

Socialist Organiser

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Labour must back

AMNESTY!

By Tony Benn MP

The Campaign Group of Labour MPs has decided to introduce an Amnesty Bill into the House of Commons under which all those who were fined or imprisoned as a result of their activities during the miners' strike will be given a Pardon which will wipe out all their sentences.

This Bill is based upon the Ordinance signed by Lord Soames, who as the last Conservative Governor of Rhodesia, granted a pardon to Mr Ian Smith and all those who supported him during the period of his illegal regime there.

This Bill is being presented to Parliament now, as part of the campaign for a total amnesty which will go to the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Conference this autumn.

The labour movement will expect the next Labour government to provide a complete amnesty and pardons for all those who were punished for their courageous and principled stand in support of the mining communities over the last eighteen months, and will go on pressing until such an amnesty is granted.

Tony Benn was speaking at the Yorkshire Miners' Gala.

The Southern Rhodesia Amnesty (General Pardon) Ordinance 1980 was signed by Lord Soames on March 20 1980 and its first provision was as follows:

"A free pardon is hereby granted to every person in respect of any act committed by him, being an act which constitutes a criminal offence".

The Campaign Group reached its decision to introduce the Amnesty Bill last Wednesday June 12, and it will be introduced as soon as the drafting is complete.



Cardiff mass demonstration against murder verdict and life sentences imposed on Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

THIS WEEK

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Scargill calls for action

From back page.

I've been reading in some intellectual magazines that one of the reasons why the miners were not wholly successful was the failure of mass picketing.

It was not a failure of mass picketing, but a failure to mass-picket, in my submission, that was one of the main reasons why we didn't have the kind of breakthrough that we should have.

There are those who suggest that the miners' strike has demonstrated a failure of traditional militancy and in particular of picket-line militancy. Nothing could be further from the truth. The miners' strike has shown how vital it is to have mass action and class commitment when you fight a class enemy of the kind that we fought over twelve months.

20 pits are being earmarked for closure, nine in Yorkshire, with the loss of over 20,000 jobs. The Coal Board has announced its intention to close 12 out of 23 workshops, with a projected job loss of over two and a half thousand, and it's inevitable that there will be a similar pattern followed in relation to the coke works, ancillary, and clerical grades.

The issues that confronted

us in March 1984 are as real today as they were then.

The British miners, each and every one of you, have got a simple choice. You can either bow your knees and accept the Coal Board's diktat - relax your vigil and concede the Board and the government are going to push through their policy - or you can say with one almighty voice that the heroic struggle of the last twelve months has not been in vain, and if they try to close our pits, we'll take industrial action.

Out of the miners' strike has come a whole new generation of class-conscious fighters. And throughout history some of the greatest struggles have been regarded by certain misinformed people as setbacks.

Who, looking back, would regard the Vietnamese in 1973 as having suffered a setback? Two years later they took Saigon and got rid of the Yanks.

Who, looking back, would suggest Fidel Castro and the Cubans had suffered a defeat in 1956? In 1959 they took Havana.

Those weren't defeats. They were steps on the road to victory. And that's what the miners' strike of 1984 and 1985 was all about.

Notts strikers win victories



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

The branch elections have been taking place in Notts. Many of them did not finish until last Friday so we have not had time to get a full picture of the results, but early indications are that ex-strikers are doing very well.

In Ollerton, for example, half the branch committee are former strikers. It's a pointer to the slow comeback we are making. We are winning things in branch meetings now. It doesn't matter particularly whether it is from the platform or from the floor of the meeting.

It is also good to see some branch officials getting elected from the ranks of the former strikers. It's a signal to the national union and to Lynk that we are not going to sit back and see Spencerism rear its head again.

And the good news is that Liptrot has been knocked out from Sherwood after I guess 15 or 20 years as branch official.

In my own branch at Bevercotes, we have taken complete control. We won all the amendments on motions to conference.

Some Notts ex-striking miners went to the Yorkshire Miners' Gala last weekend. It was marvellous to see York-

shire miners applauding the Notts strikers as they went through. We took somewhere between six and ten busloads from Notts.

Some people who attended last year's gala felt that it was rather more low key, without the singing and shouting of last year's event.

I don't know if that was true or not. Last year's gala took place near the beginning of the strike. But this year's gala was still a large event.

The speakers were well received, especially Tony Benn and Arthur Scargill and it was obvious that the leadership was trying to rally the members.

I'm still of the opinion that the only answer we have to the attacks on jobs and communities in the mining industry is industrial action.

Even though some people are saying it is not the right time, I don't think we have any choice. We have to face the attacks when they come.

We won't get anywhere if we face those attacks by sitting round a negotiating table. We've got to take industrial action.

Tony Benn's points on the amnesty were extremely well received. If all those involved in the unilateral declaration of independence in Rhodesia for fifteen years were given an amnesty, I don't see why miners who took action in defence of their jobs and communities and were arrested for that should not be amnestied as well.

Judge gives 'amnesty' to violent scabs

TWO working miners, convicted of assault after a chain attack on a striking NUM official were yesterday given conditional discharges by a judge who said a merciful sentence would help to heal rifts in a Derbyshire pit community.

Judge Brian Farrer, sitting at Derby Crown Court, ordered them to pay a total of £225 compensation to striker Alan Dunn, whom he praised for his reluctance to prosecute.

He said the dog chain attack had inflicted a serious eye injury on Mr Dunn (27).

But he also took into account the background of "insults and indignities" which working miners and their families had to endure.

Mr Dunn, a union delegate at Ireland Colliery, near Staveley, suffered blurred vision after his left eye was grazed by the choke chain, said John Bush, prosecuting. He had been hit with the chain by Peter Scoffings (24) after a row about the strike exploded inside a Clay Cross chip shop.

From the Sheffield Morning Telegraph, June 15

Scots campaign stays weak

By Alan Horn

standing demand for a "public inquiry into the mismanagement of the Scottish coal industry in order to defend the vital assets of the Scottish nation and people".

All this cuts no ice with the NCB. They have already closed Polkemmet Colliery, and since the end of the strike there has been no production at Polmaise. A question mark also hangs over the future of the Killoch and Barony pits in Ayrshire.

At the Scottish NUM conference on June 12-13, the miners

In Scotland 203 miners have now been sacked as a result of the year-long strike, and the figure is likely to increase as the courts continue to dish out more class justice. No victimised miner has been reinstated.

The leadership of the Scottish NUM, dominated by the "Euro-communist" wing of the Communist Party, has been running a campaign to win "public opinion" for reinstatement.

Their latest initiative is to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. This is combined with the long-

called for a substantial wage rise, but a resolution from Fallin branch calling for an overtime ban was withdrawn on the advice of the executive.

One delegate also pressed for a 24 hour strike against the sackings, but it is extremely unlikely that this will be taken up.

Mick McGahey took the opportunity of the conference to defend George Bolton, chair of the Communist Party and vice-president of the Scottish NUM.

Both Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield have recently attacked the assessment of the

strike in Marxism (or should it be Moderation) Today and by implication, attacked Bolton.

Arthur Scargill is right when he says that miners must consider taking further industrial action. But there is also a crying need for the militants in the NUM leadership, both national and area, to support and campaign for a rank and file miners movement which can lift the morale of the miners and their supporters.

For despite what Kinnock and his supporters may say, the working class cannot afford to wait for the return of a Labour government.

How to carry on

By John Bloxam

At the Yorkshire Area Council of the NUM on June 17 the NCB's threat to slash over 9000 jobs in the Yorkshire coalfield this year was not on the agenda.

The closest the meeting got to discussing it was to demand that the two workshops threatened with closure should, like the pits, go through a colliery review procedure.

But which procedure? The NACODS leaders called off their overtime ban with the NCB laughing in the faces.

Negotiations are due today (Tuesday 18th) between the main mining unions and the NCB on the establishment of a new colliery review procedure, but last year's 'sacrosanct' agreements obviously mean nothing.

Also due on the 18th is a meeting at the Mitchells and Darfield Miners' Welfare, with speakers including Arthur Scargill and Jack Taylor. Darfield Main, with 550 men, has been scheduled for closure within the next three months.

At the miners' gala on Saturday 15th, Yorkshire Area president Taylor talked about

carrying on the fight against pit closures. But he and the other Area officials plan no more than opposing the closures through a review procedure. The NCB and the government have made it clear time and time again that they are not going to be moved by reason or negotiation.

With no lead coming from the Area, the call by the Darfield NUM branch for a joint meeting of all branches on the NCB hit list provides the best framework for starting a campaign for effective resistance to the pit closures and to all job losses.

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Who is holding the world hostage?

ISRAELI and American governments this week passed the buck from one to the other to avoid responsibility for the lives of hostages on board the hijacked TWA jet.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres insisted that since it was an American jet, an American crew, and mostly American passengers, any decision to comply with the hijackers' demands should be made in Washington.

Ronald Reagan has pointed out that the demands are for the release of 760 Lebanese Shi'ite prisoners in Israeli jails: Peres should make up his own mind.

Both Peres and Reagan insist that the terrorists must not succeed. It's not just the lives of a few people at stake: the whole of Western democracy is being held to ransom. Or as the Daily Mirror put it: "As long as terrorism succeeds, so there will be terrorism".

Ambitions

They should know about holding people to ransom. With their nuclear armouries, they hold the whole world hostage for their imperial ambitions.

And Reagan and Peres know a lot about terrorism. Reagan's government backs vicious, murderous, terroristic dictatorships from El Salvador to South Africa, Chile to the Philippines. His marines violated the national freedom of Grenada and still threaten to do the same to Nicaragua — where he backs straightforward terrorists

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called 'contras'.

US terrorists, however, get praised and rewarded for their actions. Henry Kissinger, for example, won the Nobel Peace Prize for bringing peace to the Middle East...They could equally have honoured him for his efforts to exterminate the peoples of South-east Asia.

And Kissinger had this to say about the democratically elected Popular Unity government in Chile: "I don't see why we should stand by and watch a country go communist just because of the irresponsibility of its people".

Kissinger backed up the coup that led to 30,000 deaths.

The Israeli state, too, is full of experts on terrorism. Many of its leaders were themselves terrorists in the 1940s — that, in part, is how Israel came into being.

And in addition to systematically oppressing the Palestinian people, Israel has carried out a brutal, mass-murdering war in

Lebanon. The Lebanese mess that has produced the Shi'ite fanatics who now hold hostages is in part Israel's fault.

Reagan's and Peres' concern for the hostages and opposition to terrorism is hypocritical rubbish.

Jihad

Certainly the Islamic Jihad group, like other Muslim fundamentalists, are no friends of socialists. But many people branded as 'terrorists' by the likes of Reagan, Peres — and Thatcher — and Kinnock, for that matter — are fighting for just causes that socialists should support: Irish Republicans, Palestinians, black South Africans, El Salvadorian rebels.

Israel should release the 760 Lebanese Shi'ites; the hijackers should let the hostages go. And if the 'democratic' governments of the US and Israel kept their blood-stained hands out of Lebanon, a lasting solution to that country's agony might be a bit closer.

Labour women's sections Careerism or campaigning?

THE MAIN debate on the first day of this year's Labour women's conference was on changing the Labour Party constitution to give women equal voice and representation in the party.

Labour women's conferences have reaffirmed the same demands for many years now, but the Labour Party still takes no notice.

We still do not elect the women's section of the National Executive at women's conference. We still do not have the right to put our own resolutions to Labour Party conference.

'Power'

Unfortunately, some of the 500 women at Bournemouth on June 17 conclude that "until we have power [in the Labour Party] it is no use

Jean Lane reports from the Labour Party women's conference in Bournemouth

campaigning. Women's power is our priority" — as it was put at the Women's Action Committee fringe meeting.

This means that working class women are still not being drawn into the party, because we're not campaigning.

"Women's power"? Power to do what? Power to get women onto the NEC, Parliamentary shortlists and the leading bodies of the party. But which women?

The best way to win our constitutional rights is to take the women's sections out to the working-class women, fight the attacks that are facing them, draw them into the Labour Party, and raise a storm with the new women who can see that the Labour

Party is not in a fit state to win their demands.

The women's action during the miners' strike seems to have proved nothing to those women in the Labour Party who are stuck on "women's power". They look very much like careerists to me.

The conference is also very white. There is a handful of black delegates in the hall, fewer than in the national Labour conference.

But then why should black women join the women's sections if all we talk about is constitutional issues? Wouldn't it be better to talk about defending black communities against racist attacks?

The debate on black sections was, it's true, one of the few that raised any heat.

'Militant'

The Militant trotted out their argument about black sections being divisive and patronising. Others replied: "If we are organising women's sections, how can we deny black people the same rights?"

The platform recommended support for black sections but the best contribution came from Diane Abbott.

Black sections are right, not just because most black members want them (although Militant seem to have spoken to 80% of those who don't!) but because it is a way of organising rank and file black activists who are prepared to come into the party fighting, and force the Labour Party to take seriously and actively the questions of racism and the defence of the black communities.

But I'm still worried that the black sections may get sidetracked in the same way as the women's sections — forget the campaigning, let's get the positions.



"Women's action during the miners' strike seems to have proved nothing to the delegates". Photo: John Harris.

Delegates at national conference should prepare to argue for black sections on a political basis — on the basis of bringing socialist militant struggle back onto the agenda.

Ireland and South Africa were also debated on the first day. The arguments of 'Militant', reducing everything to the trade-union economic struggle, were defeated — but not so much through political debate but because no-one likes the Militant.

The Militant motions deserved to be defeated — but by socialist politics. Yet on South Africa they were defeated by a positively right-wing position. Labour Students successfully moved that links with South African workers be only through the accepted international trade union channels — i.e. leave it to the TUC and the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

Links

There is a desperate need in the women's organisation for a link between the question of women's equality and the question of socialism.

The mainstream of the women's sections at the moment is for women's equality at the expense of politics, while the Militant argues for 'socialism' at the expense of women's liberation.

Women's sections need to be radicalised

By Bernie-Ann Condon

AS A FIRST-timer to women's conference, I arrived in Bournemouth apprehensive, worried but excited at the prospect of playing a role at the most important event for Labour women.

I had the impression that women's conference was a meeting of radicalised and left-wing women, discussing working-class politics. The effect of the miners' strike, and the role of women in that strike, was bound to be seen.

This preconception was very quickly dented by the lack of a dissenting voice to Neil Kinnock as he reeled on about a Labour Party attractive to all classes. Not a heck-

le or shout was heard as the man who sold out the mining communities and now rejects an amnesty for all sacked and jailed miners preached to them.

As the conference proceeded, it got worse. Militant motions and amendments were defeated because they were Militant, not because of developed left-wing arguments against them.

We have heard how important it is that women politicised by the strike are drawn into the Labour Party to radicalise it. I now realise that women's sections/councils need the same radicalisation if they are to play a role in working-class politics.

Black sections continue fight

A special study group set up by the Labour Party national executive has recommended accepting black sections. But the NEC's organisation sub-committee has rejected the report.

The Black Sections National Committee has stated: "The response from constituency parties was four-to-one in favour of constitutional Black Sections...NUPE... undertook a similar consultation exercise...Again the response was overwhelmingly in favour of our demands.

"The vote on the NEC's organisation sub-committee makes us more determined than ever to fight on."

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Fight for the Tamils

THE POSITION of Tamil asylum-seekers in Britain remains very precarious.

There are about 3000 Tamil people in Britain who have expressed a fear of returning to Sri Lanka. Since we exposed the terrible danger through the wrong removal of one person to Sri Lanka, no others have been removed, but it is a knife-edge situation.

We've had support from Islington, Haringey and Camden councils in this campaign. The GLC has also assisted

By Jeremy Corbyn MP

with the provision of housing.

From Parliamentary answers I have received, it is quite clear that the government is not issuing visas to Tamil asylum-seekers wishing to leave Sri Lanka, and indeed rather less than a third of all visas issued since the restrictions came in on May 29 have been to Tamil people.

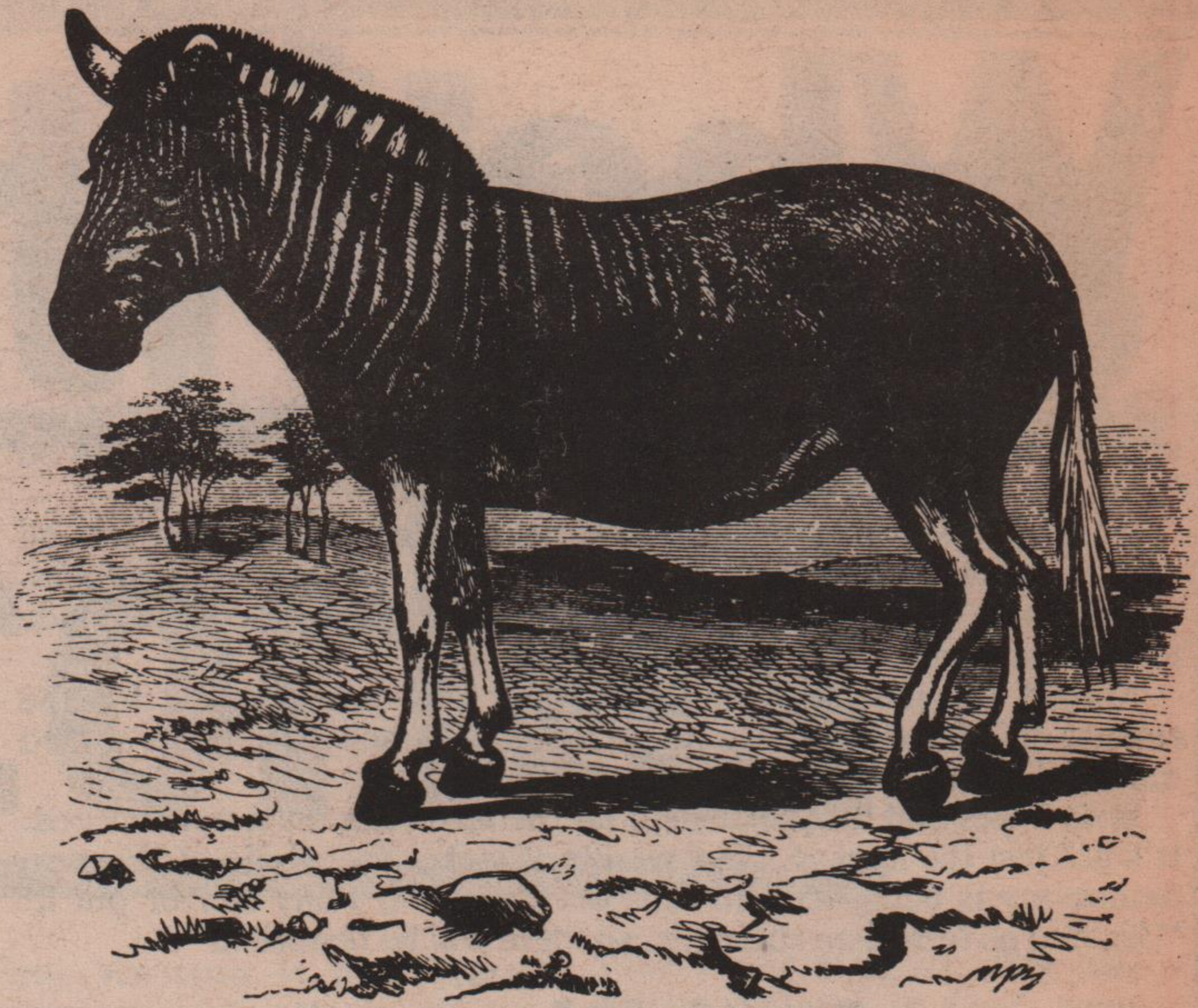
The issue has been raised in the European Parliament, and a number of MEPs are supporting us on this very crucial campaign.

I have spoken at a number of public meetings on this question, and I feel that the labour movement must treat very seriously the change in asylum rules and refugee status which the government has imposed.

Quite simply, if they can do it for Tamils, they can do it for absolutely anybody, from whatever system they

are fleeing or whatever outrages they are trying to avoid.

This week in the House of Commons we have been pressing once more for the removal of the visa restrictions, and for the admission of Tamil asylum-seekers to this country. It does appear that there is a slight scaling-down of violence in the northern parts of Sri Lanka, but information is difficult to get because of the high degree of censorship on the Sri Lankan newspapers, television and radio.



A quagga: extinct for 100 years, but its DNA lives on

Learning from fossils

By Les Hearn

Last week's science column was about cloning DNA from ancient remains. After indulging in a harmless fantasy about recreating extinct species, it concluded that the problems involved were virtually insurmountable.

This week we look at what can be learnt from other chemicals preserved in fossil remains.

Living things are assemblies of energy-rich chemicals and life is a constant struggle to stop them breaking down and being oxidised.

At death, a whole menagerie of other living things move in to digest these chemical life-savings to extract their energy and nutrients. This ensures that there is fairly little left of a dead animal or plant after a fairly short time.

Burial, either accidental or intentional, tends to slow the process down, as does dehydration or freezing, because scavengers find it difficult to operate under such conditions.

Even so, the most interesting chemical, DNA, soon goes. Even in the frozen mammoths of Siberia only a tiny fraction of DNA persists after some 30,000 years, a mere blink of the eye in the history of the Earth.

Some of the chemicals of life can persist for much greater periods. Natural gas, oil, tar and coal are the heated and pressurised remains of plants and animals that died hundreds of millions of years ago. More informative are the proteins. Some of these are very robust, particularly the protective protein Keratin that makes skin, scales, hair and horn.

Collagen, a protein that gives structure to skin and bone, can last a particularly long time protected within bone.

So what can these proteins tell us? All proteins are made according to the instructions carried in the genetic code DNA. The composition of the proteins can therefore tell us about the structure of DNA.

More interesting still would be information about the relations of extinct species to living ones. This can be gained for the following reason.

As species split and evolve away from each other, their DNAs gradually change or mutate at a more or less constant rate. This difference is of course reflected in the proteins made from these DNAs. So comparing the same protein from different species can tell us how closely they are related.

The comparison can be made in the following way which has been used extensively by San Franciscan researcher Jerold Lowenstein since 1980.

Lowenstein injected collagen of one species into rabbits which

then made antibodies to the foreign material. He extracted the anti-bodies and then used them to test collagen samples from a variety of species, living and dead, including a two million year old Australopithecus ("Southern Ape", thought to be an ancestor of humans) and the obligatory Egyptian mummy. The greater the reaction with the anti-body, the more closely related was the owner of the collagen to the original species used to make the antibody.

Lowenstein was able to confirm that apes and humans are more closely related than was previously thought, having split between five and ten million years ago, instead of 30 million years. He used his technique to establish the relationships of other extinct animals, such as the Tasmanian wolf (a carnivorous marsupial) and Steller's sea cow (a gigantic relative of the dugong or sea cow).

More fragile proteins can sometimes be identified as well, such as haemoglobin (the red stuff in blood). The blood groups of some Egyptian mummies were discovered 16 years ago. The hair of another mummy was used to show that its owner was the mother of Akhenaton, the heretic pharaoh who introduced a monotheistic religion and is now the subject of a musical!

Mummified or otherwise preserved humans are known from many parts of the Earth and this sort of protein analysis could be used to establish patterns of migration in prehistoric time.

Most fascinating though would be the discovery of protein in dinosaurs. This is not impossible, given modern methods of extraction and perhaps it could be proved whether birds are descended from, or are merely cousins of, the dinosaurs.

NEW GROUND
The latest issue of this journal of 'Green Socialism' has just come out.

It contains articles describing the GLC's policies for jobs and the environment; on cooperation between Reds and Greens in Europe; calling for an Eco-Lab alliance here; describing Nicaragua's policies to repair its agriculture and environment after the Somoza years; on an environmental policy for the Labour Party.

There are also replies to Neil Kinnock's claims about the Labour Party's regard for the environment, and book reviews (one by me).

New Ground is available at 60p plus postage from 9 Poland St., London W1V 3DG.

Special offer — send four 1st class or 5 second class stamps for an introductory copy.



Necking

Three male giraffes in a zoo in Taiwan have all proved to be gay. Apparently, the zoo-keepers are running out of

explanations to give visiting children, and are planning to import a female giraffe to try to convert them.

It strikes me as a bit mean all round. Suppose they're quite happy as they are? Suppose she's a lesbian anyway? Who do the zookeepers think they are?

(The story has a moral. Being gay is nature's way; and monogamy isn't).

Gap

The rich get richer... According to figures released by the Treasury, the living standards of people in the Upper Income Bracket have risen by 18.2% since 1978. That compares with only 4.6% for Lower Income Bracket. So the gap between rich and poor is increasing.

In fact, figures show that real take-home pay of the poorest single workers fell by nearly 6% up to 1982, and has picked up again only slightly since then.

Dodge

Spare a thought for the plight of Martin Gostwick.

Brother Gostwick is Scottish reporter for the tankie-controlled Morning Star. He is also editor of the Scottish Miner, paper of the Eurocommunist-led Scottish NUM. Despite valiant efforts, he is finding it increasingly difficult to maintain his balancing act.

When Scottish church leaders called for a return to work during the strike, Gostwick dutifully bombasted them in the pages of the Morning Star only to be rapped over the knuckles by McGahey for it.

Gostwick made amends with a grovelling letter in the Eurocommunist "Focus" about how he had failed to appreciate the outstanding work done by Scottish church leaders.

But now, with the clashes between Scargill and Eurocommunists Bolton and McGahey increasingly coming into the open, Gostwick is finding the going tougher than ever.

Deadly

Still not convinced about the WRP? Then glance at the May 1985 issue of their magazine 'Labour Review'.

An article in the WRP's usual hectic style describes the ten years since May 1975 as a process of ever-increasing crises and more and more victories for 'anti-imperialism'.

The clinching episode was "the incredible retreat of Israel and US imperialism from Lebanon".

"Imperialism", comments the WRP, "failed to reckon with the most deadly weapon yet invented by an oppressed people — Shi'ite martyrdom allied to the car-bomb".

So much for class struggle.

O'Shea

THE 1985 ASTMS conference at Harrogate passed a resolution giving full support to ASTMS member Dr Moira O'Shea, who was held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and is now being charged under the conspiracy laws.

The conference pledged the union to mount a campaign in her support. The resolution also called for a general campaign against the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the conspiracy laws to be organised by the union.

This resolution was supported by the Executive Council (with the proviso that the campaign would have to be conducted within the union's rules) and, significantly, not opposed by the Northern Irish delegates who are usually fiercely loyalist.

Mysteries

What would you be likely to think of the WRP's 'Newline' if you knew nothing about the WRP and happened to buy a copy during the miners' strike, or in any of the towns the WRP Young Socialists march through in their current campaign for the jailed miners?

You'd probably think it was a pretty good working-class newspaper. Lots of good militant-sounding supportive coverage for the miners. Not a word to recall that Newline deliberately set up Arthur Scargill for a Fleet Street witch-hunt (over his attitude to Solidarnosc) at the beginning of the important September 1983 TUC congress.

True, you might notice some bizarre touches. The timeless, dogmatic posturing for effect with the demand for a general strike, still proclaimed even after the defeat of the miners; the call for 'community councils' which would in effect be soviets; the jargon-encrusted assertion that Britain is now a police state ('Thatcher-Bonapartism') etc.

And if you were a miner trawled by the WRP into one of its rallies, your eyes would be opened very quickly. Thus it was with miners and their families who have gone to such rallies and found the doors locked to stop them leaving.

Still, to the casual reader, Newline would seem a reasonable newspaper, a very different paper from the Newline of two or three years ago with its pages of pidgin-Hegelian appearing under the pen of the WRP's geriatric Ayatollah, Gerry Healy.

But no, they haven't changed. Last Saturday, 15th, Newline celebrated the 10th anniversary of the WRP's 'College of Marxist Education' over four whole pages. Most of a page was given up to an advert for two College courses, on 'The Process and Practice of Cognition, a series of four studies — fortnightly course start July 8', and 'The World Capitalist Crisis and the British Socialist Revolution'.

An excerpt from the outline of Study no.4 in the course on 'Cognition' runs as follows:

"4. The Syllogism of Necessity. Lenin quotes Hegel approvingly (Vol.38 p.117): 'all things are a syllogism, a universal which is bound together with individuality through particularity...'"

After three more paragraphs in the same vein, we get to this:

"The syllogism of necessity is manifested in the national march [for the imprisoned miners] May 18-June 30

A) The demand 'release the jailed miners' manifests the connection with the world economic and political crisis and its effects upon the individual [emphasis theirs] in the conflict between the working class and the state.

B) 'Reinstate the sacked miners' is the particular which faces the individual when he is released from jail or if he is convicted.

C) 'Fight pit closures' [emphasis theirs] are the universal tasks which face all miners.

D) This means all-out conflict with the 'anti-union laws'.

E) Which is inseparable from the struggle against 'scab labour schemes for youth'."

Have you got that? The year-long strike that can inspire such a creative 'development of Marxism' as this has not happened in vain!

What do you think? Do you agree with the Ayatollah Healy? Or are you a reactionary 'subjective idealist' clinging to the religion you know?

Do you like your religion neat, and the gibberish in your diet to consist of the time-honoured 'mysteries of religion' such as the Christian dogma that 'there are three divine persons in one god' — or will you 'make a philosophical development', comrades, and commit yourself to Gerry?

Each course costs £80 and there are no special rates for the unemployed.

Thugs

The Brazilian government of Jose Sarney — which took over from the military this year — recently announced plans for land reform, which would provide 7.1 million landless farmers with their own land. This was to fulfill an election promise.

Immediately the poor farmers took matters into their own hands. Tens of thousands of squatters and their families began to occupy disputed land.

Big landlords have been hiring armed thugs to sort them out. And Sarney has backtracked rapidly — insisting that only presently uncultivated land is to be affected.

The 'democratic' government faces the problem of all Parliamentary reformers: when those with power resist the reforms, whose side are you on? Sarney, predictably, is on the wrong side.

VIOLENCE

The causes...

MOST primitive peoples — according to the Marxist anthropologist Evelyn Reed — find modern war incomprehensible.

Their societies have plenty of violence and feuds. But Australian aborigines, for example, "have no conception of the possibility of territorial conquest by armed force."

They would probably find the Brussels football violence incomprehensible, too. The fighting between fans looked primitive. But the whole system of publicity, communications and transport by which the fans were brought to Brussels is highly 'advanced'. The symbols around which they rallied — nations or cities — are highly abstract.

A primitive people might understand fighting for your family or clan or tribe — but surely not something as impersonal as a city or a nation.

It may be that aggression is a fundamental part of human nature. Probably, also, male-dominated societies accentuate the aggressive instincts among men. But on that basis different societies show a vast range of forms and amounts of violence.

Capitalism, fundamentally, has industrialised violence.

Code

The knights of the Middle Ages, who fought for the sake of fighting, did so within a code which stressed personal honour, personal loyalty, personal feuds.

Personal violence is still common today. But most of it has been squeezed into a very narrow arena: the family, where men are violent against women and adults against children.

It is impossible to know exactly how family violence today compares with previous centuries. But the evidence — for example, the fact that in feudal society rape was not considered to be a crime against a woman, but one against her husband or father — suggests it is probably less.

Meanwhile impersonal violence, and in particular the violence of the ruling class, has expanded.

The old wars of dynasties — which passed, albeit destructively, over the heads of the mass of the people — have been replaced under capitalism by wars of nations. And while the kings and lords of old had to stab and beat their enemies to death, often at some personal risk, today's masters of war can just press a button to kill thousands or millions.

Under all forms of class society the rulers have inflicted violence on the ruled in the form of poverty. Today this violence, too, is high-tech. Not the crude and clumsy methods of the robber baron, but a vast and sophisticated system of international communications, trade and finance is organising the mass slaughter of millions of black Africans through starvation.

Capitalism has also made the violence of the oppressed classes more impersonal.

When the Industrial Revolution was recent enough for the close kin networks of an older society still to be living memory,

Friedrich Engels wrote this about the great cities of England:

"The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings...?"

"And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common...The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest becomes the more repellent and offensive, the more those individuals are crowded together..."

Today, on the streets of big capitalist cities, you can fall ill, be attacked, or be run over, and thousands of passers-by will simply ignore you.

This intense alienation of human beings from each other is generally worst in the most developed, most prosperous capitalist countries. Suicide from despair (rather than from, for example, ritual obligation) is a new form of violence characteristic of this alienated society — personal in a way, and yet also in the highest degree impersonal.

We escape from the acute loneliness only by becoming part of crowds. These crowds — be they football crowds or others — loosen the real but one-sided, alienated, civilisation imposed on the individual, and create the conditions for highly impersonal violence as a means of self-assertion.

Fascism uses this fact to intoxicate ruined middle-class people, individually helpless, with the prospect of becoming part of a mighty destructive force.

Revolutionary socialism, too, depends on the effect of mass mobilisation in overcoming individual consciousness of helplessness and fear. The difference is that we aim to channel the aggression of the massed assemblies in ways which heighten the self-determination of the individual and nourish a permanent labour movement capable of calculating coolly and liberately how to change society.

Base

The impersonal, industrialised violence of the ruling classes — very far removed from basic human drives — can be removed by removing the economic basis of those classes. The alienated violence of the oppressed classes can be combatted by creating a society of cooperation rather than the rat race.

Personal violence within the family will be reduced as women and children gain in self-confidence and the stifling family unit gives way to broader and more flexible arrangements.

Capitalism has brought violence to its highest form. It has also created the preconditions for a non-violent society.

Martin Thomas
(Islington)



Violence at the European Cup final.

... The sources of hypocrisy

THE articles by Tom Rigby and Clive Bradley on the 'Brussels Disaster' in SO 231, were good for the broad philosophical and political basis from which they attacked the hypocrisy of the Thatcher-inspired sabre rattling of Tory politicians and sports 'personalities' alike.

Yet I felt that the articles never really pinpointed the real source of such hypocrisy. Jeremy Seabrook wrote an excellent piece in *The Guardian* (June 3) on the root causes of the violence and the role that Thatcherite economics played in its eruption. Basically it boiled down to two main premisses, which I'd like to develop. That:

1) The more extreme areas in Britain of industrial recession and social depression often have the strongest support for local football teams. Why? Denied the traditional working class forms of self-respect ('a decent job') and solidarity (in industrial struggle), due to mass unemployment and devastated, poor-

ly housed communities, many young workers, in particular, turn to football as the only real, tangible form of pride and self-expression. What else is there for a young Liverpool or Millwall worker to identify with but 'the team'? (I suppose some might say Derek Hatton in Liverpool!)

'Other'

In such areas, football is even more than usual an arena for displaced energy and yes, even aggression, against the 'other' side. Usually, of course, the aggression is muted — merely chanted or sung.

2) At the height of the worst recession for several years came the Falklands War, which Thatcher carefully manipulated into a major exercise in politically expedient chauvinism.

It was no accident that The Sun's vicious articulation of violent jingoism found a significant working class substantia-

tion. The mood that Thatcher exploited, and to a degree created, has been called one of "Authoritarian Populism". In practice, the leap from a passionate defence of "The Team" to defence of "one's country" is not such a big one. Both forms of populism depend on the notion of *The Enemy Abroad*. For the more subtle minds, the dividing line between "Bash the Argies" and "Kill the Dagos" is a thin one indeed.

Futile

It is not even the 'reverse side of the coin' — both states of mind are the direct consequence of a section of working class youth that have been severely economically exploited (YOP, YTS), dumped on the dole, and then, during the Falklands, subjected to emotional exploitation by the Tory Press supporting a futile war in order to further a political revival for their party.

The riot in Brussels was a spontaneous, quasi-Falklands campaign (the island in this case was a stranded Liverpool supporter(s) being bullied by Juventus supporters), fuelled by the same xenophobia that 'won' the war.

The NF probably were involved, frontrunners like the SAS. The real problem, as Clive and Tom suggest, is to redirect such misplaced working class anger towards the real enemy. The miners' strike was invaluable for at least this one thing — it allowed workers to feel their own strength in opposing the real Enemy Within.

As for the validity of football, and competitive sport in general: it is not simply a matter of our witnessing the degeneration of a traditional and 'honourable' form of working class culture. Football, it is true, has always been part of working class culture, linked to real regional variations in work, identity, accent and so on. But let's not get sentimental about it.

Apart from the fact of who owns and controls the game (not the players, for sure!), football has also always been a massive safety-valve for an oppressed class.

Escape

As for the other main reason given to support the game, that it can provide an escape route for a few working class youth skilled in the game — I don't doubt it; but then, Grammar Schools served the same function: escape for a tiny minority 'skilled' in the examination game.

It's hardly a reason to applaud such hopelessly inadequate, institutionalised step-ladders.

Sport 'in itself' (a dubious notion) may well serve as a "creative endeavour", a "major means of self-expression" for youth unused to enjoying success and self-esteem (this is especially true in schools, when mainly working class kids reject the academic curriculum for sport and more practical subjects).

But can we really talk of sport in a vacuum? It is intimately linked with political reality; not simply because it functions, like capitalism, on competition 'per se', but because of the way in which governments use it in international 'politics' as a bargaining counter, and because of the way it is used internally as another mechanism for social control.

To sum up then: you can admire football for the energy and solidarity it breeds amongst working class youth if you want; but it is an illusion because such solidarity lacks purpose. When that illusion shatters, as it did in Brussels, and the real feelings of long suppressed frustration emerge in violence, then it is false to start lamenting the degeneration of the game. The reality lies in the degeneration of capitalism that, for reasons of appeasement and profit, promotes such games, then professes horror and surprise when some of its supporters reveal the violence signifying the true nature of a system that depends on physical exploitation and violent repression for its continued existence.

Dave Gore
(Nottingham)

THE POWER TO SMASH APARTHEID

The organisation and mobilisation of blacks inside South Africa has now been taking place on a significant scale since 1973, after the previous decade of defeat.

How have the various sections of the black resistance movement responded to the changes in the apartheid state's policies and to the spontaneous militancy of black workers and students? Naturally, each section has responded in line with its own political heritage.

The African National Congress has had great difficulties in adapting itself to a struggle in which the focus is not on sabotage from without nor on international sanctions, but on internal resistance.

ANC

Now ANC President Oliver Tambo writes of a pre-revolutionary situation: 'a very rare combination of revolutionary factors are maturing... If the liberation movement seizes this very important moment and builds upon it, the prospects of people's power is within our sight'.

He sees the convergence of three factors. First, 'a regime and a ruling class in deep economic and political crisis, perhaps the deepest in [its] history'. Second, 'ferment among the people who are showing that they want not reform but a revolutionary solution'. And third, 'a movement exists with an organised following to guide the build-up to victory'.

At the same time, he pragmatically keeps open other possibilities: 'the idea of a general insurrection as an immediate way forward cannot replace the long-term perspective of protracted people's war... We must keep lines open to other possibilities'.

The main criticism aimed at the ANC in the past has been that it substituted armed struggle for political organisation inside the country. The result of their armed struggle strategy was disaster, both on the armed and on the political fronts. Now Tambo is saying that it is necessary to 'combine armed struggle with political mass actions', at the same time as accelerating the armed struggle.

This means 'less concern over civilian casualties' as far as the sabotage campaign is concerned. Tambo is calling for preparation for 'a long general

Bob Fine concludes his article on South Africa by looking at perspectives for working class politics.

'strike', the turning of black townships into no-go areas by the action of small bands of armed youth, a call to black soldiers and policemen to quit their jobs and the institution of 'people's committees' as alternatives to the black councils.

He hailed the two-day general strike in November as evidence of 'a very substantial shift on the part of workers toward acceptance of the view that they must be part of popular mass struggle'.

In my view the ANC's analysis is not precise enough. First, the idea of 'people's power' is no more than a rhetorical device used to cover and obscure important differences which exist between the various sections of the 'people' and it says nothing about the form of state for which the ANC is fighting.

Second, this is not the first time that the South African ruling class has entered into deep crisis. 1946, 1960 and 1976 were other such occasions, and each of them in the end proved to be a springboard for the recovery of the ruling class. On this occasion there is little evidence as yet that the ruling class are anywhere near being unable to rule.

Suspicious

Third, many black people are by no means convinced — and often for good reason — that the ANC represents their interests or can act as an effective leadership for them. This is the lesson of many years' experience of the ANC downgrading the day to day economic struggles of workers and of the trade unions. Many are suspicious of the ANC's efforts to subject all black organisations to their own leadership and direction.

Inside the country there are three principal forces at work and to some considerable extent in conflict with one another. The UDF (United Democratic Front) is a broad front of all who may

be opposed to apartheid. It comprises a coalition of 645 affiliated groups and claims a membership of over two million — though the UDF's attempt to gain a million signatures for its petition to free Mandela fell far short of its target.

It is formally a non-racial grouping and has attracted a number of leading liberal figures like Bishop Tutu to its ranks.

UDF

It has not managed to win over the bulk of the organised working class, however — most of the trade union movement fearing for its independence were it to join. The UDF's own organisational structures seem rather weak. It took a major role in the boycott of the new constitution (but certainly not a dominant or even a leading role). It adheres to the politics of the ANC and the Freedom Charter and espouses its popular front politics.

Within the UDF, however, as one would expect, there are all kinds of diverse views. At present about 40 UDF leaders are charged with treason and other serious offences, especially support for the ANC which remains a banned organisation.

It is unlikely that most trade unions would join the UDF unless the workers' numbers were reflected in the decision-making structures of the Front. At present this is not the case.

The second of the major liberation forces within the country is that centred around Black Consciousness and the National Forum. The main group within this circle is AZAPO.

Within this grouping there is also a wide diversity of views, ranging from black separatism on the nationalist side to socialists and Trotskyists on the working class side. There is no ban on whites joining, but anti-whiteness co-mingles with its greater emphasis on socialism.

union movement has managed to build and consolidate among black industrial, commercial and now mining workers. It has made significant strides toward forming a united trade union movement (that could mature in the next few months).

The trade unions have also engaged much more actively than in the past in political struggles, taking a major role in the boycott of the new elections, leading and providing the muscle behind the two-day stay-at-home in November, in which more than half a million workers participated — Johannesburg was entirely paralysed — and offering a working class political perspective which is nowhere else to be found.

These are the three major contending groupings as things now stand.

Issues

It is important not to confuse the jostlings for power and advantage by competing petty bourgeois groups, each laying claim to leadership, with the real class issues that face the movement.

The big underlying question in the liberation struggle is the relation between the working class and the liberation movement as a whole, between socialism and nationalism, between the fight against apartheid and the fight for socialism, between working class forms of struggle and forms of struggle which leave the working class as bystanders applauding their champions.

All parties now speak formally of the leading role of the black working class. The problem is to give this content.

After the stay-at-home in November there was considerable criticism from within the ranks of FOSATU (the largest trade union federation) that workers had not been adequately consulted prior to the action — and that the leadership was behaving too much like a middle class nationalist leadership, calling on workers to do this and that but not involving the workers in planning or decision-making.

The UDF and NFC leaders tend to 'represent' their constituencies in a much looser way, much less structured, than the trade union leaders, who put high emphasis on trade union democracy. During and after the stay-away, FOSATU represen-

tatives on the united front that organised it found themselves somewhat compromised by statements about no-go zones and the like put out by some of their colleagues. Perhaps this explains why further calls on workers to stay away from work have not been notably successful.

Workers cannot be pulled in and out like puppets, and South African history has many examples to prove this. Workers also stand to lose not just their jobs but their right to reside in an area where jobs are to be found, when they strike. They want to know that the reason is good and that their organisation is good. It is too easy to declare workers backward when they fail to perform what others want of them or, alternatively, to uncompromisingly idealise them as ever-ready to take militant action. After the two-day stay-away all 5000 SASOL workers were sacked and sent back to their homelands (though some were subsequently re-employed).

One of the most significant areas of trade union development at the moment is in the gold mines. For the Economist (10/5/85) this is where the real action is.

In mid-March the NUM demanded a general 10% rise; two weeks later it declared an official dispute. 400 union members were immediately dismissed and negotiations flopped. The following night 14,000 workers, almost the entire underground force in the Vall Reefs gold mine, owned by the giant Anglo-American, failed to turn up.

The dispute spilled over into a neighbouring mine. Every striker, 17,000 in all, was sacked by Anglo and bussed back to the 'homelands'. Two bombs exploded in Anglo's Johannesburg office on April 30. Since then negotiations have been resumed.

NUM

The NUM is now seeking a 40% increase across the board, plus danger money and abolition of job reservation. Anglo are offering 15% at most for blacks (below the rate of inflation) and 9.5% for white miners (the white, and poisonously racist, MWU has also declared a dispute!)

Since Gavin Rally took over direction of Anglo from the 'liberal' Harry Oppenheimer, Anglo has been taking an

"The largest and most powerful working class in Africa"

DEID

increasingly hard line, closing the liberal Rand Daily Mail (for supposedly financial reasons) and now taking on the very union which the company had originally invited into their mines. The dispute is still to be decided.

Such are the forces at work. We should not downplay the influence of the black bourgeoisie: of the homelands chiefs like Buthulezi and Matanzima, whose supporters have entered into bitter and lethal fights recently with township workers; and of the Asian and Coloured representatives who now sit in parliament and are claiming credit for the reforms. None of them are going to surrender their new-found power easily.

Deal?

There is talk from the government of a deal with the ANC — thus the offer to release Mandela if he would publicly eschew violence. Mandela refused and so too have the ANC. But offers of some kind of federal deal may well be on the table, with the Buthulezis and Matanzimas acting as go-betweens. Such a solution would offer little or nothing to the struggles of black workers.

The situation is a confused one. It will take more than sabotage or American sanctions, or student riots to overturn what is still a mighty regime. What is at issue is not only whether apartheid can be overturned but also with what it is to be replaced.

The black working class of South Africa, by far the largest and most powerful in Africa, may well be presented with the opportunity not merely to replace a repressive colonial rule with a repressive rule of the black bourgeoisie, but to create a socialist and democratic South Africa which would doubtless serve as a catalyst for all Africa. Such a prospect is not immediate, but the current battles may well be crucial in determining the place of the working class in the struggle as a whole.

This, in my opinion, will be determined by whether or not the trade union movement — which is at present the major organisational focus of black workers — has the capacity to construct out of their own ranks, and in conjunction with other socialists, a working class political movement. As ever this is easier to advocate than to achieve.



"The big underlying question is the relationship between the working class and the liberation movement . . ."

Israel the oppressor

The Zionist movement began as a Jewish response to anti-semitism in late 19th century Europe. The Zionists — mostly middle-class Jews — hoped to evade anti-semitism by creating a Jewish state elsewhere.

Marxists at the time condemned this strategy as utopian, a cop-out, and realisable only in alliance with imperialism.

But after the horrors of Nazism, Zionism became a mass movement among European Jews.

Over 30 years — 1918-1948 — the Zionists colonised Palestine, under British imperialist protection. Through deals with Arab landlords they pushed Arab peasants off the land. Through a policy of establishing an autonomous Jewish economy (Jewish labour only, Jewish produce only), they excluded the Arabs from employment.

Settlers

Then in 1947-9 the Zionist settlers kicked off the British harness. The ensuing war, as Britain bailed out, drove out the majority of the Arabs, or panicked them into fleeing and then prevented them returning home. Some 800,000 Arabs were made refugees. A Jewish state was established over 77% of the land area of Palestine — a country where in 1947 Jews had been only about a third of the population.

The Arabs remaining in the Jewish state — a sizeable minority, about 16% today — have been third-class citizens. Most of them lived under military administration from 1948 to 1966. Perhaps 70% of their land was confiscated under various pretexts.

Many state and quasi-state services and benefits are reserved to Jews only: for example, 92% of the land, controlled by the Jewish National Fund, is reserved for Jews only. Arab municipalities suffer discrimination as regards public services (electricity, water, etc).

Militant expression of nationalism — i.e. their actual majority politics — is forbidden to the Israeli Arabs. For example Israeli Palestinians who protested at the Sabra and Shatila massacres were jailed for "demonstrating, inciting, stoning military vehicles, and supporting the PLO".

In 1956, in 1967, in 1973, and again in 1982-5 Israel went to war against the neighbouring Arab states. In between times, Israel pursued a policy of massive reprisals for any Palestinian action.

In 1967 Israel seized those parts of Palestine which the Jewish forces had not conquered in 1948-9, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Another 350,000 or so Arabs were made refugees, many for the second time. (Another wave of some hundreds of thousands of second-time-over refugees has since been generated by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon). Since 1967 those Arabs who remain in the occupied territories have lived under Israeli military rule, without even the rights of the Israeli Arabs. Some 40% of their economically active population works in Israel proper, but they are not allowed to stay the night there.

Harassment and straightforward deportations have driven over half a million Arabs out of the occupied territories since 1967, but still some two million Palestinian Arabs — out of 4½ million Palestinian Arabs altogether — live under Israeli rule as third-class citizens or fourth-class non-citizens.

The other 2½ million are refugees, many of them still living in miserable refugee camps. Even there they are at risk from the Israeli military machine, as in Lebanon recently.

Yet the Israeli Jews are a nation — a nation whose rights must be taken into account for any progress to be possible. They have a national language, a national economy, a more-or-less defined national territory.

Despite the increasing use of Arabs as menial, low-paid labour, the Israeli Jews are a nation rather than an exploiting caste like the whites in South Africa. Despite the considerable power of Orthodox rabbis within the Israeli state, the Israeli-Jewish identity is national rather than religious.

Many Israeli Jews are atheists or only nominally religious.

Israeli-Jewish national consciousness is generally an oppressor-nation consciousness, usually chauvinist, and often shot through with open racism.

However, these facts do not do away with the reality of the nation. A majority of Israeli Jews — 57% as of December 31 1981 — were born there. A majority of adults — 66% of over-20s — are settlers born elsewhere. But most of them came fleeing persecution — including the persecution under which the Nazis systematically murdered perhaps one-third of all the world's Jews. Most of them individually have, and certainly the community as a whole has, no other homeland.

Before 1947 the Palestinian Arabs were, in their great majority, peasants. Like peasants elsewhere they were not able to create their own autonomous political leadership. They fell under the leadership of the reactionary Arab landlords and money-men. This gave their resistance to Zionist colonisation the form of wild outbursts of peasant fury, topped by chauvinist rhetoric and stained by anti-Jewish atrocities.

After their desperate and bitter rebellion in 1936-9 was suppressed by British and Jewish force, the Palestinian Arabs were politically exhausted for nearly 30 years.

Between 1947 and the late '60s the Arab states spoke in their name. In 1948-49 they talked bloodthirsty chauvinism — Azzam Pasha, general secretary of the Arab League, proclaimed: 'This will become a war of extermination and an enormous massacre' — while actually fighting to see which state could grab most of Arab Palestine for itself. In 1967, again, the Arab leaders proclaimed that they would 'drive the Jews into the sea'.

Meanwhile these Arab states were mistreating and discriminating against the Palestinian refugees in their territory, sometimes carrying out or sponsoring massacres of them (Jordan 1970, Syria/Lebanon 1976).

Experience

Out of this experience the Palestinians emerged as an autonomous political force, with Fateh's takeover of the PLO in 1968-9. The social composition of the Palestinians had changed dramatically, and there was a new leadership.

The old Arab-chauvinist rhetoric was replaced by the slogan of a secular democratic Palestine.

But the new leadership was and is a bourgeois leadership, attuned to manoeuvring with Arab states and imperialist powers rather than to any endeavour to unite Arabs and Jews from below. Its guerrilla attacks frequently hit civilian targets in Israel.

Thus the bitterness and despair — and, on the other side, the spiralling chauvinism of Israeli-Jewish society — have not been ended.

One Palestine, or

For about seven years Socialist Organiser editor John O'Mahony has held to a minority point of view among SO supporters in that he rejected the call for a secular democratic state in Palestine as unrealistic, and argued that socialists should advocate a solution to the conflict of Arabs and Jews in Palestine on the basis of two states. Here he outlines his views.

We have to support the Palestinians, as the oppressed, against Israel as the oppressor. However, what is our alternative to the existing situation of oppression?

The idea of a secular democratic state as a solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict is a good and attractive one in the abstract, but it is impossible to realise. These are distinct nations which have related to each other

with bitter communal-national hostility or unrestrained war for 50 or more years (from the 1936 Syria-Palestine general strike and earlier).

The Jews occupy a distinct national territory (most of the area within the pre-1967 borders of Israel).

The secular democratic state as we have understood it involved the smashing and destruction of the Israeli state, an end to the Law of Return (which gives Jews everywhere in the world a right to Israeli citizenship), the return of the Palestinians to all the territory of Israel. All this was expected to enfold and merge the two peoples into a democratic secular state.

The attraction for us of the idea

of a secular democratic state lay in its alleged ability to do justice to everyone concerned. The Jews would cease to be 'Zionists'. The Palestinians could return and either repossess or be compensated. The Jews would have equal rights to what they have created in the last 40 years.

It is plainly nonsense.

Nothing short of the complete, inevitably very bloody conquest of the Jews, and driving them out or slaughtering them, would be required to enforce it.

At the end of such a process, the last thing you would get would be the intermingling of the two peoples in one secular democratic state.

The idea of the secular democratic state is a mental construction incapable of realisation in our benevolent version of it. Since the PLO was re-



The desolation of the Palestinians. Photo: Donald McCullin.

Transform Israel from within

Clive Bradley argues that support for an independent Palestinian state can and should be coupled with a political struggle within Israel against its discriminatory structures.

Our position should look something like this:

We are for, here and now, the establishment of a Palestinian state. Such a state could be established on the West Bank and in Gaza, if Israel was to grant these areas self-determination.

We are for a Palestinian state with no strings. We would be against (and if we

had forces there, would fight against) any attempt to restrict or limit the real independence of that state — either by subordinating it to Israel, or to Jordan, or to anybody else.

We would oppose any conditions on the establishment of a Palestinian state that limited its independence.

To say that we recognise Israeli national rights means one thing: we are not in favour of forcing change on the structures of the Israeli state through external military force. We are not in favour of an independent Palestinian state attempting (assuming — which is a

daft assumption — that it was capable of it), or any other Arab state attempting, to 'destroy' Israel, to 'smash' the Zionist state from the outside.

Accepting Israeli national rights means that and that only. It cannot commit us to accepting that an inherently racist, discriminatory state is unchangeable. It cannot commit us to sacrificing the democratic rights of those many Palestinians for whom a West Bank/Gaza state is no solution.

We are against conquering the Jews. We are not against transforming the Israeli state from within.

two states?

organised in the late 1960s and the old 'drive the Jews into the sea' leader Shukairy gave way to Yasser Arafat, the secular democratic state slogan has served fundamentally as just an Arab propaganda weapon in a conflict which could not conceivably, by the victory of the Arabs who supposedly fought for it, lead to the creation of a secular democratic state in Palestine.

A roughly equivalent project would be to amalgamate the German and French nations on the territory occupied by one of them. The difference is in the intense level of fear, grievance, and mutual animosity that exists between Jews and Arabs compared with French and Germans.

In reality, there are only two alternatives in the situation:

- 1. Drive out the Jews (that is,

accept, that that is what military conquest — 'smashing the Zionist state' — would mean). Abandon any commitment to defend the rights of the Palestinian Jews. Or:

- 2. Create two states.

'Drive out the Jews' — most of them born in Palestine from parents the core of whom were refugees from racist persecution — has no place in our programme or world outlook. It is the programme of rampant Arab chauvinism.

That leaves the two states solution.

It would serve no purpose for us to try to define precisely where the borders would lie, or what precise relationships the two states would have with each other, and with Jordan, the Lebanese communities, etc. (If it could be achieved, some

form of federation of Israel, the Palestinian Arab state, Jordan and the component parts of Lebanon would seem to be the best framework with-in which to solve such problems as economic viability, overlapping and intermingled populations, etc.)

The point of principle here is that there is no way other than the creation of two states in Palestine to express the idea that the Palestinian Jews have the right to stay in Palestine, and at the same time to express and define the demand for the restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian Arabs. Full Arab restoration to all of Palestine is now impossible short of driving the Jews out.

This is a basic outline of my position, so I have not attempted to elaborate on any of the points made or to anticipate objections.

A democratic, secular state

Bruce Robinson argues that a single democratic state in Palestine is the best framework to advocate; the collective rights of both Arabs and Jews can be safeguarded by some form of local autonomy.

The Palestinians suffer three aspects of national oppression. Firstly, they lack a territory in which to live as a nation. The areas from which many of them came in 1948 have since been settled and are now inhabited by an established Jewish population. Many Palestinians wish to return to live in those areas.

Secondly, the West Bank and Gaza Strip have since 1967 been under a military occupation by Israel, which has combined wide-ranging repression of the Palestinians with settlement of these areas by Israelis.

Finally, there is a 650,000 Arab population within pre-1967 Israel, who are discriminated against as second-class citizens. In the northern parts of Israel in which they are concentrated, they form a majority in some areas.

As Marxists we are concerned to find a consistent democratic solution to national oppression which allows both national groups the fullest rights compatible with not oppressing anyone else. This is both because we oppose national oppression as such and because the divisions it causes prevent the development of class unity.

Secede

In most cases, we favour the right of the oppressed nation to secede and form its own nation state. In the case of Palestine, this approach is not possible because both nations lay claim to the same territory and if the Palestinians and Israeli Jews were to have a separate nation state it could only be by denying at least some of the national rights of the other group. This is both because of the large degree of intermingling of the population that exists and because the form the national question has taken in Palestine is that of driving out the indigenous population and settling the same areas.

Given this situation there are three possible approaches:

- 1) choosing an arbitrary division — such as the pre-1967 Israel border, which either leaves minorities in both states who do not wish to be part of that state or can only come about with transfers of population.
- 2. Redrawing the boundaries to allow, for example, those parts of pre-1967 Israel with Palestinian majorities to secede and join a Palestinian state.
- 3) Recognising that a democratic solution cannot be based on a territorial divi-

sion of pre-1948 Palestine.

The first option would lead to both arbitrary borders and to continued national conflict. Given that Israel would remain the dominant economic and military power in the area and that in this option Israel would remain a Zionist state, a West Bank/Gaza state would either have no room for independent action and be subject to Israeli domination or very quickly come into conflict with Israeli 'national interests', probably leading to war.

Over the last couple of months Socialist Organiser supporters have been re-discussing our line on Palestine. We have always supported the Palestinians' struggle against Israeli oppression, and that is not in question.

But among the Palestinians themselves, among their supporters, and among anti-Zionist Israelis, there are various different programmes for that struggle. Which programme to support?

Up to now SO has backed the mainstream Palestinian policy of replacing Israel by a reunified democratic, secular Palestine, in which Jews and Arabs (Muslim and Christian) can live as equals.

Some SO supporters argue that this 'democratic secular state' project, although desirable, has no grip on political reality, and that we should therefore advocate the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside a modified Israeli-Jewish state.

We print some discussion pieces.

While it might provide an immediate solution for the Palestinians in the occupied territories, it is unlikely to lead to a long-term defusing of national conflicts.

The second option tries to solve the problem by giving both Palestinians and Israeli Jews the right to decide on which state they want to belong to. This option does not seem to deal adequately with

the wish of many of the Palestinians to be able to live in the areas of pre-1948 Palestine from which they originally came. It is also not clear how the West Bank/Gaza state would be a step towards such a federal solution.

A common state — the third option — seems to me to provide the best structure for a long-term solution. Such a state would have to be based on a recognition and guarantee of the collective rights of both Arabs and Jews to maintain their separate identities. Such rights would include freedom of religion and language, control of education, etc. They could be implemented by a form of local autonomy where communities — whether Arab, Jewish or mixed — would have the power to decide freely on these issues.

Fail

A number of objections have been raised to this. Firstly, that it would fail because what both the Palestinians and Israelis want is their own national rights, including the right to a separate territory. However, if that right can only be granted at the expense of the other national group's rights, then part of any process of solving the national conflict would require a recognition of this from both sides. The Palestinians would have to recognise the rights of the Jews in a Palestinian state and at least a large section of the Jewish population would have to break with Zionism and be prepared to give up the privileged position they at present enjoy vis-a-vis the Palestinians.

The overwhelming weight of the concessions required to make this solution work would have to come from the Jewish population — not surprisingly, given that they at present form the oppressor nation.

This may sound a distant prospect but the conditions under which a federal solution which includes a non-Zionist state for the Jews would come about would be very similar, while the short cut of the West Bank/Gaza state option would not come anywhere near to solving the problem.

This seems also to deal with the objection that a single state could only come about by a forcible integration of two nations. Any lasting solution would have as a prerequisite considerable reconciliation of the two peoples. No external force would be able to impose a solution.

Finally, we should re-emphasise that, while we defend the rights of the Jews, it is at present the Palestinians who are suffering national oppression. We have a duty to give them our unconditional solidarity in that struggle, whatever our differences on their tactics or long-term aims.

Merging oppressor and oppressed

Some Socialist Organiser supporters who previously advocated a democratic secular Palestine have been convinced in the recent discussion that this formula is not an answer to the national conflict in Palestine, but rather a description of something desirable which might be possible after the national conflict has been resolved. Martin Thomas argues this view.

Generally no situation of serious national oppression can be resolved by proposing to amalgamate oppressor and oppressed nations on the basis of individual equal rights. To propose this in Palestine is to produce a democratic-sounding formula which actually can only be a gloss for Israeli-Jewish subjugation of the Palestinian Arabs (in a Greater Israel) or Arab subjugation of the Israeli Jews (in an Arab Palestine).

Or else it is advice to the Palestinians to become super-internationalists, and then to wait until the Israeli Jews are also super-internationalists and they can live in harmony.

Paradoxically, the 'democratic secular Palestine' slogan actually denies the Palestinians' national rights as much as the Israeli Jews'. The slogan tells the Palestinian Arabs *either* to wait until the Arab states subjugate the Israeli Jews *or* to wait until the Israeli Jews become internationalists.

But Marxists should propose objectives for struggle for the Palestinians

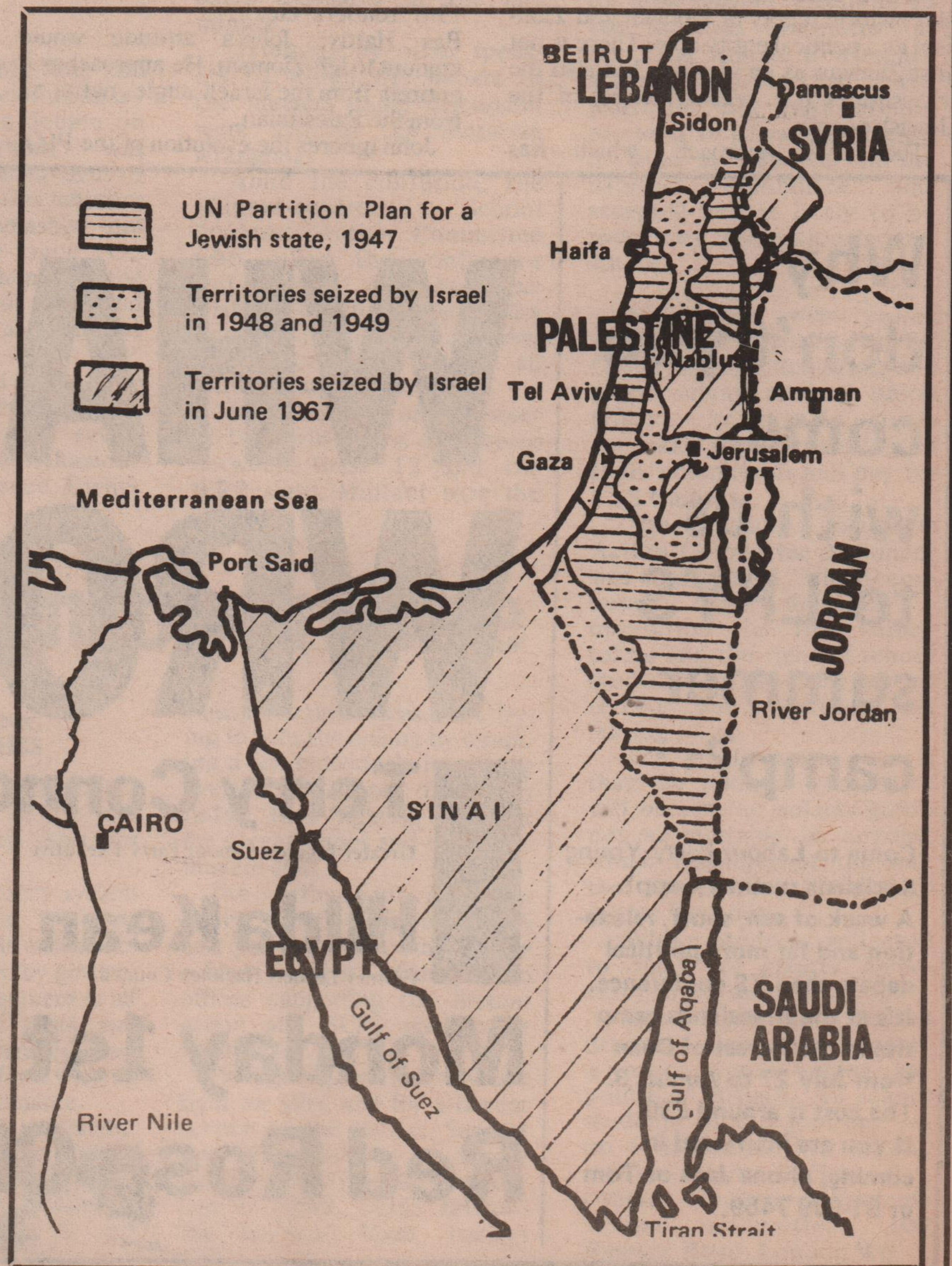
which they can win without having to rely on dubious external saviours or a miraculous change of heart by their oppressors. That, to my mind, is a crucial argument for a 'two states' position (whether simply 'two states', or coupled with a proposal for federation of those two states, is a secondary matter).

The Palestinians can fight for their own state in part of Palestine, perhaps also linked to a revolutionised Jordan; they can fight for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, and for national minority rights (including the right to secession) for the Arabs in Israel.

They can — in principle — *force* such concessions from Israel. They do not have to emancipate themselves in advance from all national prejudice for such a solution to be possible.

The Palestinians could get a democratic secular Palestine — a *real* democratic Palestine, a real merging of the two nations — only by themselves first becoming pure-minded internationalists, and then the Israeli Jews freely agreeing to *give* a democratic Palestine to them.

Far from being a solution to the national question, the democratic secular Palestine is something which might be possible *after* the national question has (by some other means) been solved. You could almost say about it what Marx said about the 'labour money' demand popular with socialists of his day: it can be realised only under conditions where no-one would any longer particularly want to raise it.



What rights for Jews?

In May 1980 the editorial board of *Workers' Action* — one of the groups which founded SO in 1978 — discussed Palestine.

The discussion was summarised in minutes taken by Martin Thomas. The issues now being discussed by SO supporters were spelled out clearly. Excerpts:

John O'Mahony: Think about the concrete implications of the secular, democratic state slogan for Palestine. It has no grip on reality. It's an ambivalent slogan, fundamentally wrong because it proposes the forcible integration of two peoples. The history of Zionist oppression is terrible. But forcible integration means forcible abolition of nationality, which is hardly possible. We're for a socialist united states of the Middle East, but we also need to uphold self-determination. We don't need to question the sincerity of the Palestinians' declaration of not being hostile to Jews as such. But what is the logic of depriving the Jews of the right to their own state? It's inconceivable it will be acceptable to the Jews. Who's going to do the forcible integration? There is no force capable of making it happen. The only even conceivable method is conquest of Israel by the Palestinians and/or Arabs. A socialist revolution is more feasible than the secular democratic state.

The secular, democratic state slogan is not 'algebraic' in a real sense, just ambivalent. It actually means just Palestinian nationalism. But the national rights of the Israelis must be part of our programme. A nation has been created — by terrible means perhaps, but it exists.

Our error: to identify with the oppressed (which is correct) but to go from that to identifying with their nationalist programme (which is wrong).

Our only real answer for the Palestinians consistent with the Israelis' rights must be some sort of partition. (Though I don't know what dividing line).

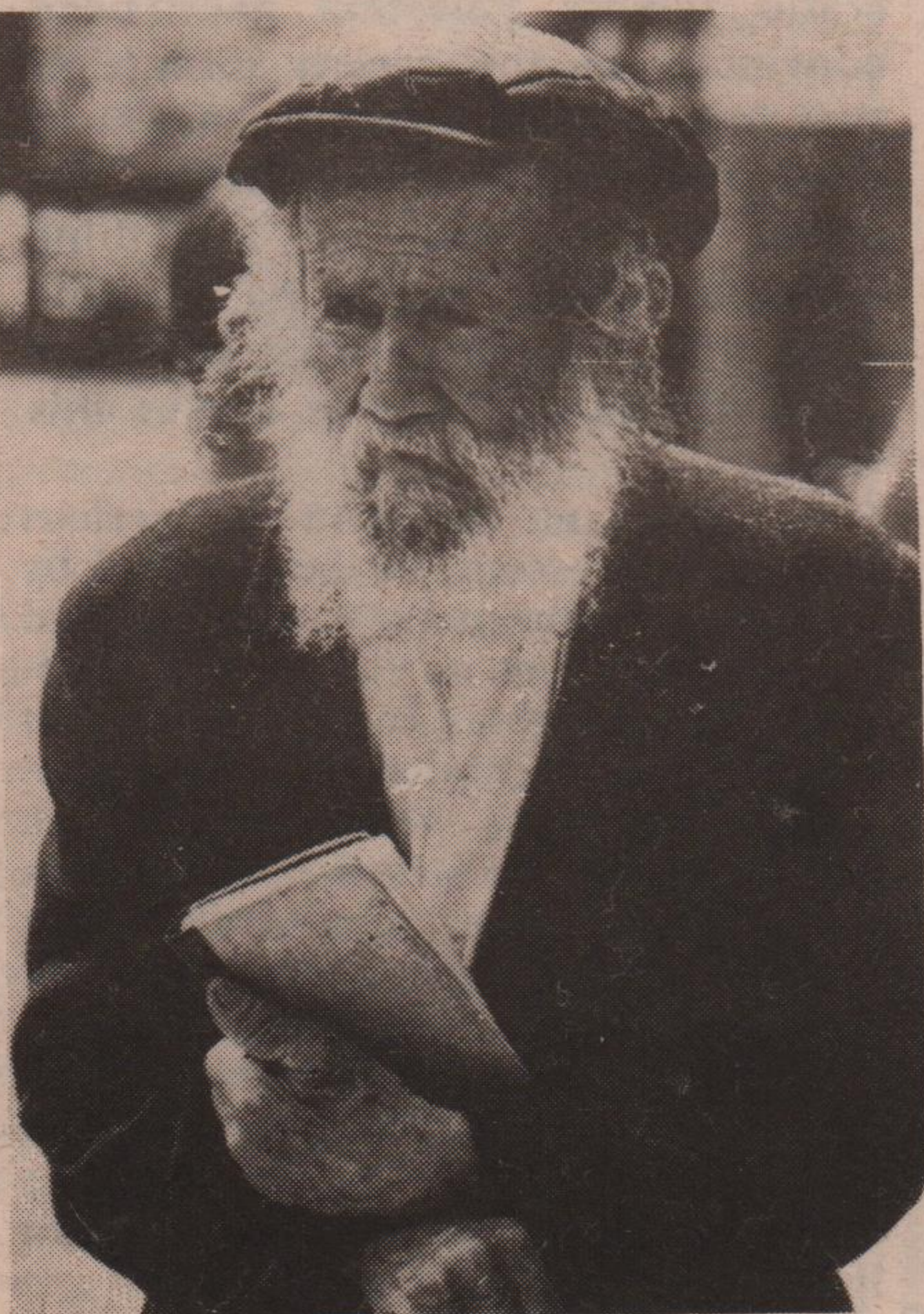
We've failed to distinguish between the historic reality of Zionism and Zionism as a political entity now. There is not just Zionism as an ideology but also the vicissitudes [i.e. recent history] of the Jewish people.

The USFI approach, which has

coloured our attitude, is woolly sentimental third-worldism.

And what about the Jews in Israel who were born there? We can't visit the sins of their fathers on them. Parallels with South Africa, Northern Ireland, etc., do not hold up. Zionism is not fundamentally about exploiting Arab labour. And, if Northern Ireland were a homogeneous Protestant state, would we advocate military conquest of it?

I don't propose raising self-determination for the Israeli Jews now. But it should be part of our programme. Self-determination for the Palestinian people — does that include the right to determine what happens to the Jews? It seems to, so I'm against it.



An Israeli Jew at the Western Wall. Photo: Donald McCullin.

Israel is a racist state? Yes it is. But aren't all states racist. What's different about Israel is the hostility to and driving out of the Arabs. But the major racist crime is now a fact of history.

Is a different Israeli state possible? Yes, it is possible: e.g. withdrawal to 1967 frontiers, etc.

Bas Hardy: John's attitude would amount to left Zionism. He approaches it entirely from the Israeli angle, not at all from the Palestinian.

John ignores the evolution of the PLO.

Fatah states it "would help Jews anywhere if they faced persecution by racists". It also recommends rights for the Jews and, e.g. Hebrew as an official language in a secular, democratic Palestine.

The PFLP say they don't think Israel is a nation — colonialism cannot be justified just by continuing a bit longer. Israeli workers, even, gain from their settler-state status.

These positions are completely different from the caricatures presented by John. There is even considerable racism within Israel against Oriental Jews. Yes, Jews were terribly oppressed. But that cannot justify their oppression of the Palestinian nation. If Israel were even curtailed as John indicates, then there would in any case be massive emigration.

Imperialism wants a Palestinian mini-state. John's attitude is similar. And where are the Palestinian refugees to go?

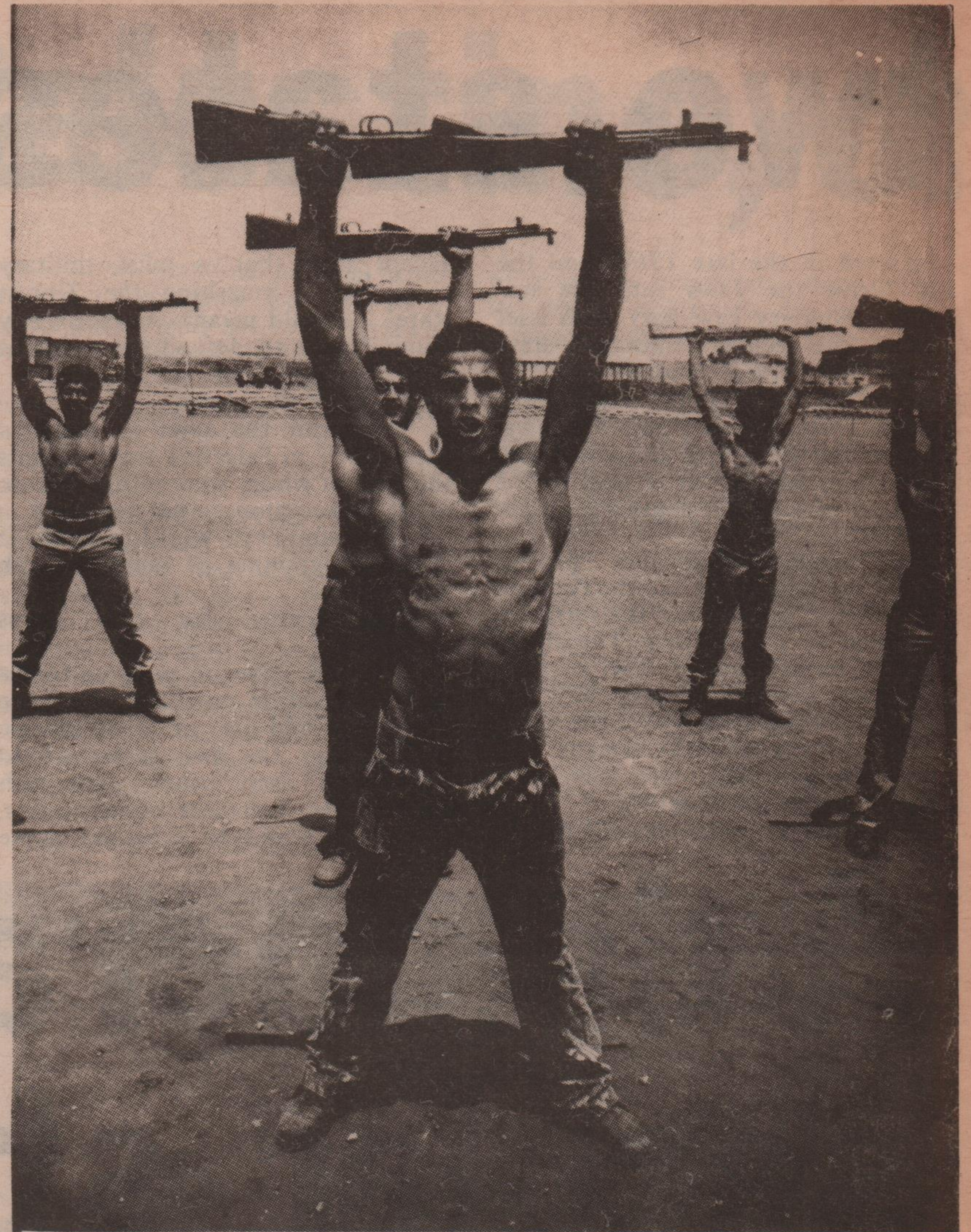
Rachel Lever: The Israeli nation is not just some cultural society, but it has a big state apparatus, an expansionist logic, etc. Crimes of 30 years ago? There have been two wars and a lot of other crimes since. The crimes continue.

But John is contradictory. The Jews are supposed to be so backward that they will quit and go to New York rather than live together with the Palestinians. And at the same time the Israelis are presented as innocents, while the Palestinians are presented as likely to cut the Israelis' throats and drive them into the sea.

If the Israelis want to emigrate because they can no longer oppress the Palestinians, that is up to them.

Bruce Robinson: Is the secular democratic state feasible? Well, is John's proposed reformed Israeli state, e.g. within 1948 frontiers, feasible? And how would repartition help the struggle for socialism? It would increase tensions and conflicts.

The secular, democratic state is not, I think, utopian — it is an algebraic slogan for the national conflicts in Palestine. John seems to confuse the rights of the Jews in the area and their right to a state. And much of what he says about the changes in the nature of Zionism is a myth. Logically, John's position would lead to arguing the PLO should give up their struggle.



Palestinian guerillas in training. Photo: Donald McCullin.

Destroy Israel, equality for Jews

This is an excerpt from an editorial in the paper *Workers' Fight*, October 20 1973. It contains two political commitments — to the destruction of the Israeli state by external force, and to full rights for the Jewish population who inhabit it. Its author, John O'Mahony, now argues that these two commitments are incompatible, rendering writing such as this politically incoherent.

A DECISIVE and crushing defeat for Israel will be [good] news for revolutionary workers throughout the world, and for enemies of imperialism everywhere.

We say this knowing that the working class rules in neither Israel nor in any

Arab country, and that on that level there is nothing to choose between them.

Yet the world's working class, including the Israeli working class though it doesn't yet know it, has an interest in the defeat of Israel and in the victory of the Arabs.

Israel is a pro-imperialist policeman in the Middle East, a bayonet permanently pointed at the throat of the Arabs and their desire to free themselves from imperialist rule.

Israel is also a racist state. The 'pampered child of imperialism' in the Middle East, the Zionist State of Israel, has by its very existence been the main force militating against the growth of independent working class consciousness in both the Arab and Jewish Middle East peoples. Only the defeat of Israel and the destruction of the Zionist state opens a way through the road block which Israel is for the Arab, and Jewish, masses of the area.

The open support of the British press for Israel has as its centrepiece defence of the "right of Israel to exist". That, for once, takes us to the heart of the question.

We are firmly opposed to the existence of Israel: we say it has no right to exist.

We are opposed to Israel's existence because its existence is inseparable from the oppression of the Palestinians, who have been driven from their homeland because, according to the way the Zionist state is constructed, they are racially unsuitable. Whilst the Palestinians are prepared to participate in a multi-racial state, the Zionist state is racially exclusive and must be destroyed before such a multi-racial state can be built.

The Jewish community has, of course, a right to reach an agreement with the Arabs, and the demand for the defeat of Israel is not at all the demand to expel or drive out her population. The only solution is to create a secular democratic state in which the Palestinians have full right to return to their homeland with compensation and full equality with Palestinian Jews.

But the existing exclusive Zionist state can only exist at the expense of the Arabs, in alliance with and under licence from their imperialist masters: such a state can never be even a normal capitalist state, because it is based on 'religion' and 'race' and deprives the Palestinians of the right to live in their own country, while every Jew in the world... is automatically a citizen of Israel...

Why don't you come with us to LPYS summer camp?

Come to Labour Party Young Socialists summer camp! A week of sun, sport, relaxation and far more political debate than YS conference. It's at the Bracelands camp site in the Forest of Dean from July 27 to August 3. The cost is around £30. If you are interested in coming, phone Jane or Tom or 01-609 7459.

WHAT WENT WRONG?

Why councils caved in to rate-capping

Terry Connolly Joanna Fawkes

Greater London Labour Party Executive

London Bridge Committee

Hilda Kean Mick O'Sullivan

Former Leader, Hackney Council

London Bridge Committee, Socialist Organiser

Monday 1st July 7.30

Red Rose Club

129 SEVEN SISTERS ROAD, 5 minutes Finsbury Park tube.

Speakers in a personal Capacity

Socialist Organiser

Electronics bosses block all unions

By Tony Allen

THE EETPU leaders have been hoist on their own petard.

Now they have resorted to appealing for support from the OECD [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a club of the richest capitalist states], against the union-busting tactics of Nippon Electric at its Livingstone plant in West Lothian, Scotland.

According to EETPU national official Roy Sanderson, an obscure OECD code of practice for multinationals puts Japanese corporations under a 'moral obligation' to recognise and bargain with English trade unions.

The company has refused the EETPU recognition, even though one third of the 250-strong workforce have joined the union. A last-ditch EETPU attempt to bring in ACAS and test factory opinion via secret ballot has been countered by the setting-up of a works council.

Nippon is just the thin end of the wedge. There are some 40,000 mostly non-unionised electronics assembly workers in Scotland employed by a group of multinationals based outside the UK. As well as Nippon, they include Mitsubishi, IBM, Motorola, Wang, National Semiconductor and Hewlett Packard.

They hold down labour costs by stopping workplace organisation. Even in unionised plants convenors have been softened up, involved in participation committees which have drawn them into open management roles and focused attention on 'company viability' rather than on the conditions of their members.

But the truth is that none of these measures could have been forced through in Britain with-

out great assistance from cynical bureaucrats like Roy Sanderson, who endorsed such packages.

The average age at Nippon is about 19 years, while the oldest employee is just 28. These workers, Nippon claims, are too immature to join a trade union!

Class conscious militants with a history of struggle remain blacklisted.

This factory was established with a £20 million grant paid out of public funds, yet now workers at the plant face victimisation if they opt for EETPU membership.

On this point Labour Party activists should press for an immediate enquiry. Militants must also force the TUC to mobilise the workers' movement against this conspiracy aimed at denying fundamental political rights.

Newham seven

THE trial of the Newham 7 is now in its fourth week.

So far, Parvaiz Khan, one of the defendants, has been beaten up by prison officers for refusing a pork pie. Maria Isen, a police witness has admitted in court that she was a police informer before the Newham 7 incident of April 7 last year.

There has been regular provocation, abuse and intimidation of pickets supporting the seven outside the Old Bailey by the police.

Support for the campaign is still vital. Mass pickets have been organised every Monday from 12-2pm for the duration of the trial.

Further details from PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7, tel: 555 8151.



Photo: John Harris.

Ron Todd has won the re-run election for general secretary of the TGWU.

His majority over right-winger George Wright was 76,840, twice what it was in last year's allegedly rigged poll. The turnout was 40%, slightly down on last year's 41%.

Although Todd was backed by the left, he has

minimised his differences with Wright and stressed his support for a witch-hunt against 'Militant'.

The left in the TGWU needs to organise to stop Todd pulling the union behind Kinnock — and to get a serious discussion on reforming the union's ramshackle voting system.

British Rail on the attack

By Rob Dawber

time to organise.

July 8 is the first Monday after the NUR's Annual General Meeting. And while the subject of DOO is not actually on the agenda, (policy having been set by the two previous AGMs), Jimmy Knapp

has been making speeches recently indicating that he would like to see the policy of outright opposition changed.

BR are once again probing wherever they can to find soft spots in the union's organisation. They then intend to push ahead with their productivity proposals and use that as a precedent

for elsewhere.

Any success for this strategy would be demoralising for our membership. We must not allow anyone supposedly representing the interests of the NUR to help them do that.

British Rail has already let it be known to staff representatives on Eastern Region Sectional Councils that they intend to impose DOO on 76 workings on the Eastern Region.

Frank Paterson, general manager on the Eastern Region, is generally known as a hawk on the BR board; but now BR as a whole has written to the NUR stating that BR intends to reintroduce and extend the "trials" so far agreed with the NUR to test the feasibility of DOO. This will start from July 8.

NUR debates union laws

THE NUR AGM, meeting at the end of June, will be taking as its first item for decision, the issue of ballots before strikes.

Three resolutions effectively call for acceptance by the NUR of the Tory anti-union laws and the fiasco on the London Underground will be used to strengthen the arguments for it.

This is probably the single most important issue before the conference and could set the tone for all that follows.

Amendments to these call for reaffirmation of present policy of non-compliance with anti-union laws, a campaign to explain to the membership, and a demand that the TUC support all who fall foul of these laws.

Reselection as an idea has found its way onto the agenda in the form of electing annually the NUR's member on the Labour Party NEC.

Traditionally it is one Charles Turnock, senior assistant general secretary, a supporter of the disgraced Sidney Weighell and, in Labour

Party terms, well on the right.

Also on the Labour Party, a resolution from my branch calls for the NUR to encourage Labour Party workplace branches and make resources available to assist in this.

Other resolutions instruct the NEC to oppose any fur-

ther privatisation "by all means it deems necessary", and others to seek renationalisation from a future Labour government of all that is sold off, while an amendment says that this should be "without compensation other than proven need".

Scots teachers' conference

By Ian McCalman

DELEGATES to the annual conference of the Scottish teachers' union EIS meeting in Inverness last week, voted to step up the pay campaign by holding monthly levies next session.

That will mean ten levies in 1985/6 as against four in 1984/5 and will obviously more than double the amount of paid strike action.

Another motion (also from Glasgow) specifying a number of days of unpaid strike action was defeated. Nevertheless, all the signs are that the lobby of Parliament jointly with the NUT early next session will go ahead.

The Glasgow-based Cam-

paign for a Fighting Union also won a continuation of the curriculum development ban until improved conditions of service are also gained. That leaves the section of the leadership who would dearly love to conclude a snap deal at some point in a difficult position.

Although a motion was passed rejecting the concept of an interim pay claim, the demand will not go away. Before the year is out we may have to consider a recall Special General Meeting

to take this step.

Many members fear that an interim claim will contradict their call for a government promise to restore salaries to 1974 levels. The two demands are not mutually incompatible, however.

The conference also passed a resolution pledging the EIS to campaign for the reinstatement of all sacked miners. An attempt to widen this to the release of imprisoned miners was defeated.

But the campaign for this was taken up at a fringe meeting addressed by John McCormack, pit delegate from Polmaise, and three sacked miners.

School students' union

By Nic Breerton

Over 150 delegates from schools all over Britain attended the founding conference of the School Students Union in Manchester last Saturday.

The union is now set to get off the ground next term and another strike is being planned for the week of the Tory Party Conference in October.

The agenda included speakers from Chile and on South Africa, together with various reports from around the schools on the school strike, and a young miner.

However, the conference quickly turned into a sectarian slanging match when the debate was opened to the

floor.

Members of Militant and the Workers Revolutionary Party ignored the debate on organisation which was mentioned only a handful of times, to argue about whether YTS should be smashed and replaced by some vague TUC apprenticeship scheme, as the WRP demanded or reformed and unionised as Militant argued.

The WRP had very little to say other than 'Smash YTS' over and over again. And their sectarian behaviour ruined the conference. Earlier

they tried to delay the conference by bringing in extra delegates at the last minute.

Attempts by other speakers to widen the debate to the matters under discussion were lost in the sectarian wrangling.

Amid the confusion, the Militant-controlled School Students Action Committee who called the conference and largely organised the strike on April 25 proposed a slate of 12 for the national committee. They were all Militant supporters.

It was a case of the lesser of two evils, given the choice between these 12 and the WRP slate. Militant won the

vote easily.

A Class Fighter proposal to hold proper elections to the National Committee at the First Annual Conference was not even accepted by the platform. But part of the proposal to allow each region to send an observer to the national committee was accepted and is likely to be passed by the national committee.

Resolutions were passed supporting the miners, against Labour Party witch-hunts and about school student union policy — votes at 16, grants for sixth form students and trade union rights and pay for YTS trainees.

The School Students Action Committee document was also passed, which contained other demands — opposition to the Gillick ruling and the right of school students to see their school records and references on leaving.

The great danger now is that the national committee will become an isolated group not accountable to anyone, which stagnates in the way that the LPYS national committee have done.

School students will need to fight for greater democracy in the union.

However, the School Students Union can become a major force among the youth of Britain. All school students should join and set up a branch in their school.

For details, leaflets, etc., contact the School Students Action Committee, 109 Ranock Road, London W6.

DHSS strike on overtime

CPSA member, Brixton DHSS

MEMBERS of the civil service unions CPSA and SCPS in DHSS, South London, are currently staging selective strikes against management offers of overtime.

On Monday June 3, 76 staff in Brixton DHSS came out. The action spread to Balham, Battersea and Kennington offices, where a total of 234 people struck.

Despite this, management still refused to withdraw the offer of overtime.

The following Monday Brixton came out again and the action was supported in Balham, Battersea, Camberwell, Peckham, Streatham, Bloomsbury and Westminster where a total of 372 people took strike action.

Overtime is used in the DHSS and other sections of the civil service to mask staff shortages and cut jobs.

As the Social Security system lurches from crisis to crisis through lack of funds and inadequate staffing caused by government cuts, so management at all levels seek to cut costs and stretch the already heavily over-worked staff to the limit with no consideration for claimants.

Unions in DHSS are under fierce attack. Since the dispute at Newcastle all levels of management have been seeking to undermine the unions in any way possible, and overtime is a

classic example. Bosses are trying to split the unions by tempting a few individuals into doing overtime to boost their pay rather than fighting together for decent wages and more permanent staff.

The overtime ban is a national policy of both CPSA and SCPS and yet the CPSA bureaucracy refuse to give strike pay to offices supporting the Brixton action and SCPS gives none whatsoever.

The fight against overtime is a fight for jobs, and for a decent service to the public. Support the DHSS strikers by sending donations and messages of support to CPSA, DHSS Brixton, 246 Stockwell Road, London SW9.

Socialist Organiser

SUPPORT LAMBETH AND LIVERPOOL!

Lambeth council in London, and Liverpool city council have decided to hold out against the Tories.

Liverpool city council has decided to make an illegal deficit budget — approved by 49 votes to 42 at last Friday's meeting. A rate rise of 9% is expected to leave the city with £117 million in deficit. A rise of 40% would have been necessary to balance the budget.

This puts Liverpool in direct confrontation with the government — and could lead to legal action and even imprisonment for councillors.

The city's Joint Shop Stewards Committee has voted to go on strike if any action is taken against any councillor.

And in Lambeth, despite letters from the district auditor saying that councillors now face 'irreversible' proceedings leading to surcharges, they still have not set a rate. Lambeth council have called an open conference from June 22 to discuss action. They are building for this conference, and making a serious attempt to mobilise council workers.

London Bridge, the across-London shop stewards committee set up to fight the Rates Act, are raising money to cover surcharges and councillors' legal costs. They are mobilising for the June 22 conference, and pre-

paring for industrial action.

Even after the fiasco of the GLC and nearly all the rate-capped councils, it is possible to organise resistance around the stand that Lambeth and Liverpool are making.

But there are still big dangers. Liverpool, and Lambeth especially, have made dramatic gestures in the past that have amounted to nothing. Lambeth council under Ted Knight first ducked out of the fight in 1980. And Liverpool's deal with the Tories last summer — hailed as a victory by Militant who dominate the council — weakened the fight against the Tories at the height of the miners' strike.

But for now the two councils are standing firm. Edinburgh district council is also set on confrontation.

The real issue now is whether a serious, mass campaign — far greater than anything in the past — can be organised.

Some people in Lambeth are critical of Liverpool's decision to set a rate, viewing this as breaking ranks from the 'no rate' policy. In fact, Liverpool's position is *stronger* than 'no rate': this sort of deficit budgeting necessarily means confrontation, it leaves you no escape clauses for 'brinkmanship' and retreats.

Action in defence of Liverpool and Lambeth councils can and

must be spread. Despite the betrayals by other local authorities, rank-and-file action can still stop the cuts and defeat the Rates Act. Other Labour councils must be pressed to commit themselves to stop debt payments if Lambeth, Liverpool or Edinburgh are penalised.



Lambeth's Ted Knight

Edinburgh deadline

Edinburgh district council has been given a deadline by the Tories expiring in two weeks' time.

If the Labour council does not end its defiance, it could be taken to court. The councillors are liable to be convicted of contempt of court, surcharged and disqualified.

But they say they will stand firm, and the local party has a whole slate of candidates ready to fight the by-elections if the councillors are disqualified.

The conflict arises out of the rate-capping system already in force in Scotland. The Tories Scottish Secretary, George Younger, has instructed Edinburgh to cut its rates and to reduce the money it spends from general rate income in housing. The council insists on maintaining a rent freeze and doing improvements to the council estates.

Stirling's Labour council could soon face a similar confrontation.



Arthur Scargill. (Photo: John Harris.)

Scargill calls for action

Arthur Scargill spoke at the Yorkshire miners' gala

The decision to take strike action was not taken because we want to be involved in strikes. We did not pick the time. We responded to an attack and it is my understanding as a leader that when members of a union are attacked, both leaders and members respond. They take action to defend those who are under attack. That's a basic principle of the movement.

The miners' strike would have been won quickly if, first of all, miners in Notts, South Derbyshire and Leicestershire had come out on strike and supported this union.

Secondly, even if they disagreed with our policy, if as members of a trade union they had respected the basic tenet of our movement and refused to cross picket lines, not only would we have won but Davy Jones would have been alive today.

Strike action

If Eric Hammond of the EETPU, instead of inviting Tebbit to open his centre, had told his workers to take strike action in support of the miners, we'd have won within a matter of days.

That's the sort of action we were entitled to expect.

There was a conversion programme — increasing oil burn from 5% to 40%. There was an acceptance by workers of scab coal. I don't blame working people, I blame the leaders of those unions for failing to give leadership in a situation like that.

OVER 900 men have been sacked, and 700 have not yet been reinstated. Fifty of our members are in jail, and their only crime was fighting for the right to work.

Those who've been jailed should be regarded as political prisoners who've been taken by the State and incarcerated because of the stand they took.

I want to say to the Labour Party leadership that the next Labour government should give an unequivocal commitment to free those who have been jailed and reinstate into work all those who have been sacked.

There has to be a campaign to free those in jail. There has to be a campaign to win reinstatement for those dismissed. And this union will never relax until every single miner has been reinstated.

If steelworkers had been prepared to give the miners the same support we gave to them in 1980, steel production would have come to a standstill in a matter of five weeks.

If Bill Sirs had been less inclined to jog along the front at Brighton and more inclined to join our picket lines, that policy would have come to fruition.

If transport workers, with a few notable exceptions, like Ray Buckton's ASLEF and Jimmy Knapp's NUR, had refused to move coal, our strike would have been successful in a very short space of time.

Fourthly, if in October last year, with an 82% ballot vote behind them, if the Deputies had refused to accept a sell-out this dispute would have been over.

But I want to make one appeal to our members. There are lessons to be learned from our dispute. And if there is one overriding lesson, above

all others, it is that you don't become vindictive towards working people.

As far as I'm concerned, as a socialist and trade unionist, I pledge from this rostrum that no matter what section of the working class anywhere in Britain, if they are involved in industrial action, this union supports them, because we cannot have dual standards.

There was an abject failure on the part of the TUC General Council to translate into positive action the resolution that was passed at the September Congress last year.

There was also an obsession on the part of Labour Party leaders with alleged violence. They shouldn't have been talking about so-called violence. They should have been doing for our class what Thatcher did for hers.

They should have supported the miners without equivocation.

Continued on page 2

Reverse Gillick!

ON Monday June 23 the House of Lords will hear the appeal from the DHSS against the Gillick ruling.

According to a court ruling won by Ms Victoria Gillick, people under 16 can no longer be given advice on contraception or abortion without parental consent.

The idea that under-sixteens are the property of their parents and cannot make independent decisions about sex is an infringement of their rights.

In practice, the effect of the ruling is to frighten young people, especially young

women, who will be less likely to seek necessary advice if it means telling their parents.

In some cases what doctors actually have to deal with is young women sexually abused by fathers or uncles.

The Brook Advisory Centre have taken expert legal advice that the distribution of leaflets dealing with contraception, abortion and pregnancy testing does not constitute the 'advice' prohibited by the Gillick ruling.

So the legalities can be contested. But the ruling needs to be fully and unequivocally reversed.

NEXT WEEK

Socialist Organiser is taking a well-deserved break next week. We'll be back as usual the week after.