P&T group), with 40,000 members, and the engineering group (POEU), with 122,000.

**By Ricky Houston**

The clerical section also endorsed the engineering section's broad strategy document on new technology, including the immediate demand for a 32 hour four-day week. A special conference on action will be called by November this year at the latest.

British Telecom's 6.75% offer - 'with more strings than a concert harp', in the words of Dave Ward, engineering group executive member - was overwhelmingly rejected on a recommendation from the executive.

One of BT's strings was a £40 per week wage cut for a section of members.

Candidates supported by the Broad Left gained a number of seats on the clerical section EC and maintained a majority on the main engineering group EC.

Although the union is poised to weld its clerical and engineering unity in action over pay, the engineering group EC's successful opposition to an August 1 overtime ban date was quite concern-

ing. Virtually the same EC last year (in the POEU) caved in shortly after the conference when the employers improved their offer slightly.

The engineering group EC accepted that not enough campaigning had been done among the mass membership for the shorter working week and promised to improve this before the special conference.

An immediate campaign will be needed by Broad Left supporters to pressurise their NEC into standing firm on the 12% claim and to prevent any moves by the NEC to go for a ballot as required under the Tories' anti-union legislation before taking action.

This is especially important following a recent letter to branches from the NEC saying that every decision on whether to comply with the legislation will be taken on its merits. The temptation to go for a ballot on pay will be strong, but it would set a precedent for any other industrial action such as may be proposed on the 32 hour, 4 day week, or for spreading any industrial action on jobs from areas facing redundancies.

**Socialist FORUM**  
50p Number 2 March/April 1985

**Ireland 69-85**

**Why Militant and IRSP are twins**  
Editorial: Dialogue yes, ve. triloquism no!  
Militant is record on Ireland... and ours  
James Connolly  
For a federal united Ireland!  
16 years of conflict

50p plus postage from SO, 214 Sicker Court, London N1 2SY

**Get ORGANISED!**

Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance - groups are established in most large towns. We ask £5 a month minimum (£1 unwaged) contribution from supporters.

I want to become a Socialist Organiser supporter/I want more information.

Name .....

Address .....

Send to: Socialist Organiser, 214 Sicker Court, London N1 2SY.

## Contact

**BASINGSTOKE.** Contact: Alan Fraser, 20 Cotswold Close. SO is sold in the Town Centre, outside Dolcis, 12.30-1.30. Meetings: alternate Fridays, 7.30pm at Chute House, Church St.

**BIRMINGHAM.** Contact Jim, 194 Dawlish Rd, Selly Oak.

**CARDIFF.** Contact: Martin, 492988. SO is sold at the 108 Bookshop, Salisbury Rd. Meetings: alternate Sundays, 7pm, at 56 Richards Tce, Adamstown.

**COVENTRY.** Contact: Bryan, 55 George Eliot Rd. SO is sold at the Wedge bookshop and on Thursdays and Fridays at Warwick University.

Meetings every Thursday, 7.30: contact for details.

**COLCHESTER:** contact c/o London.

**DURHAM.** Contact Gary, 0783 860506. SO is sold at the Community Co-op bookshop, Old Elvet, and Saturday 11am-2pm in the Market Place.

**DERBY, WORKSOP:** contact c/o Nottingham.

**EDINBURGH.** Contact c/o Glasgow.

**GLASGOW.** Contact Stan, 63 Dixon Ave, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at 'Changes' bookshop, at Partick underground (Friday teatime), and at Hamilton shopping arcade (Saturday morning). For meetings, see paper sellers.

**HARROGATE, SCARBOROUGH:** Contact c/o York.

**LEEDS, DONCASTER, HUDDERSFIELD:** Contact c/o London.

**LEICESTER.** Contact c/o London.

**MANCHESTER.** Contact Tony, 42 Duxbury Sq. SO is sold at Grass Roots bookshop, and Thursday 6pm-7pm outside Quiksave, Rusholme. Meetings: alternate Sundays, 7.30, UMIST student union, Sackville St.

**MERSEYSIDE:** Contact Debbie, 11 Afton, Hough Green, Widnes. SO is sold at News from Nowhere, Progressive Books, and Lark Lane Books. Meetings: Sundays 7.30 at Birkenhead unemployed centre.

**NOTTINGHAM.** Contact: Pete, 16 Drayton St; 620947. SO is sold at the Mushroom Bookshop. Meetings: Mondays 7.30 at the International Community Centre, Mansfield Rd.

**SHEFFIELD.** Contact Rob, 589307, or Dave, 348395. SO is sold outside Boots on Fargate, Saturday midday, and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Rd. Meetings: alternate Mondays, 7.30, at the Foresters, Division St.

**SOUTHAMPTON.** Contact Tony, 118 Gordon Avenue, Portswood. SO is sold at October Books and every Thursday (Millbrook DHSS) and Friday (Southampton University Students Union). Meetings: alternate Fridays, 7.30 p.m. at 118 Gordon Avenue.

**STOKE:** contact c/o London.

**STOCKPORT:** Contact Patrick, 40 Fox St, Edgley; 429 6359.

**YORK.** Contact: Mark, 39 Melbourne St. SO is sold at Community Bookshop and Saturday midday, outside Woolworths. Meetings: Fridays 7.30, inquire for venue.

**NORTH LONDON.** Contact: Nik, 278 1341. SO is sold at Highbury and Holloway tube stations, Wednesday 5pm-6pm, and at Bookmarks, Central Books, and Collets. Meetings: discussion meetings every other Thursday, 8pm at the Red Rose Club, Seven Sisters Rd; business meetings alternate Thursdays.

**EAST LONDON.** Contact: Will, 791 0247. Discussion meetings held monthly, phone for details.

**WEST LONDON.** Contact Tom or Gerry, 789 7587. Meetings: alternate Sundays, phone for venue.

**SOUTH LONDON.** Contact: Ian, 609 7459. SO is sold at Bookplace, Peckham Rd, SE15. Educational meetings fortnightly, general readers' meetings monthly: phone for details.

a socialist organiser broadsheet

**the fight for trade union democracy**

**The Broad Lefts**

What they are and what the m... be...

Order from SO, 214 Sicker Court, London N1 2SY. 'Trade Union Democracy', 20p; 'Broad Lefts', 35p; postage, 13p.



# Socialist Organiser

By Gerry Bates

LAST week the closure of Cortonwood and Brookhouse in South Yorkshire was announced, and 2800 workers and their families knew they would soon be on the dole. Arthur Scargill had no doubt about the proper miners' response to this threat:

"Faced with the latest threat the miners have a simple choice. They either accept the destruction of the coal industry, or they fight to save pits, jobs and communities."

"The struggle of the last year must not have been in vain. Britain's miners must, yet again, consider industrial action."

"At the same time the trade union and labour movement must support and join that action to save not only the mining industry, but trade unionism itself."

But the Yorkshire Area officials reacted sluggishly. An Area Council meeting, scheduled for next Monday, hasn't even been brought forward — to the surprise and anger of many militants.

Albert Bowns, Kiveton Park delegate, described the officers' attitude: "Keep everything low key; don't do anything to rock the boat; negotiations — that's the only way to fight it."

A previous Area Council meeting decided to fight closures pit by pit, through the review procedure, arguing the economic and social case for each pit. For Jack Taylor this fatalistically is the bitter price to be paid for the miners' defeat.

The truth is that the *defeatism* of the officials is itself now a big problem for militants defending their jobs.

## South Kirkby

A month ago the Yorkshire EC sabotaged the week-long South Kirkby strike by blocking the attempt to spread the action to neighbouring pits.

But it is now crystal clear that

## Back Scargill! FIGHT TO SAVE THE PITS!

the NCB is not going to be persuaded by reasoned arguments or negotiations. As MacGregor told the NACODS leadership: "We are going to continue to close mines as we think fit."

But is the industrial action that Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield have called for really possible, after the failure of the strike?

Militants in South Yorkshire told Socialist Organiser that they were doubtful. Albert Bowns expressed a common view: "The situation at the ground level is not very good; it's the grassroots that's been beaten down. There's been no resurgence of the spirit that we had during the

strike."

At Kiveton Park last week just £10 was collected at the pithead collection for the three men still sacked at the pit.

## Better

Other pits report the collections for sacked miners — an important indicator of mood — to be much better. At Wath, where 130 jobs are threatened out of the existing 660, the collections are still averaging about £100. But the dominant mood in the pits is depression combined with concern to pay off the massive debts accumu-

# Womens' charter

The Labour Party has launched a Charter for Women which proclaims as its main principle the right of women to work.

By Jean Lane  
Editor, Women's  
Fightback

According to the Charter, the next Labour government will introduce legislation

which will reverse what Tory policies have done to push women back into the home. Labour will extend the provisions which will enable

women to work.

Labour's proposed measures include:

\*giving part-time workers the same rights as those in full-time work;

\*establishing a national minimum wage to alleviate low pay, and

\*a programme to introduce a shorter working week with more flexible hours.

All of these provisions are especially important to women who make up the majority of part-time and low-paid workers.

The Charter also proposes to improve provisions for childcare and for the elderly and disabled. Women are increasingly thrown out of work, not because of lack of jobs but because of increased responsibility in the home.

The Charter says that the next Labour government will place a statutory obligation on all local authorities to ensure that all three and four year olds in their area are provided with free education, care and play facilities.

Fathers will be encouraged to take more responsibility for children by the introduction of a minimum of three weeks paternity leave.

A woman's ability to work is also weakened when she is subject to harassment. Thousands and thousands of women are forced out of their jobs because of inhuman behaviour from the men they have to work with who refuse to accept women as human beings who are neither sex objects nor inferior. The Charter proposes to make sexual harassment at work illegal.

Of course legislation alone won't stop sexual harassment. The laws against rape do not stop rape happening. You cannot legislate the improvement of men's minds.

However, the constant battling of women has made the labour movement recognise it as a problem and attempt to deal with it. Legislation could provide a framework within which the fight against sexual harassment can be prosecuted far more effectively.

The Charter is a comprehensive plan, taking up all the areas which affect women's ability to work. The Labour Party is to be applauded for taking it up, even this late in the day. The women who have organised in the Labour Party are to be applauded for forcing the Party to recognise a woman's right to work, to childcare and to be free from sexual harassment as political issues which the labour movement must act upon.



NOMPAS demonstration, London June 8. Photo: Adrian Franklin

lated during the strike.

After suffering a year on strike and then defeat, serious demoralisation in the rank and file is the least that could be expected. In such a situation, how the Area leadership leads becomes even more important that it is at times when the rank and file are more self-confident. The area leaders have two choices: Either to start campaigning again, patiently and consistently, for the only action that will be effective, building on any strike that breaks out. Or to reflect and reinforce the demoralisation, using it to justify doing next to nothing.

In fact, the situation is far

from hopeless. As Peter Heathfield has constantly pointed out, there hasn't been a week since the end of the strike when some form of action hasn't taken place. And when it has happened, its strength has often surprised the militants even in the pits concerned.

Only last week, a strike at Kellingley stopped management imposing a new four shift system on the development teams.

And at Horden, a successful campaign was mounted to stop more than a few accepting voluntary redundancies. In past fights against redundancies, this has often proved one of the most difficult things to do. At Horden, a major role in this was played by the Women's Action Group.

Flesh can be put on Arthur Scargill's call, and the ground laid for the only kind of action that stands a chance in stopping the NCB's butchery. Immediately, action could be taken along the following lines by the area leadership:

\*Follow Horden's example with an immediate campaign of leaflets and demonstrations urging miners not to take voluntary redundancies — they are selling jobs that are not theirs to sell.

\*Immediately support and, where possible, extend any industrial action that does take place.

\*Mount a clear, public campaign — including meetings, demonstrations and marches — on the issue of the sacked and jailed miners. There needs to be a clear indication that they are receiving full support — and that any miner victimised in the future will be supported too.

\*Campaign for an immediate overtime ban in response to the announcement of job cuts. Stop the NCB and the Tories rebuilding stocks again! use the action as a platform for rebuilding confidence and militancy.

# Dartfield Main must stay open

THE NCB Barnsley Area has announced that Dartfield Main colliery is to cease production in September. John Douglas talked to Bill Roby and John Pickerill, branch officers from Dartfield Main, about the Coal Board's attempt to cut jobs.

What sort of campaign have you mounted to keep your pit open?

BR: Well, we've got the support of the Barnsley Area Panel (NUM rank and file delegate body) to keep it open. At this stage we're going through the Colliery Revue Procedure. This was decided at our last branch meeting.

They've just spend £30 million at Dartfield Main on a project that took five years to be completed. We reckon we've got a case even on *heir* terms, never mind NUM policy on seam exhaustion. It only takes us 7 minutes to reach the face and machines run an average of 6½ hours a shift.

But if you argue on their grounds, you might end up with

pit fighting pit on the question of viability and efficiency, when it is jobs the whole NUM is fighting for.

JP: 550 work at Dartfield Main, not one under 50 years of age. These new shafts reach the same coal — the Silkstone Seam, as at Cortonwood, except our coal, according to MacGregor last year, is to be blended at Grimethorpe. They might be having a go at us because we were militant during the strike.

BR: Yes, we've got to keep Dartfield open, because if we don't our community will go. Those of us the Coal Board keeps will have to travel all over to go to work and the pit community will go.

JP: We're holding fire just now, going through the procedure, but when the time comes, we'll fight.

So the fight against pit closures in the Barnsley area looks likely to continue. However there is

one new development in that area, and that's the possibility of Emley Moor becoming a workers' cooperative. I asked Derek Reeves, chairperson of the Barnsley panel, what he thought about it.

DR: We don't know much about it yet. But I do know that it's only an 18 inch seam and there's 12 inches of water and that's after £10 million worth of aid from the EEC, so they'll have a job on.

With Thatcher's support it could be a foot in the door to change the legislation for privatisation.

DR: The legislation states that only 30 can work in a private mine and what with manager, mining engineer and deputies there won't be many jobs left out of the 200 or so NUM members who work there unless the government do change the legisla-



Join the Labour Party.  
Write to: The Labour  
Party, 150 Walworth  
Road, London SE17  
1JT.  
Subscription is £8 per  
year, £2 unwaged, 50p  
OAPs.