

A Socialist ACTION

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STAR WARS
IS REAL

MacGregor's plan to crush the NUM

IN A carefully timed interview with *The Times* on Tuesday, Ian MacGregor unveiled his new plan for coal — the plan he will be taking to the table for 'negotiations' with the NUM this week.

He made it clear that it is the NCB that will be dictating the terms. Comparing his plan to the 1974 *Plan for Coal* MacGregor said: 'This time we must be more forthcoming. We will write the plan. The Coal Board will recover its responsibility for managing the coal industry.'

He explained his main proposal: '...while there may be fewer people, those who are in the industry will be substantially better paid if productivity goes up the way I think it may.'

In other words, the NCB will dictate the terms. The NCB will divide and rule.

It is a classic sell-out proposal — exchange jobs for the promise of higher wages. And the aim is to sow division in the NUM's ranks.

As a plan for coal MacGregor's plan means 'create one, two, many Nottinghams,' and deepen the divisions within the NUM, putting huge obstacles in the way of the future unity of the union.

There is no doubt that MacGregor's proposal has been worked out with Thatcher and the government. But of course MacGregor denies any 'political' content: 'I don't vote here — I vote in Florida,' he told *The Times*.

It is obvious that the ranks of the NUM are determined not to accept any deal that means pit closures. At the miners' gala in Scotland McGahey promised: 'There are secret meetings, but no secret deals. We are accountable.' On the same platform Heathfield insisted: 'There is no division in the leadership of the union.' But in reality Thatcher and MacGregor are now working flat out to create divisions in the NUM.

The Tories have so far concentrated on ensuring that every individual confrontation with the pickets — at Orgeave, Ravenscraig or in Notts — has been defeated by a military operation from the police. Meanwhile the NCB continue to use negotiations to attempt to divide and weaken the union.

The real response to MacGregor's plan was seen at Shirebrook on Monday — extending and deepening the boycott of coal. Making the strike more effective and building up the solidarity action from other sections of the labour movement.

At the miners' gala in Scotland Jimmy Knapp of the NUR said of his union and the miners: 'We are now the provisional wing of the TUC.' The 'provisional wing' should take the initiative and step up the action behind the miners now. So that MacGregor's plan can be consigned to the dustheap where it belongs.

EVER felt scared? Well one short item on Monday's news should have created more fear in the people of the world than anything which has happened in most of their lifetimes.

The news? Simply that the United States had successfully tested an anti-ballistic missile system. For the first time ever an intercontinental ballistic missile was successfully intercepted in outer space.

Don't believe that test has anything to do with 'defence'. The US wants a reliable anti-ballistic missile system for one reason. So that it can 'successfully' fight a nuclear war. So that it can protect the mainland of the United States while it carries out nuclear attacks on the rest of the world.

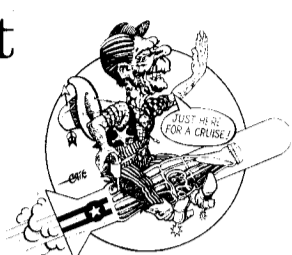
If it ever gains that potential United States capitalism, without question, would launch a nuclear war. It is precisely to gain that capability that the United States has repeatedly refused, and again on Tuesday, to enter into any limitations of its capacity to use anti-missiles systems in space. Reagan really means it when he talks of preparing for war.

Last Monday, courtesy of the United States, the world became a terrifyingly less safe place.



Socialist ACTION

Reagan's summit



Last week's world economic summit was an almost 100 per cent success for Ronald Reagan. On every key question in dispute — the nature of the arms build up, the new cold war, the US budget deficit, interest rates, the international debt crisis — the US asserted its interests not only against the working class and the Soviet Union but also against its capitalist 'allies'.

The United States' victories were not on small matters either. West European capitalism continues to be drained of its finances to prop up the dollar and fund the American military build up. The United States is imposing a pattern of arms trade across the Atlantic totally in its own financial interests. The US embargoes on trade with Eastern Europe are directly hitting West European 'high technology' firms. The continued impact of 'Reaganomics' is deepening still further the recession in Western Europe — and is directly creating starvation and chaos in large parts of the 'third world'. All those, including the Soviet leadership, who believed the West European capitalists would stand up to the United States had a nasty shock last week.

But the reason for Reagan's victory is easy to find. In a struggle between capitalists the United States holds all the trump cards.

No European capitalist state has the power to defend capitalism in Western Europe against the Soviet Union. No European currency can substitute for the dollar. No West European capitalist has any workable alternative to NATO and the 'Atlantic Alliance' — that is the subordination of Western Europe to the United States.

More important the US arrived in Western Europe after World War II with its Marshall Aid and ground forces to block socialism. Confronted with highly organised labour movements in Western Europe, and the USSR as the strongest military power on the continent, capitalism would not have survived in Europe without the intervention of the United States.

It is this reality which still dominates the positions of West European capitalism. Certainly the West European ruling classes dislike many of the current policies of the United States. But they fear the working class of Western Europe, and the USSR, far more.

Reagan, and the United States ruling class, understand that reality perfectly well. They have only one — but utterly devastating — argument to European capitalism. 'Either submit to us or we will leave you to face your own working class, and the USSR, alone.' Faced with that logic the Kohls, Mitterrands, Craxis and all the rest collapse like pricked balloons. As the United States is also the most powerful guarantor of their exploitation of the Middle East, Latin America, Africa and Asia the West European and Japanese capitalists finally will give in to Reagan on anything fundamental.

The only force which really opposes the United States in Western Europe was that out on the streets on 9 June — the West European labour and peace movements.

But then Thatcher, Mitterrand, and Kohl wanted them invited to the summit even less than Reagan did!

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A touch of class

The most important thing about Thursday's Commons debate on the miners strike was not what was said in the Chamber, but the mass presence of miners in London. The spirit of the march and rally and the behaviour of the police brought home the sharpness of the class struggle.

And it could have been brought home even more if the police hadn't stopped so many people getting into the House. They were simply refusing to allow people in. The Central Lobby was never that congested; it's been far busier on many other lobbies. And, at one time, the Grand Committee Room, where various Labour MPs and trade union leaders were speaking to a running audience, was virtually empty.

Yet there were lines and lines of police outside refusing to allow any more miners into the building on the grounds that it was full. Outside there were 100 arrests, including one Labour MP, Dave Nellist, who was subsequently released. That tells you as much about what's going on as anything that was actually said inside.

I was out there myself, and saw people arrested behind a very heavy row of police. For a while I had difficulty getting back in. They refused to accept a parliamentary pass as evidence that I was a member of Parliament!

Another small but interesting incident tells a lot about class attitudes. One Labour MP from the north east was on the terrace with about a dozen miners. (There's a silly rule which says an MP can only accompany six people at a time).

A policeman actually came up and asked the MP 'Are this lot with you?' If there'd been 50, never mind 12, City gents and their wives sitting out there having a drink with a Tory MP, the policeman wouldn't have even asked the question. He certainly wouldn't have referred to *this lot*. It might have been 'Are these ladies and gentlemen with you, sir?'

There is usually a tremendous facade of impartiality here. It's probably the one place where you would expect police behaviour to be absolutely impeccable. It's no coincidence that when the miners come to lobby we see such arrogance from the police.

All this meant that most Labour MPs felt this wasn't just another debate. The miners presence put Labour MPs in a more determined mood.

Few

There are a few who haven't been that conspicuous in their support for the miners, who were running around on Thursday with their NUM stickers on, cheering the miners on. Dennis Skinner's performance was the most remarkable I've heard in my short time here. The more the Tories reacted, the more it got Dennis going.

Pointing straight at Peter Walker, Energy Minister, he spelled it out: 'We're not only winning, but when we go back you're going to have to reinstate every miner that's been sacked in the dispute. That evil incentive schemes going to have to go - it's no good shaking your head, you're going to have to do it.'

Everyone on our side



By Bob Clay

was cheering him on. For a moment, it brought the place alive. And it ended with a great chant from the Labour benches: 'the miners united will never be defeated'. A rare moment.

Of course the House will return to its tranquil, antiquarian ways. It is increasingly just a rubber stamp. There is a growing authoritarian tendency to do things without any reference to the House of Commons at all.

What will remain after Thursday will be an understanding among Labour MPs that the miners fight is the central political issue in the country. The strike is going to continue till it's won. And there's every indication that it is opening up a whole new arena of class struggle.

I'm absolutely convinced that the 1984 miners strike is going to be the turning point for this government. It will be down hill for them all the way from now on. We won't get rid of them overnight but the NUM inflicting a defeat will be the beginning of the end. More Labour MPs understand that now than understood it even a week ago.

A number were somewhat surprised that Neil Kinnock didn't lead off Thursday's debate. To his eternal credit, Michael Foot ended his speech by saying the Prime Minister had lied. And he got away with it. (Tam Dalyell was thrown out for five days only a few weeks ago for saying that and refusing to withdraw).

Traditionally the party leader only speaks in a major debate. I would have thought that the miners debate was one. Neil Kinnock seems to believe that the party shouldn't be too clearly identified with workers in struggle.

There's a history of this now: the NGA dispute, GCHQ, Liverpool, and now the miners' strike. Whenever legality is raised, the front bench backs away.

They aren't prepared to say, as in my view they



Labour MPs join miners leaders on Thursday's London march.

should be, that we don't always think the law is the supreme determining factor, that if laws have been passed that prosecute a class war against our people and our people decide they're not prepared to be repressed by those laws and defy them, we should support them doing so.

Until the miners went on the campaign trail, until they started moving towards a victory, this was a very depressing phenomena. When any group of workers showed some sign of actually being able to effectively resist the government, then the government turned the issue into one of law and order and deployed the police or the judges.

Full credit to the miners — they've turned all that round with little active support from the rank and file, and they're winning. When they do, everyone will understand that Thatcher's invincible facade is a busted flush.

The job of Labour MPs is to pile on the pressure and speed on the victory. The PLP are at their weakest when making statements condemning all violence. They must come out into the open, as some of us have done already, and condemn what the police are doing. Miners no longer

bother to tell you that they've been arrested in a completely arbitrary and brutal manner, it's so much a part of every day life. It's about time our parliamentary leadership started making a stink about it.

Think

Perhaps they think there's a mass of respectably, upwardly-mobile floating voters who are going to be terribly shocked and put off the party if they say the police are behaving like a bunch of thugs. But what's more important than winning their votes (if they really exist) is the fact that thousands and thousands of miners and their families know that the police are behaving that way — they've been on the receiving end — and can't understand why our party leaders aren't saying anything about it.

It's very difficult to identify if the parliamentary leadership actually do support the strike. They support the struggle against pit closure; they want a return to the Plan for Coal; they support the notion that MacGregor's is a political appointment to butcher the industry and ought to be stopped.

This is a war, a class war — it's the sharpest class war in this country for a very long time — and you can't stay in the middle of the road. If you aspire to be a leader,



Dennis Skinner — he turned the stately debating chamber into a Labour Party rally for the miners

you've got to be at the front of it.

That doesn't mean the PLP should start telling the NUM what to do, directing the tactics of the strike. But there is very clearly a role for the parliamentary leaders. All the terrible things that are happening are subject to the approval of the House of Commons.

It is government ministers, sustained by a parliamentary majority, who deploy the police in this way. The job of our leaders in parliament is to resist that.

Thursday's events, and what's happening in the strike outside, give strength to the argument that Labour's parliamentary leadership must give clear and unequivocal support to the miners fight.

● Bob Clay is MP for Sunderland North. Wearmouth, the second largest of the Durham coastal pits is in his constituency.

Photo: GM COOKSON

Photo: GM COOKSON



Battle of Orgreave

IT'S MUCH HARDER closing the gates at Orgreave coke depot than it was at Saltley 12 years ago.

Then engineers, foundry workers and car workers streamed from their factories across Saltley bridge responding to Arthur Scargill's call for solidarity to stop coke being removed from Saltley depot. The police were outnumbered by the pickets and the gates were shut.

On 29 May 1984 the miners once again rallied outside a coke depot — this time in South Yorkshire — to prevent the NCB using scab lorry drivers to transport coke to the Scunthorpe works of the British Steel Corporation.

The scenes of that day were unforgettable but for different reasons than the victory at Saltley gates. The Tories and the police

were out for revenge and they unleashed a barrage of fury against the miners not seen in an industrial dispute for many, many years in Britain.

By Valerie Coultas

Maurice Jones, Editor of *The Miner* described the day most vividly saying there were three sets of animals present: 'The

police dogs, the police horses and the police themselves ... Horses were galloped into people, young and old, scything them down — truncheons rained down repeatedly on unprotected heads ... I saw one man lying on the ground, white faced and twitching. A policeman on horseback deliberately rode back over him.

'One miner had blood streaming from the corner of his eye where a member of the snatch squad had deliberately inserted his finger.' Police dogs were set on pickets who tried to escape. The riot squad, used for the first time in an industrial dispute, charged into the crowd and smashed their transparent shields into the faces of miners.

Their helmets were used as head-butts. Eighty two arrests and 32 injured was the toll at the end of the day.

A 'police state, something you are used to seeing in Chile and Argentina' had been created in South Yorkshire argued Arthur Scargill who was himself arrested with 35 other miners the next day.

Roland Whitehead explained why the Portakabin was dragged onto the road and burned. The charges of the mounted police dictated that miners made barriers 'out of what was at hand'. 'This is why the wall at the side of the road was pushed over the telegraph poles were

uprooted. Not as a battering ram as was claimed on television but to block the road.' The battle he explained was a 'set-piece confrontation by the police to avenge Saltley gates'.

Anyone who has been on the Orgreave picket line will realise that Arthur Scargill has the wholehearted support of the militant miners. He is with them on the picket lines at each crucial point and when he is there he gets tumultuous applause.

Picket

But too often at the Orgreave picket line Arthur Scargill seems to be the only leader. Members of the Yorkshire area's

executive, who should be in charge of this activity, are not leading the pickets. The week following 29 May Sheffield Trades Council urged all local trade unionists to support the miners' picket on Wednesday morning. 2-3,000 people attended but it was not enough to push through police lines 20-50 deep.

Union

The only person actually directing operations was Arthur. Jack Taylor, along with other pickets, had apparently been held back by police from joining that particular picket. One possible explanation for the Yorkshire area's

lukewarm attitude can be as Dave Parry explained in SA 61 that 'for some of our union leaders the negotiations have taken priority over picketing.'

Whatever the reason the building up of the picket line to a scale that the police dare not use violence to contain it is the only way that the gates at Orgreave will close. The NUM has to learn the lessons of Saltley as well as the Tories.

A date should be set when the rest of the labour movement comes out and shows not only that they wish to give financial support to the miners but, as at Saltley Gates, they are with them — in action against the police and the riot squads.

When Saltley gates closed

IS THERE a corner in your home where you store old memories? When I was asked to write a piece on Saltley Gates I dug into that collection of old newspapers to jog my memory.

What first hits you is the similar role played by some trade union leaders. Vic Feather, then TUC secretary, attempted to isolate the miners by suggesting that they were a special case in the fight against the Tory pay norms.

And who do you think said this? 'The trade unions must not create a serious enough industrial crisis or industrial damage to the nation's economy to cause a crisis which would topple the Tory government.' It was Frank Chapple!

And the same Frank Chapple settled the power workers pay claim inside the very pay norm the miners were fighting — much to the annoyance of rank and file power workers.

Harold Wilson's search for compromise went to the extent of trying to get Fisher Bendix workers, who were occupying their factory, to call off their action.

But the role of these people fades compared to the events that led to the closing down of the gates at Saltley. Saturday's *Birmingham Mail* was full of how we could expect an invasion of miners the next day.

I went to Saltley on Sunday. Small groups of miners from Yorkshire, Kent, Wales and the Midlands stood around talking to students and workers who had come down to show their solidarity.

By Paul Davidson, Heeley Labour Party

The first wagons weren't due until the next morning. I was a postal worker at the time, and our own union, the UPW, had just suffered at the hands of the Tories. Many of us were rooting for the miners.

Half a dozen UPW members went back to the picket on Monday afternoon. The number of miners had grown to hundreds and groups of other workers were spontaneously joining the picket line to show their support. Already a number of arrests had

been made, and tales of police violence were common.

By Monday evening the leadership of the pickets were having meetings with representatives of the local labour movement. On Tuesday hundreds of building workers marched five miles from Woodgate Valley to join the picket.

But the biggest cheer that day came when hundreds of women engineers, behind the BL banner, joined the picket. Several building workers got arrested trying to close the road, and the police violence was taking its toll, with several miners in hospital and many arrested.

On Tuesday evening the engineering unions of the Confed pledged their support for the miners and along with the trades council agreed to organise support for the Saltley picket. Other miners had been drumming up support in the factories and colleges.

On Wednesday morning a large picket at Birmingham Crown Court protested at the arrests of miners. By now there were thousands at Saltley. And that evening a call went out from the local labour movement for workplaces to march on Saltley on

Thursday morning.

When the Austin Rover banner, followed by a sea of engineering workers, came over the railway bridge we knew no traffic would come or go in that direction. Other workers from BL, building and engineering were soon to fill the other approach roads.

When finally, at 10.45am, Arthur Scargill announced that the gates had been closed there was many a wet eye. We all went and got drunk after that.

No one should pretend it will be easy to turn Orgreave into another Saltley. In 1972 workers had witnessed a series of factory occupations and industry in Birmingham was still relatively booming, numbers at shop stewards quarterlies were counted in hundreds not dozens, and unemployment was still low.

But as the massive amounts of money and food being collected for the miners shows the support is still there if it is organised. That means a day for the whole of the labour movement to go to Orgreave must be set. Involving the ranks of the trade unions can ensure that Orgreave is another Saltley and not a Grunwick.





Massive gala in Scotland

LAST Saturday saw some of the biggest demonstrations in Britain for years. Not only did more than 150,000 march against Reagan in London, led by contingents of miners, but there were 30,000 on the Scottish miners' gala.

This was the biggest turn-out for a gala in ages. It was militant and demonstrated the enormous support for the miners' struggle in Scotland.

The link with the CND demonstration in London was made with the presence of Bruce Kent on

the platform. He said it was ironic that Thatcher was so keen on a ballot for the miners' strike, but was opposed to a ballot on the missiles. He said that the CND movement and the miners had more in common than any other two issues of the moment.

Other speakers included Mick McGahey, Eric Clarke, Peter Heathfield and Jimmy Knapp who pledged the support of the transport unions.

Bill Gillespie from Sogat 82 promised to keep money rolling in for the strikers, and stressed the need for other workers to go on the picket lines. Two women from

Greenham also spoke and received a standing ovation.

Meanwhile pickets at Lochgally — the privately owned opencast mine — notched up an important victory. On Wednesday two empty buses going to collect pickets were stopped by police. The drivers were told that miners travelling over the Forth Road Bridge to picket Lochgally would be arrested.

Undeterred the miners went on picketing. On Friday word came that the police had called off their escort for the scab lorries. The drivers then decided not to cross the picket lines!



Miners' Support Committee

Bristol
c/o TGWU, Transport House, Room 1, Victoria St, Bristol BS1

Manchester
c/o FTAT, 37 Anson Rd, Victoria Park, Manchester 14

Preston
c/o John Parkinson, Trade Union Centre, St Mary's St North, Preston

Huddersfield
c/o Friendly and Trades Club, Northumberland St, Huddersfield

Vauxhall
c/o Joan Twelves/Greg Tucker, 1 Alverston Hse, Kennington Park Estate, London SE11

Southall
c/o 14 Featherstone Rd, Southall, London

Birmingham
c/o Trade Union Resource Centre, 7 Frederick St, Hockley

Ealing
c/o West London Trade Union Club, 33 Action High St, London W3

Southampton
c/o NUPE District Office, 93 Leigh Rd, Eastleigh, Hants

Cardiff
Room 219, Transport House, 1 Cathedral Rd, Cardiff. Tel: 0222 31176

Hounslow
c/o Ian MacDonald, 220 Wellington Road South, Hounslow, Middx. Tel: 01-577 3429

Medway
c/o Vince Drongin, Medway Towns Trades Union Council, 19 Randall Rd, Chatham, Kent.

Bury
c/o Brian Marden, 061-764 9648

Oxford
c/o Claimants Union, Princes St, Oxford

Leeds
c/o District Labour Party, 9 Queens Sq, Leeds 2

Lewisham
c/o Labour and Trade Union Club, Limes Grove, Lewisham, London

Haringey
c/o Unemployed Workers' Centre, 28 High Rd, Tottenham, London N17. Tel: 801 5629

York
c/o Terry, 3 Scaife St, York. Tel: 0904 25223.

Brent
375 Willesden High Road, London NW10

Birkenhead
Trade Union & Unemployed Resources Centre, Argyle St South (next to Central Stn), Birkenhead. Tel: 051-647 3904.

If your local support committee is not included here it means we have no address for it. Send it in!

Notts women on the frontline

By Maggie Coles and Mary Croften

ON A miners' demonstration in Caerphilly we heard there was a meeting of miners' wives in Chesterfield the next day. A minibus was arranged on the spot and we went.

We were met by Betty Heathfield when we arrived in Chesterfield Labour Club. She sat us down and started to talk about violence against women on the picket lines.

She had been on three pickets. At the first one the police moved the women where they would not be seen by the strikebreakers, and were told they would be arrested if they moved. Some of the younger women ran across the road where they would be seen and they were beaten and kicked back across the road.

On another occasion a police wedge drove the women back against a barbed wire fence, behind which was a big drop to the road below. Betty said even to shout out about it would have been seen as provocation and meant arrests.

From Chesterfield we went to Ollerton Miners' Welfare where we met up with wives from Durham, Derby and the Ollerton women themselves.

They also go on the picket line, and again meet with violence — one was dragged through a thorn bush, another had her head banged against a wall. But they always stop the violence when the film crews are out!

Police harassment extends into the community. When the South Wales miners came to the miners' welfare there was a line of police waiting across the road when they came out.

We next went to meet the women from the Welbeck Action Group. We were told that in the week there is a policeman on every street corner and intimidation is intense. Even kids get told to take their support stickers off.

Returning to Chesterfield the women held a meeting, the second they have had, to discuss problems with food, and make arrangements for demos and so on. The meetings take place fortnightly on a Sunday.

Sindicato de Trabajadores Mineros Pedro Roque V., Mina El Limon, Leon, NICARAGUA, Central America

From: The Miners' Unions of Nicaragua Affiliated to the Sandinista Workers' Confederation.

To: Brother miners of Great Britain.

Dear Comrades,

A revolutionary Sandinista greeting from the mineworkers of Nicaragua!

Through this letter we, the miners of Nicaragua, would like to assure you of our solidarity with the struggle you are waging in your country to win trade union democracy to sustain your struggle without your rights being suppressed.

Brothers, we would like to tell you not to lose heart; right and reason will win through when there is a willpower as strong as yours.

We know you are confronting reactionaries, conservatives and right-wingers led by the iron woman — Margaret Thatcher — but your struggle is just, and being just will win, as the old reactionary structures of capitalism are swept away by the incontestable force of the revolutionary and progressive ideas of the organised and conscious working class, guided by the best sons of the proletariat.

Forward, Brother British Miners! Your brother miners in Nicaragua support your just struggle, a struggle which will be long, cruel and full of sacrifices, but we say to you, brothers:

The struggle continues — Victory is certain.

Signed: Enoc Castellon
For the Union of Mineworkers 'Pedro Roque V.',
El Limon Mine,
Nicaragua.

Hospital workers strike to defend trade union rights

HUNDREDS of hospital workers struck at Southampton General Hospital on Friday 8 June. The strike was a response to local management's attempts to discipline two NUPE shop stewards for carrying out their union activities.

By Mike Tucker

The two stewards, NUPE branch secretary Steve Ferris and Chris Buckingham, secretary of the joint shop stewards committee, faced dismissal following the tearing up of agreed facility agreements by management.

The strike follows the discovery of a bugging device at a mass meeting called to discuss the victimisations. Management's action is seen as an attempt to break the most militant sections of the workforce before planned privatisation of services later in the year.

Wider political issues are involved, because Steve Ferris is past president of Southampton Trades Council and a leading member of the left in Southampton Labour Party.

NUPE has been at the forefront of support for the miners locally, with the facilities of the district office being turned over to

striking South Wales miners.

The strike is seen as the beginning of a fightback. As Chris Buckingham said: 'It is a measure of the strength and solidarity for the stewards who are being victimised by management.'

● Messages of support to: Trade Union Office, Southampton General Hospital, Southampton.

THE MINERS' CAMPAIGN VIDEOTAPES

(N.U.M. endorsed)

USE THESE VIDEOTAPES AS PART OF THE CAMPAIGN — ORGANISE A SHOWING FOR YOUR LODGE, CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE, UNION BRANCH, TRADES COUNCIL, COMMUNITY GROUP... TODAY

COPIES (VHS) FREE TO MINERS — from your nearest NUM Area HQ. Platform Films, London 01 278 8394 Trade Films, Gateshead 0632 775532

The videotapes are available to other trade unions and groups at a reasonable cost. The Miners' Videotapes have been made by a group of ACTU Technicians and Film & Video Workshops, with the endorsement of the Kent Area NUM/South Wales Area NUM/Derbyshire Area NUM/Northumberland Area NUM/Yorkshire Area NUM in support of the 1984 miners' strike.

Women Support the Miners

public meeting

8pm Thursday 21 June
Manchester Town Hall

Speakers: Audrey Wise (member Labour Party national executive), Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures, Bold NUM wives' support group, Greenham peace camp.

Organised by: Manchester Labour Women's Action Committee

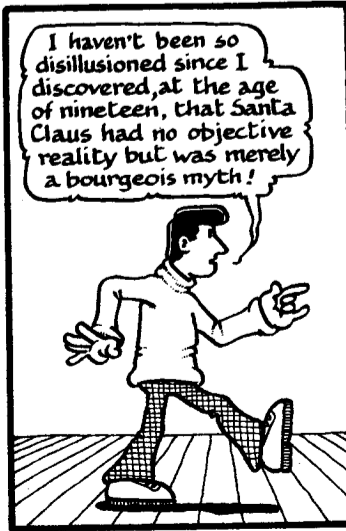
Kent NUM Women's Support Group March

Assemble 12 noon at B and Q, Dover.
March to rally at Connaught Park

Saturday 23 June

Organised and led by women, but men are welcome.

A PIECE OF THE ACTION



Cormac

News

ON WEDNESDAY 6 June, units of the Indian army under the command of Lieut-General Ranjit Singh Dayal, stormed the Golden Temple of Amritsar (in the province of Punjab), the holiest shrine of the Sikhs.

The storming of the temple came as a culmination to the curfew and news blackout that had been imposed on the city. Before this ruthlessly executed action by the Indian Army, the whole province was sealed off from the outside world.

After the storming of the Temple, hundreds were killed, almost all of them Sikhs, who had taken refuge in the Temple assuming that the army would not dare attack the shrine. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was among them. The latest report puts the number of dead in the region at 400 or more.

For hundreds of thousands of Sikhs, a relatively prosperous section of the Indian people, it was a merciless and brutal act.

But contrary to expectations, the masses of the Sikh people did not rise in a widespread and spontaneous manner even though hundreds of their brothers were ruthlessly wiped out and their holiest shrine attacked. One of the reasons may have been that the commander of the Indian units who led the attack was also a Sikh. And those who agreed to and led the storming had, from all accounts, been assured that the sanctum-sanctorum of the Temple complex, the Harmadir Sahib, was not to be touched.

A more considerable and far-reaching reason may have been that the militants who supported

Bhindranwale, were not in the mainstream of politics in the way that the Akali leaders and the Akali party were.

By Ahmad Shuja

Bhindranwale and his followers have not up to now publicly stated what their demands are. Bhindranwale himself is reported to have used occasionally the phrase 'homeland', but the term has apparently never been spelt out. Obviously Bhindranwale did not agree with the demand for autonomy formally made by the Akali party in conjunction with some other Indian states. If he had, he would have supported it and thrown in his lot with the Akali demand.

Nor did he express support for either 'Khalistan', which a number of Sikhs abroad are demanding along with Dr Jagjit Singh Chauhan who lives in London, or a separate independent territory.

Another reason, rarely mentioned, but which undoubtedly has played a part in encouraging restraint among the broad masses of the Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab may

be the fact that the two are so closely inter-related. There is hardly a Hindu family in the Punjab which does not have one or more Sikh relatives, and vice versa.

The reason for this is historical. It follows from the injunction by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, that every Hindu family in the Punjab must provide at least one Sikh. At that time, 'Sikh' meant soldier or guerrilla fighter.

Merciless

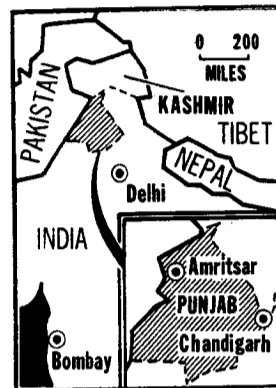
This historical fact may explain why it is only outside the Punjab — in neighbouring states such as Haryana, or in Uttar Pradesh's western parts — that Hindus and Sikhs have fought each other mercilessly as two different communities, and have not done so in the Punjab — despite some brutal murders of Hindus by Sikh extremists, and, more rarely, almost equal-

ly brutal murders of Sikhs by Hindus.

Unlike Mr Bhindranwale and his militant followers, the Akali leadership, who adhered to constitutional ways, had submitted demands formally and publicly. These demands were divided into religious and political. The religious demands extended to matters such as the creating of holy areas in Amritsar; the permitting of Sikhs to travel in airplanes with their 'kirpans', swords that they carry as a matter of religious ritual; and so on. Most of these demands were met.

Important

But the more significant demands were political: the most important had to do with Centre-State relations. After much pressure, a commission was set up to study the issue, under Judge



Sarkaria. The questions of Chandigarh and river waters had been under discussion since 1981, with the other demands. Suddenly, Bhindranwale appeared on the scene, as if from nowhere.

The general suspicion in some political circles is that Mrs Gandhi set up Bhindranwale to counter the Akali leadership and that he turned to independent activity when he

discovered that he had got a degree of independent power. Neither Indira Gandhi nor India's Sikh president have criticised Bhindranwale by name despite all the terrorist activity credited to him.

Could it be that he could reply by exposing the Congress leaders' roles? It is likely that Mrs Gandhi will win the next general elections, due next year. But for retaining power, and keeping her party uppermost in the Punjab — and in other states where attempts are being made all the time to topple opposition governments — Mrs Gandhi has seemed to use the harshest 'strong state' measures in the name of law and order.

In effect the tactics of divide and rule — learned from the British who divided religious and linguistic communities in the sub-continent to rule it more easily — are constantly being used by the Indian ruling classes.



PETER UHL, one of the chief leaders of the Czech dissident group Charter 77 was released from prison on 28 May. He had served five years for 'subversion'.

Peter Uhl's real 'crime' had been helping establish a committee for the defence of those unjustly persecuted by the Czech state. He was arrested on 29 May 1979 and served his sentence in the worst prisons of the country with an internationally condemned campaign carried on against him by the prison authorities.

Uhl's *Socialism Imprisoned* has been translated into German, French and other languages.

JUST 16 days short of four years after Hitler had launched Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union, the long awaited and oft-promised second front was opened by the Allies. It involved the use of a fleet of 5000 naval vessels.

On the morning of 6 June 20,000 paratroopers and 70,000 seaborne troops were put on the French shores. Behind them two million more were waiting. The allied air force poured down a rain of bombs and incendiaries.

But all these forces faced was 58 divisions of the Nazi Wehrmacht spread thinly across France, Belgium and Holland. On the Eastern front the Germans had more than 239 divisions. The invasion only took place when the German army had been bled to death. Twenty million Russian people were to die in their anti-fascist war and two million German soldiers were casualties on the Eastern front.

When the Wehrmacht invaded Russia Hitler predicted a short sharp war. After all, hadn't his panzer divisions sliced up the French, Belgium, Dutch and British armies in only a month just a year before? His army chief of staff, General Halder, normally a cautious man wrote in his diary: 'it is hardly too much to say that the campaign against Russia has been won in 14 days. In a few weeks it will be all over.'

Four months later with his armies at the gates of Moscow and Leningrad, Hitler, in a speech to the nation, said: 'I declare today, and I declare it without reservation that the enemy in the east has been struck down and will never rise again.' The capitalist politicians in the west thought they had little reason to differ and thought the Russo-German conflict was a useful way of weakening the German army whilst getting rid of the scourge of communism.

But the generals who had blundered the successful blitzkrieg used in Poland, France and the Lowlands were less successful in Russia. Moscow did not fall in the autumn of 1941 and nor did Leningrad.

The new German offensives launched in the hot dry months of 1942 were blunted by the Red Army. Then in the winter of that year came Stalingrad. The German 6th Army was trapped — an attempt by Manstein's Fourth Panzer division to break the Russian encirclement failed.

By Bob Pennington

From November into January a most terrible and bloody battle raged among the ruins of the city which smouldered and burned in the icy Russian winter.

Finally on 2 February 1943, the German commander Field Marshall Paulus surrendered. Ninety-one thousand survivors were taken prisoner — among them 24 generals.

Another 16,700 prisoners had been taken by the Red Army during the fighting and 70,000 German soldiers were killed or died from exposure and starvation during the siege. The myth of the invincibility of the Nazi army died at Stalingrad. From then on the tide on the eastern front began to

THE MEDIA DESCRIBED the head's of states and the Queen's visit to the beaches of Normandy as a 'solemn journey of commemoration'. The more detached observer would describe it as a cynical exercise to lay claim to a 'momentous military achievement' for what in reality was nothing of the sort.

The D Day invasion was in a military sense too little, too late, in a war that was already decided. It's purpose was to save western Europe for capitalism and it had nothing to do with liberating people from the shackles of fascism.

The motley crew who gathered on the shores of France last week were there in the name of an alliance against communism — which is the reason their predecessors sent the soldiers to die in Normandy 40 years ago.

For the ham B-movie actor the occasion had an added bonus: 'patriotic wars' and 'glorious deaths' are good mileage in an election year.

turn. Two further battles in the Kursk salient wiped out another half a million of the Nazi soldiers. But help from the west was slow to come. The second front demanded by the Russians was promised but didn't arrive. Always there was one excuse or another. In 1942 Churchill blamed

it on the shortage of landing craft.

But it was not a lack of materials that delayed the second front. The western powers wanted the USSR decimated and its economy destroyed. Then they were terrified about the rise of the European resistance movements.

In Greece ELAS, the

CP-led partisan movement was growing stronger by the day. In Italy resistance to Mussolini was spreading fast — again under CP leadership. The Allies decided to go into Greece and Italy first to make sure that state power was handed over to the representatives of capital.

The Allies had no intention of fighting a war for capitalism only to see the fruits of victory go to another class. But time was running out. The victories in the Kursk salient had sealed the fate of the Wehrmacht. From then on the march of the Red Army across Europe was inexorable and inevitable as a broken and defeated German army retreated back through Russia, across Poland and eventually into Germany.

The military defeats suffered by the Nazis sent a tremor across Europe. The anti-fascist movement could see that Nazism was heading for its end and saw the chance to make a new Europe where fascism and its breeder, the capitalist state, could be removed.

But the alarm bells were also ringing in Whitehall and in the White House. The western ruling class could see the hated spectre of socialist revolution raising its head in the heartlands of European capitalism.

It was the victories of the Red Army that had created the conditions which could have led to the undermining of the



Everybody rallied to defend Moscow

west European states. But this had never been Stalin's intentions. He had done his deal with the western powers. He had been given the east European states and in return he agreed the west could go back to the status-quo.

As the Red Army swept across the eastern front the Allies looked at the seething cauldron of Europe and realised there was no guarantee of order and decided that the D-Day operation had to be done by the latest in the June of 1944.

And so the armies of the Allies crossed the channel. They went not as

liberators but as the guardians of the capitalist order.

The soldiers who came on the beaches of Normandy thought they were fighting for freedom against the fascists. That was not true. They were being used to defend a rotten social system that threatened to destroy Europe in a nuclear holocaust.

Reagan, Thatcher, Mitterrand and the women from Buckingham Palace use the myth of D-Day to prepare another counter-revolutionary war just their predecessors did years ago.

D-Day: the big lie

Disaster in France

The Mitterrand government in France was for a long time held up as a model in the Labour Party. It provided an inspiration for the 'Eurosocialist' Party Neil Kinnock is trying to persuade Labour to become.

But three years later the balance sheet of the Mitterrand government has been a disaster for the French working class. The labour movement has been deeply split, tens of thousands of workers have left the trade unions, the racist and fascist right has gained over 10 per cent of the vote in local and bye-elections, and every indication is the right wing parties will score a huge victory in the Euro-elections.

Resistance to Mitterrand's policies has so far come mainly from 'far left' organisations and from oppositional currents in the Socialist and Communist Party trade unions. This interview with French Trotskyist leader Alain Krivine gives a graphic insight into the state of the French left after three disastrous years of the Mitterrand government.

Question: What are the main results of three years of Francois Mitterrand's Socialist Party-Communist Party government with its austerity policies?

Krivine: At first there were some positive steps — an increase in the level of political and social liberties in France: the suppression of the special courts of justice, and steps to develop the rights of the trade unions in the factories.

On the economic level the first steps were the five big nationalisations — the banks, the steel industry and the sections of the metal industry — and steps to increase wages, to maintain real purchasing power.

This policy ended very quickly. After a year they changed policy and decided to apply an austerity policy, beginning with a six month wage freeze — the first in France for 37 years.

A savage attack on the working class has developed. Inflation is eight per cent a year. The level of unemployment is about 2,300,000.

They began to attack conquests of the working class — social security, and even the financial allocations for the unemployed have been reduced.

That was when the workers began to fight — when they began to understand that the crisis was not only a theoretical thing but it attacked them in their daily lives.

In those circumstances what has been the response of both the Socialist Party and the Communist Party leaderships, and how have workers responded — particularly supporters of these parties?

The result of this policy is a fantastic internal crisis inside the Socialist Party and inside the Communist Party.

The leadership of the Socialist Party



Krivine

defends the austerity policy, explaining that it is not a strategy, merely a tactic, and that it will stop eventually.

The Communist Party leadership is embarrassed. They are caught in a terrible contradiction. They want to stay in the government and agree to everything. They have no political alternative. They want to stay even if it is very difficult due to the crisis in their membership. They have no other policy.

But the fact that the Communist Party represents the more radical and active part of the working class and this part of the working class is furious about this policy, has forced the leadership of the Communist Party to make some public criticisms of government policies.

The leadership of the Communist Party uses a double language. At the government level they support austerity, but to their working class supporters



they make criticisms and they call for struggle.

But when they lead struggles they are very careful to isolate each struggle because they don't want to destabilise the government.

That means that you have a fightback, but it's not organised. That's why there have been electoral victories for the right.

In the last year, and especially in the last month, there has been an increase in big fights — very strong, very massive, very combative, sometimes clashes with the police — but without any political perspectives.

It's more rebels coming from sectors most affected by the austerity, than national political movements. And that is a big problem we are confronted with.

Austerity usually goes hand-in-hand with some promise that if the workers

sacrifice wages and conditions they'll be compensated in other areas — for example social services. What is happening in that regard?

There are local contracts in each sector where the workers accept a certain freeze of wages. Usually they are promised five or six per cent and the inflation is eight or nine per cent. But the government then says 'we will increase social rights.' The minister says we will have more participation in the factory, the workers can be members of the administration council and things like that.

Then they try, in some factories, to link wages with productivity and to allow a small wage increase in return. Officially this is refused by the Communist trade union, although in practice things are often a little different.

But certainly the workers refuse.

The explanation that we need austerity is accepted by the bureaucracy and the trade unions more or less led by the officials of the party, but as far as the membership is concerned, austerity is rejected.

All the struggles are militant, nearly all are defensive although offensive demands can come out of the defensive struggles. For example there was a big strike among the shipyard workers — it's a very combative sector.

They put forward the 'zero sackings' demand, but then they went on to demand nationalisation under workers' control. And they explain that is the one way to avoid any sackings. It is defensive and also offensive but it is not on a national scale.

Is opposition developing within the trade unions?

We have two big trade unions, the CGT, which is led by the CP and the CFDT which is more or less led by one wing of the Socialist Party.

Today there is in the CFDT a national opposition which the Trotskyists of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (Revolutionary Communist League) played a big role in building. It has its own paper — *For a Trade Union Alternative*. They're up to issue number three and they sell about 5,000 copies per issue.

This opposition is very important. It is based on a platform of independent class struggle, against compromise with the government, against the austerity policy, and for trade union unity. We have a big division today amongst the trade unions. This is organised by the leadership.

If there was a democratic congress of this trade union, the opposition could possibly get about 40 per cent of the vote. With a bureaucratic congress it would probably take 25 or 30 per cent of the votes.

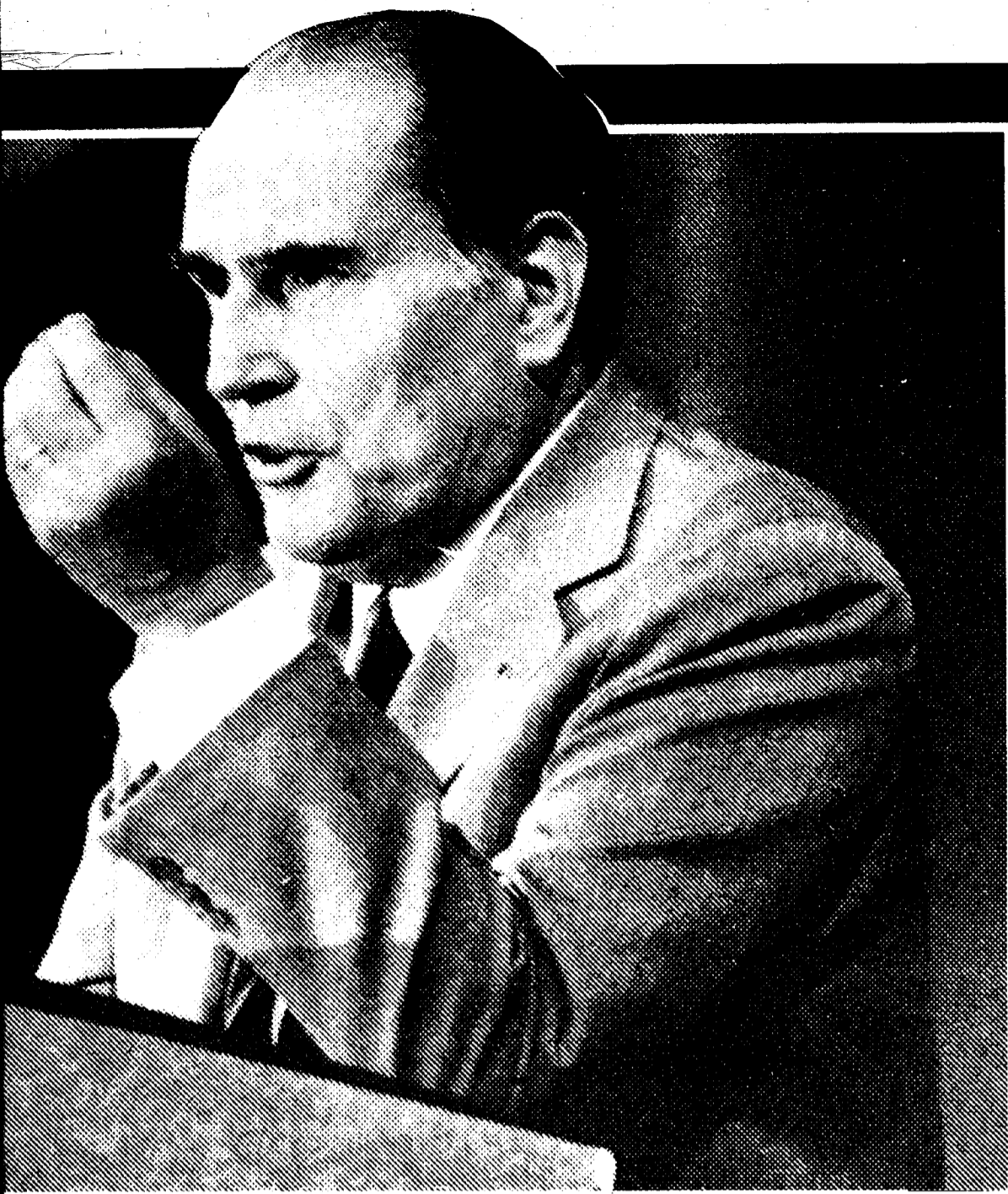
For example the recent strike at Talbot was led by a section there which is affiliated to the opposition. Even the general secretary of the union did not feel able to attack them during the strike. He said he supported them. He waited until the strike was over to attack them.

What about the Communist controlled CGT?

Well in the CGT it's different. There is



Angry workers protest government job cuts



Mitterrand

no right to form oppositions. But of course it is a question of the balance of forces. They are not in a position to expel people openly.

There have been opposition movements in the CGT — around the Polish question for example. They organised a meeting in Paris attended by 2000 members of the CGT to hear Kowalewski, the exiled Solidarity leader.

This opposition on Poland had a national conference and 500 regional branches were represented. It was a minority, but a strong minority. It had perhaps 20 or 30 per cent.

It's finished now. But the new opposition is against the austerity policy. A big part of it is the old Polish opposition, of course with new people. For example in this new opposition you have old Stalinists who were against Solidarity.

But on the question of austerity they are furious at what the Communist Party is doing. They say to our members: 'OK on the question of Poland we disagree but on austerity we agree.' But nationally it's not organised, it's only local groupings.

Of course we try to help these workers to link up and form national structures. We see this as a very important step to address the working class and to help form an alternative leadership. That is the central problem today.

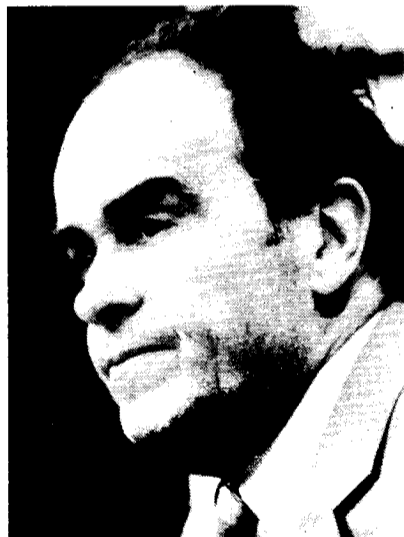
Has the role of the Communist Party leadership helped to delay a fightback?

The fact that you have the Communist Party in the government creates a lot of disarray. The Communist Party is in the government and the bourgeoisie is terrified.

They would prefer to be in the government themselves, but they are not afraid of the Socialist Party. They are not afraid of the program of the Communist Party either.

What they are afraid of is the CP's links to the combative sections of the working class. With Communists in the government, the working class is waiting. For the first time we have representatives in the government.

Even during the Popular Front government in 1936 the Communists refused to be in the government. It was only some years after the war that we had a small participation of Com-



Marchais

munist in the government.

The fact that now the two major working class parties are in the government did sow confusion to a certain extent.

What conclusions do you draw from the experience of the steel strike in Lorraine?

I think what is happening in this area is a good indication of the whole political situation. On the one hand these people are the workers most under attack, because 30,000 will be sacked. All this area will be smashed economically.

There is no other possibility of work. This is a struggle for life for them. So their revolt has been very violent. The CP and SP are more and more discredited. Their members are leaving.

There was a public burning of membership cards. Even elected Communist mayors are leaving the CP.

Publicly the Communist Party denounces these sackings. But the workers say, 'No, you are in solidarity with the government.' The apparatus of these parties is falling apart in these areas and people are becoming politically desperate. They organised a national march on Paris — 50,000 people came.

The fought each day in their towns. They want the police to come to fight. It is a way to show how they feel. In many towns all the state buildings have

been burnt. In one town they even burned down the Socialist Party headquarters. None of the left politicians could have a meeting in this area. The Socialist parliamentary representatives from that area, split from the parliamentary group, but not from the SP.

One day there was a general strike. Everything was closed. They blocked all the roads. They called it the Day of Death, the towns were dead. Not one car could enter any town in the region because of the barricades. The CP opposed the strike and the march for a while but then said they supported it.

But they refused to widen the strike. They refused to call strikes in Paris so the people could greet the marchers as they arrived. In Paris there was only us and 2000 workers to greet the steelworker's march. It was a deliberate policy of the Communist Party to isolate the strike.

Is that pattern being repeated in other areas?

You have the nickel miners and construction workers and so on but they are totally isolated. Other sections are quiet. The level of combativity is uneven.

One example was a national strike of miners, 90 per cent were on strike. The workers said they would just continue until they won. But the Communist Party said no.

Have you been able to co-operate with opposition currents within the CP?

There was a small revolutionary fraction inside the CP but three years ago they joined the Ligue. When these people understand that they have been betrayed they want to build another organisation.

But the problem today is that there is nothing organised inside the Communist Party. The CP has no internal life. When people get disillusioned they just leave, or stop going to meetings.

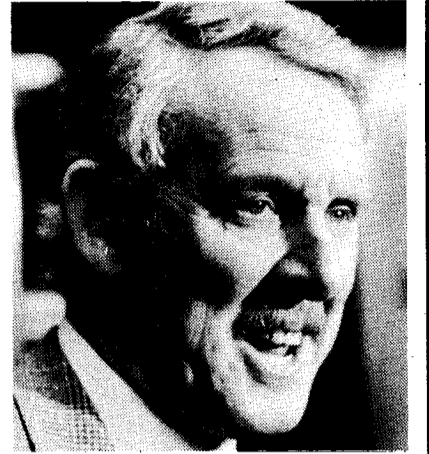
The best place to unite with Communists who oppose their leadership is in the trade unions.

The Communist party is very passive today, there are few posters on the walls, there are less and less people selling their paper. They are very passive and that is why it is very difficult to organise opposition.

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LABOUR AND UNIONS CHARTER

THE LABOUR Co-ordinating Committee and the Institute for Workers Control are running a conference in Nottingham on 7/8 July in the campaign to defend the trade union political levy to the Labour Party. **JOHN DENHAM**, Chairperson of the LCC, explains the aims of the conference.



Peter Heathfield

All over the country local Labour Parties have rallied to support the miners. Even the Labour leadership — with whatever reservations and hang ups about the wrong issues — have given clearer support than has been usual for industrial action. At such a time the links, both formal and political, between the party and the union movement seems deep and unchallenged.

Unfortunately, the current reaction is the exception rather than the rule. In more normal times union-Labour links are threatened both by external attacks and internal neglect.

The Tebbit-King ballots threaten much more than the Labour Party's finances. It is impossible to envisage real progress towards socialism through parliamentary legislation alone. Socialism can't be 'voted in' in Westminster but has to be built in practice in the workplace, community and home. The role of the unions, as the organisations of people at work, will be crucial in achieving this aim. Only by having politically aware and effective organisation in workplaces can votes in the ballot box be matched by real change at work. If the ballots are lost and major unions end their organisational support for the Labour Party a vital channel for organising and getting our message across will be tremendously weakened.

The ballots on the political levy pose such a threat, however, partly because the links between the Labour Party and the unions have been allowed to wither. In many local parties, union affiliation is low and participation even lower. (Too often, union delegates places merely provide an alternative route for activists to get onto the GC rather than reflecting deep union commitment.)

At national level, and within unions, the case for affiliation has often not been argued for years. A few leaflets pointing out the similarity between union and Labour policy is a poor substitute for the deep and continuing political education that is needed. For many members, Labour Party affiliation is seen as an opportunity for power-broking by national union leaders with little explanation or involvement of union members.

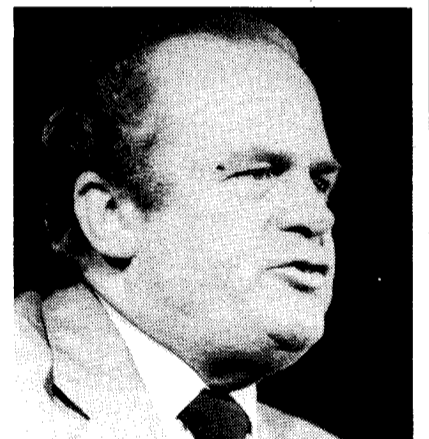
The problem is not restricted to affiliated unions. About half the TUC membership is not affiliated yet the cooperation and support of many of these unions will be vital to Labour. When we should be gaining support the predominant trend seems to be towards the promotion of a less party political strategy for the trade union movement.

It is essential that these trends are reversed and that the case for strong union-Labour ties is won throughout the movement. While national campaigns are essential there must be vigorous locally based campaigns as well.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee's *Labour and Unions Charter* is



Tony Benn



Ron Todd

an important step in this campaign. The aims of the Charter must be taken up as a focus of local activity all over the country. There is probably no one best form of local campaigning — this will depend on the state of the party-union links at the current time, the nature of the local union movement and so on. What is key is that a broad range of activists should meet to plan campaign activities.

Nationally, the LCC is joining with the Institute for Workers Control to hold a national conference in Nottingham, on 7 and 8 July where the speakers will include Tony Benn, Peter Heathfield, Tom Sawyer and Ken Coates. Each day costs £3. The first day will take the form of a rally with workshops on building local action.

The second day will look in more detail at many of the policy issues which unite the Party and the trade unions and around which joint campaigning can take place — including trade union legislation, shorter working hours, minimum wages and social benefits.

● On SATURDAY 7th. there will be Conference and Workshop sessions with Harriet Harman, Ken Coates, Peter Hain, Audrey Wise, John Denham, Tony Benn and Ron Todd.

This first day deals with the practical response to the Labour and Unions legislation; specifically the tasks for local parties and trade union branches; and the opportunity to be grasped in winning support for Labour and for socialist politics amongst union members.

On the Sunday, plenary and workshops will include Tom Sawyer, Peter Heathfield and Jack Dromey.

Registration for either of the 2 days is available at £3 (£1.50 unwaged).

Bookings to The Organising Secretary, 9 Poland St, London W1. (01-439 3749)

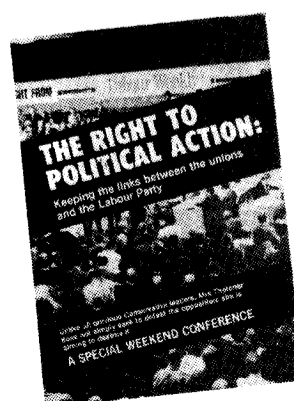


Photo: courtesy NUM

Photo: GM COOKSON

Photo: GM COOKSON

Militant on women

One step forward, six back

AFTER three years of campaigning women in the LPYS this year finally won the demand for the organisation of a YS young women's conference.

The *Militant* leadership of the YS have organised it for this weekend in Scarborough (boycotted as a conference venue by many unions due to the notorious anti-gay policies of the council) and it is limited to 100 participants, all of whom *have* to pay £13.50 a night for the hotel if they want to take part. To cap it all it is not even women-only.

All this is not some momentary aberration by the *Militant* tendency. Their hopelessly backward approach to the demands and organisation of women is theorised in their recent pamphlet on women by Margaret Creear.

JUDE WOODWARD reviews it here.

With women playing such an obviously crucial role in all aspects of the class struggle — from Greenham to the miners' wives — it has become increasingly impossible for any current on the left to disregard the issue of women's rights.

This pamphlet by Margaret Creear is an attempt to insert *Militant* into the debates and discussions among women in the labour movement, which have so far largely passed them by. In one respect at least it is an advance. In the mid-70s the *Militant* thought the whole Labour Party women's organisation should be closed down, and the Women's TUC should be ended. The passing of the Equal Pay Act had made them both redundant!

Now *Militant* goes to some lengths to explain that all those who thought this was the case were wrong — they don't mention that they were the main exponents of this view.

Only

But this is the only advance. The pamphlet remains a polemic against all the demands that women are actually raising inside the labour movement, and a justification for the fact that *Militant* have lined up with the right-wing against all of the constitutional changes demanded by the Labour Women's Action Committee.

The lynch-pin of *Militant's* argument against these constitutional changes is identical to the one they raise in virtually every other struggle, from CND to Ireland. The time is not right, women must wait until the struggle for socialism is more developed before raising this kind of demand.

Margaret Creear explains: 'Future events could lead to a radical restructuring of the constitution. At the moment, however, we have to press for changes which will take the Labour Party forward, and in particular advance the interests of women, under the conditions which prevail at this stage.'

We've heard the *Militant* put forward the same argument on nuclear disarmament — there is no point fighting against nuclear weapons, wait until the working class has brought in socialism. Or to the nationalist population in the North of Ireland — don't fight against the border, wait for the working class to create a socialist Ireland.

This is all proposed in the name of 'class unity'. Women in particular are familiar with this brand of unity. It is precisely the variety of *non-unity* with the struggles of women that the British labour movement has tried to impose for over eighty years.

Involves

This so-called unity of the working class actually involves the subordination of the struggles of women *not* to the struggles of the whole working class, but to a section of the working class, skilled white workers.

There need be no such counterposition. *Militant* correctly polemicise against some feminists who call for the demands of women to be met out of the pockets of other workers, but *Militant* in reality accepts the same framework, it's just they say that the women should withhold their demands in the interests of 'class unity'.

But the working class can only be genuinely united through a collective fight in the interests of all workers, women and blacks included.

But what is most insidious about *Militant's* argument is that they say that one day they will make this new choice, but now the time isn't right.

It is hard to see when more propitious circumstances for a fundamental change will arise if the opportunity is not taken today. The Labour Party has suffered its greatest electoral defeat, and all sections of the Party are discussing the fundamental changes necessary to turn this around. The Labour Party



is going to be shaken up, the only question is whether women will play a role in reshaping it.

On the actual proposals made by WAC, *Militant* present only one serious argument against them. They say they won't work.

If the NEC elections are taken to women's conference, the pamphlet argues, then the trade unions will want a block vote there too. In fact WAC is in favour of this because it would make the conference a more serious body.

If there is a mandatory woman on every Parliamentary shortlist the CLP's still won't vote for them. But at least the issue would get raised, it would have to be discussed, and women would have to think about standing. And there would be more chance of women being selected than if there are no women on the shortlist.

On the five resolutions to Party conference the pamphlet argues that they still won't be taken seriously, and the TGWU will want five resolutions too. But then at least they would be on the agenda, they can't be debated at all if they are not. And the TGWU may represent a million workers, but the women's conference has to represent half the working class.

Arguments

But *Militant's* arguments that these things won't work could be taken a little more seriously if it wasn't for the alternative they propose — one woman elected to the NEC by women's conference, and one resolution to conference floor. If five won't work, how the hell will one?

It is clear that these alternatives are merely token gestures in the direction of the demands of

women in the Labour Party. *Militant's* real position is that the women's section of the Party has not campaigned enough, and if it did 'women would automatically have more impact on the Labour Party as a whole'.

True

It is true that without women or youth actively campaigning for their demands, positive discrimination alone is no substitute. But the problem is that women have vocally and massively campaigned for their rights for years, and won very little response from the organised labour movement.

All that WAC is saying is that women have already waited eighty years for the British labour movement to take the initiative, now women are going to force themselves into the mainstream, whether the time is right or not!

IRELAND UNFREE

IRELAND'S BIGGEST SELLING WEEKLY
AN PHOBLACHT
Republican News

Ballyman takes on pushers
— PAGE 10

BURKES' little helper
— PAGE 13

Dukes' barren budget
— PAGE 2

SINN FEIN'S EEC POLL PLANS

Dialogue — another first!

LABOUR EURO-CANDIDATE Pat Healy last week spoke out on Ireland, sharing her North West London platform with Belfast Sinn Fein's Joe Austin. This is the first ever use of an official election rally to promote Labour's Irish dialogue.

For too long Labour leaders have taken for granted the votes of the Irish community whilst harassing them with racist measures like the Prevention of Terrorism Act and keeping Ireland under British rule.

It was right and proper that once bipartisan policies had begun to be changed Labour support for the reunification of Ireland should be fed into the election campaign. Who better to endorse Labour's candidate than a representative from the party which more than any other is leading the fight to get the British out?

Of course, not everyone shared our enthusiasm. The Tories must have thought they were home and dry when their man for the job was supported in the *Irish Post* (a paper which is read by many of Britain's Irish).

Calling on Irish people to 'make their vote count' the *Post* heaped praise on Kilburn's Tory MEP who 'had the courage' to separate himself from the Tory whip and abstain when the vote on Neil Heagerup's investigatory report on the North of Ireland was put.

The report said nothing critical of Thatcher's policies. No other party in the parliament (apart from the hard line unionists) voted with the Tories against it. On top of that he voted down amendments put by Labour's Alf Lomas drawing attention to the abolition of trial by jury and use of strip searches.

So the pseudo-flattery of this 'man of courage' was rightfully rebuffed by Labour in the election rally. Just the job for restoring the lost faith of the Irish in a party which has given them Merlyn Rees, Roy Mason, and Don Concannon. Just the thing to rebuild Labour's election hopes. If only we were all so keen.

It is unfortunate that at a time of unity Neil Kinnoek, speaking in Brussels, bowed to the pressure of the SDLP and disassociated himself from the effort in London.

He missed a good meeting. Ken Livingstone said he wouldn't have come if Joe Austin was not there. Sinn Fein's election campaign was fighting against both the British and the multi-nationals. The consequences for both working people and small farmers was disastrous Joe Austin said.

Irish neutrality is not at risk? Endorsing the aims of Irish CND Joe told of the protest's against Reagan's visit to Ireland and supported the call for a nuclear free Europe.

Frank Hansen and Sheila Healy from the local constituency party outlined Brent's long running campaign to change Labour's policy to one of withdrawal from Ireland. Sheila said that despite its weakness the Forum report was seen to support a reunified Ireland so the Labour Party should press ahead now with a campaign to scrap the Unionist veto.

Sarah Roelofs, the Labour Committee on Ireland's Women's Officer, explained the campaign against strip searches.

The meeting finished with Pat Healy promising that Ireland would not be forgotten in her election campaign. If elected to Europe she will make sure it will not be forgotten there either.

West Yorkshire Met. County by election Fighting Tory 'democracy'

MARIE STINSON is the Labour candidate for a West Yorkshire County Council by-election in the Leeds ward of Chapel-Allerton/Scot Hall, on Thursday 14 June. West Yorkshire is one of the metropolitan councils threatened with abolition, which gives this campaign a particular significance. Marie told ZOE GILBERT what's at stake.

THE by-election is important because it might be the last metropolitan county council election to be fought in West Yorkshire. As such it brings the issue of democracy itself to the very forefront.

The Paving Bill now going through the House of Lords will abolish next year's elections before parliament has even debated the provisions of the actual Abolition Bill, let alone agreed them — so anxious are the Thatcherites to destroy democracy when it produces the 'wrong' result: Labour councils.

And this particular by-election is crucial in another way. Although the seat is highly marginal — Labour only won it once, at the last election — it is currently Labour. It is inevitable therefore that it will be seen as a mini-referendum on abolition. Should we lose, the Tories will use the result to say that the people of West Yorkshire support abolition.

As it is not a safe seat, the election is not a chance to put forward our politics, but an occasion on which it is absolutely essential that we do so. We have to persuade the voters in a marginal ward

to come out and vote Labour, and this cannot be done in any other way than by convincing them that our arguments are the right ones.

Nutshell

In a nutshell, we are campaigning on jobs, services and democracy. These issues weren't so much chosen as obvious. With the direct attack on the right to vote, the expectation of the loss of 3-4000 jobs in West Yorkshire alone, and the prospect of public services, especially transport, being decimated, privatised or even abolished altogether, there was no question of the positions that we should take.

Basically the Tories want to abolish the metropolitan councils and the GLC because they are all Labour controlled. As such they are seen as a political challenge to Thatcherism. Abolition only makes sense if you accept that the aims of this government are to smash the labour movement's twin arms — the trade unions and the Labour Party — and destroy local democracy altogether.

The attack on local democracy is essential for them at the moment because, although they control national government, the Labour Party still controls many of the key areas of local government. We still hold several key cities. The councillors in Liverpool and elsewhere have already shown how local government can provide the arena for a thorough-going challenge to the government and all it stands for.

Abolition is one side of this concerted attack on local democracy. Rate-capping is the other. The two are not separate. Rate-capping is meant to starve local government of funds so that its 'uselessness' can be made to seem more obvious — and thus we move one step nearer to total Whitehall dictatorship.

Poverty

The effect of rate-capping and abolition in practice is to reduce both jobs and services, thereby undermining working class standards still further and pushing the idea that you can only get what you pay for directly.

In the longer term the attack on democracy now being waged is essential for the Tories. The strategy of the government — to cut the living standards of the working class to the bone and reduce to the most desperate poverty those who can't work — can only

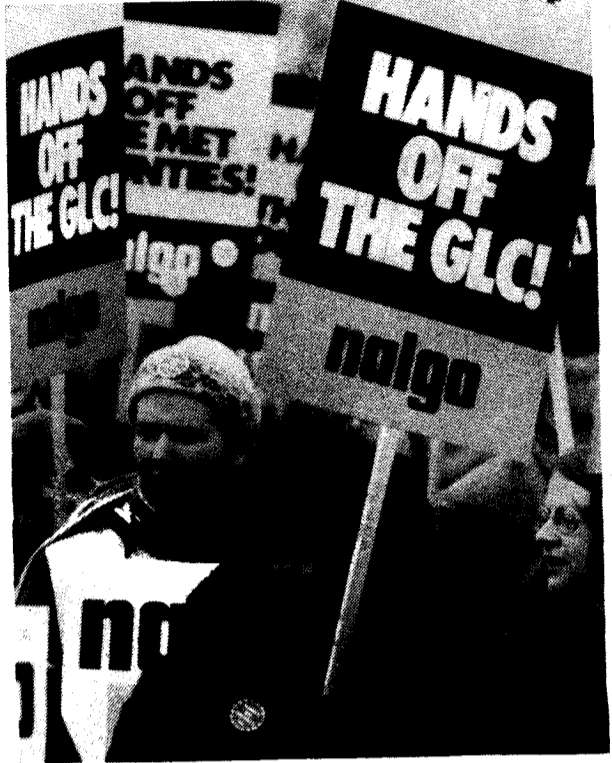


Photo: GM COOKSON

be successful by putting the political as well as the economic clock back — by attacking the right to vote itself.

The miners' strike has shown with what contempt the Tories really view democracy. The national ballot on productivity schemes was declared in the courts not to be binding nationally — that's because it didn't work in the Tories' favour. Now they are screaming for a national ballot

because they think it can be used to make striking miners go back to work.

This is exactly the same principle they use in relation to the abolition of the metropolitan councils and the GLC. Democracy has produced the 'wrong' results, so it must be abolished. The 'right' results, which make voting acceptable, are those which return a Tory government or council, or those which call for an end to strikes.

Exeter Briefing editors face expulsion

By Carol Turner, Labour Against the Witch Hunt

WHO SAID 'Why don't you go back where you came from?' Not Enoch Powell, but Chester Long, the recently-elected Labour leader of Exeter council.

Since May, Labour and Liberal councillors have cobbled together a 'working relationship' which gives this unholy alliance a majority of one at City Hall. Exeter Labour Party has never been consulted.

Among the first to protest was Exeter Labour Briefing, whose three editors now face expulsion from the party.

Clr Long's remark was made at a special session of Exeter Labour Party's Executive Committee considering the expulsions. It was addressed to the only Labour Briefing supporter on the executive, Cabir Shukra.

Party chair John Shpard provided a sympathetic cover: Cllr Long, of course, must have been referring to the university she had recently studied at!

The Exeter party has protested the use of 'Ex-

eter Labour' in the title of the local Briefing bulletin. The name, it appears, is the exclusive property of the Labour Party.

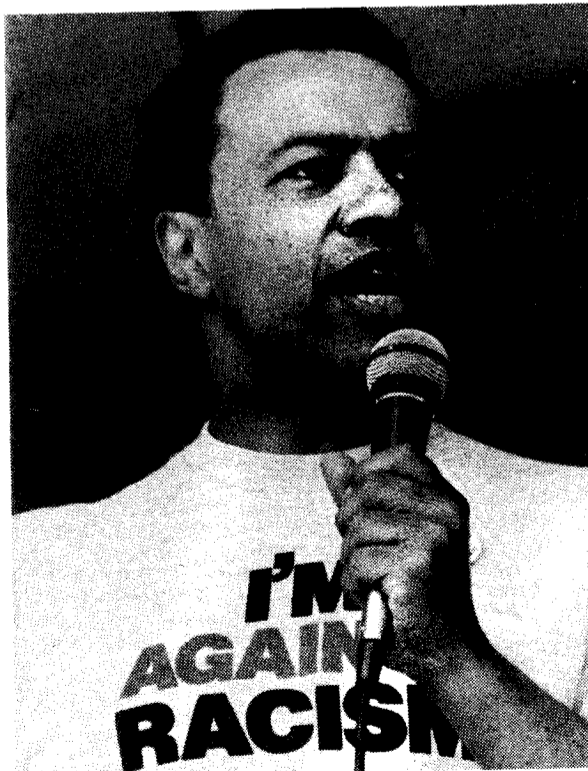
To meet this, the Briefing group printed a clear, front-page disclaimer. This magazine, it says, does not represent the official policy of Exeter Labour Party.

This is insufficient for the local hawks who would silence all criticism. The executive is recommending that this Friday's general committee expel the three editors.

Labour Against the Witch Hunt has approached sympathetic members of Labour's national executive in the hope that they will be able to step in before local apparatchiks carry this farce to its absurd and unpleasant conclusion.

The events in Exeter are a clear warning to anyone toying with the idea of a Lib-Lab pact. (Just as Cllr Long's remark is a clear vindication of the need for black sections.)

Meanwhile, Exeter Labour Briefing is selling like hot cakes ...



Paul Boateng — a message of support to conference.

Photo: GM COOKSON

Black sections: a movement of national dimensions

THREE HUNDRED Labour Party black activists met at Birmingham's Digbeth Civic Hall on 9 June to discuss establishing black sections throughout the party. After a speech from Vididya Anand, conference heard messages of support from Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Jo Richardson and Paul Boateng.

Conference rejected the idea of black sections simply campaigning for black MPs. Speaker after speaker emphasised the need for a campaigning, socialist movement rather than mechanisms for the ambitious to get into power.

By Chris Palmer, Ladywood Labour Party

Also taken up, in response to demands from the many women present, was the need to involve women at every level of black sections. As Narendra Makanja said when reporting back from one of four workshop sessions on the way forward: 'We must not reproduce the oppression of the party as a whole, particularly the

oppression of women.'

Also noted was the need to develop work in the unions, particularly links with developing black workers' groups. Despite opposition from both Militant supporters and the party leadership, conference clearly showed black sections are here to

stay.

A new expanded steering committee was elected with greater representation from outside London, in recognition of the movement's national dimensions. A further conference was called within three months to formalise developments.

Labour Activist

Newsletter of the LCC Democracy Issue

NEW AGENDA FOR PARTY DEMOCRACY

There are a number of reasons why the Labour Party should be reformed. The first is that it is a party of the working class and should be run by the working class. The second is that it is a party of the people and should be run by the people. The third is that it is a party of the future and should be run by the future.

We must not be afraid to challenge the status quo. We must not be afraid to challenge the power of the few. We must not be afraid to challenge the interests of the rich.

The State of The Left And Party Democracy

The Labour Party has a long history of being a party of the working class. It has a long history of being a party of the people. It has a long history of being a party of the future.

Socialism in 50 years

By John Nolan, Birkenhead Labour Party

'A DOCUMENT that both Hattersley and Trotskyists could put their names to,' was how one member hailed the Labour Coordinating Committee strategy proposals. About 40 people attended the LCC's national strategy conference in Liverpool a week ago, which tried to prescribe the long-term aims of the Labour Party.

The 'long-term' was defined by Geoff Hodgson, one of the document's authors, as similar to the projection of the Swedish and West German socialist parties. It would take two generations — up to 50 years — to achieve such (earth-shattering?) objectives as decentralised, planned (sic) economy with a small market under workers' control. An island of socialism in a sea of capitalism!

The conference recognised that the commitment to maintain capitalism in Britain would be seen by the left in the labour movement as a concession to the right wing. But there was a complete refusal to see that the transfer of most of industry into common ownership would come up against the most massive resistance from the state on behalf of the bosses who own industry.

It was even argued that British capitalists were not really interested in running the whole of industry privately. They would quite happily let us take over their assets for ourselves. So, the privatisation of British Aerospace, Telecom, local services and the National Health Service is all an illusion. They don't really want them.

Only half a dozen women attended the conference. They organised their own workshop on Women and Socialism. Their demands — for positive discrimination in jobs and labour movement bodies, and their challenges to male attitudes to women — if implemented, would seriously confront the bosses and the right wing in the labour movement.

Apart from this, the discussions — on liberty, freedom, equality, democracy, planning common ownership, the market, and international strategy — nowhere seriously challenged existing class relations in Britain. Dressed up as a bold socialist initiative, they would not even upset MP Frank Field's Lib-Lab Rainbow Circle.

Just as the Alternative Economic Strategy was immediately adopted by Jim Callaghan, so the danger is that the LCC proposals will be taken on board by the centre-right leadership in the labour movement. Any demands that upset the bosses will be denounced as divisive or 'narrow socialism'.

NATO and the Common Market were not discussed, nor was the question of nuclear disarmament. Indeed, nuclear power was deliberately left out of the document because 'the party has not discussed its policy fully' on this.

POEU conference Time to organise the left

DELEGATES who cheered Len Murray's opening-day speech at last week's Post Office Engineering Union conference were blissfully unaware of his latest gesture in support of striking miners: a magnificent 17p donated to the NUM collection at the entrance of the conference hall. What they were applauding was a speech against the right wing union president's claim that last year's industrial action had been a total waste of time.

Despite the real setback telephone engineers have suffered in the last 12 months, this year saw no sharp right turn. Rather it was a mixed bag of a conference. Despite big problem with industrial action last year, a broad left executive was still returned, but with a slightly reduced overall vote.

By Carol Turner

Two 'left' candidates, Tony Young and Doug Raftery — dropped from the BL slate after they voted with the right to drop action on Mercury last autumn, and opposed by alternative BL candidates — had greatly reduced majorities (down by 32,000 and 22,000 respectively).

Two others similarly dropped, were unopposed by alternative candidates and had slightly increased votes.

A resolution from the International Services branch, badly affected by the collapse of last year's selective action against privatisation — a censure of the executive, demanding that the poor conditions on which they returned to work be renegotiated — was defeated, with BL support.

And a debate on privatisation saw no assessment of the many and obvious problems the selective industrial action campaign experienced.

No further industrial action is planned. However, a resolution for action in support of the union's pay claim was overwhelmingly carried.

This year is the first time that details of the negotiations have been made public to the membership. Management are offering a differential award of between 4.2 and 4.7 per cent. The executive set out a three-

point proposal to reject the offer and engage in industrial action for a claim of eight per cent.

In similar vein, a resolution from the right, to ballot the membership before any strike action, was defeated on a card vote by 96,000 to 30,000. Even the overwhelming vote to renominate John Golding for the Labour Party NEC is not a total setback. It is the first time that conference, as opposed to the Political Fund Management Committee (a sub-committee of the executive), has taken the decision. It provides an opportunity in the future to persuade rank and file members to support left candidates.

Telephone engineers are far from defeated after their unsuccessful action against privatisation. But conference lacked a clear balance sheet on why selective action failed. Neither the executive nor the BL as a whole have drawn the lessons of last year. Until they do, the left mood of conference — which reflects the optimism generated by the miners' fightback — will not be turned into a real understanding of how to protect jobs and save telephone services.

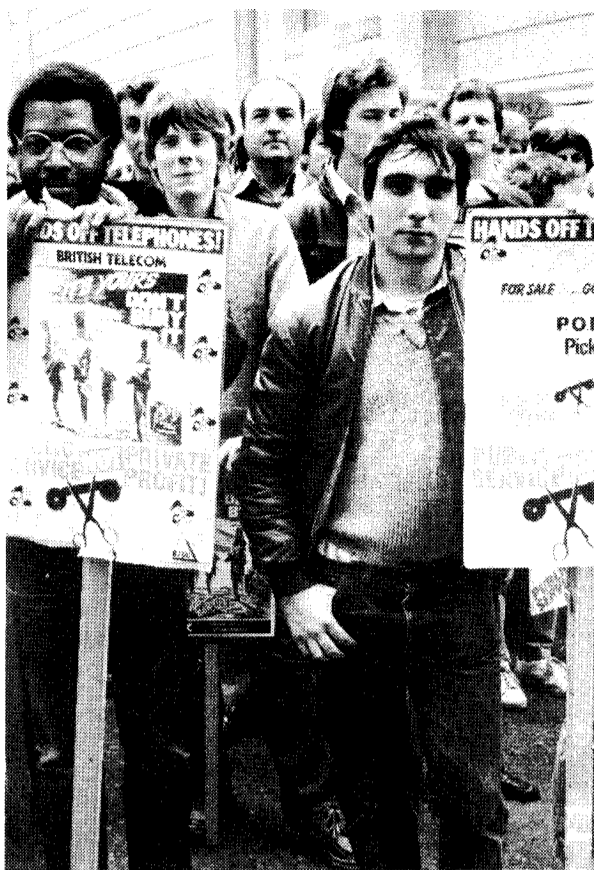


Photo: GM COOKSON

'Rights — Wot Rights?'

THE MAN(sic)POWER Services Commission (MSC) has spent a small fortune trying to sell Youth Training Schemes (YTS). Lectures in schools, glossy publicity material and exhibitions all have to be paid for.

Convincing youth that they should be 'trained' for £25 a week is not an easy package to sell. GRANT KEIR reviews a new video on YTS.

In the interviews with young people the message is loud and clear: 'It's slave labour', 'Too dangerous', 'No real training', 'No job at the end', '£25 is not enough'.

The video starts from the fact that YTS is a con. Ironically, it is the low take up of youth on the schemes, that gives those on YTS some bargaining power. With the help of Steve Bell's penguins and interviews with trainees, it shows young people that they can attempt to improve YTS.

The video shows that by organising trainees into trade unions and by exploiting the bad publicity and the vulnerable financial position of the shark operators, a fight to improve YTS can be waged.

Examples of good YTS schemes are dealt with just as much as the horror stories. Young people know how bad YTS is. They have to be convinced that it is possible to fight for something better.

The video's message to the wider labour movement is that its responsibility to the 'future generation' has yet to be met. Some of them die as a direct result of the disregard for health and

safety conditions in non-unionised sweatshops.

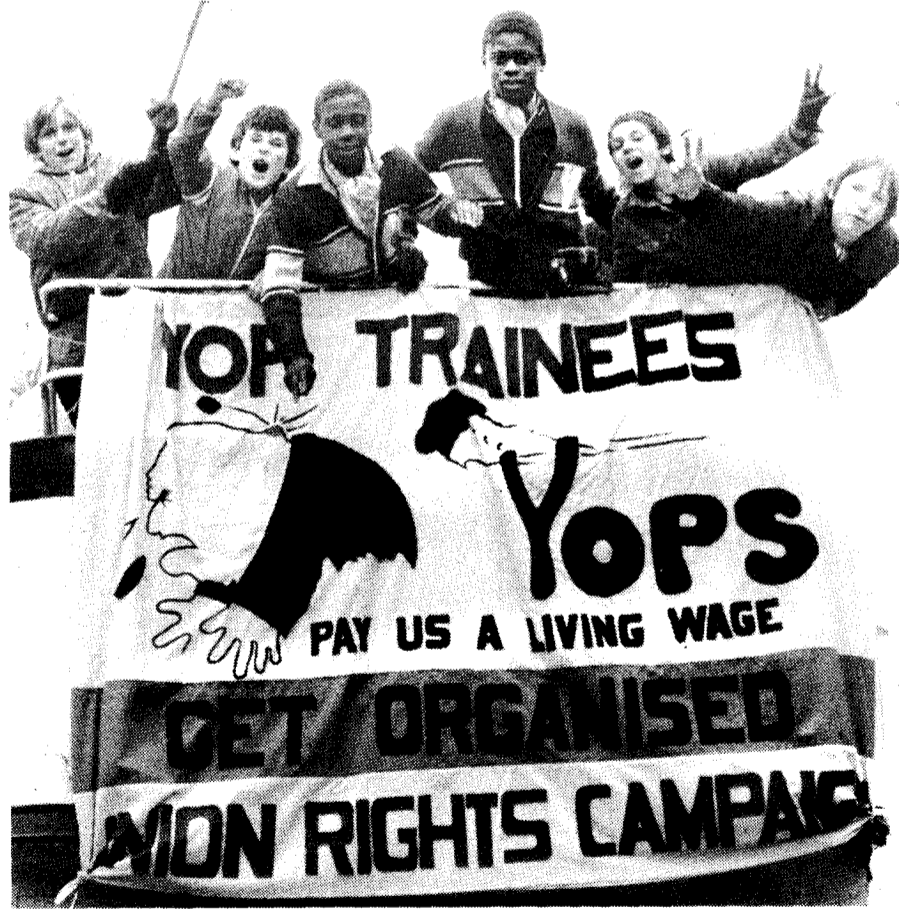
The sponsorship that this video received from the GLC, West Midlands County Council, Sheffield City Council and NALGO is a start.

Rights — Wot Rights? comes in VHS format. It covers every aspect of YTS. From pay and conditions to institutionalised racism and sexism on the schemes. It not only shows the need to fight YTS, but how to do it.

This video is long overdue. It should be shown throughout the labour movement, as well as to young people. It is 20 minutes long, very well made and easily accessible.

It can be obtained from: Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre (TURC), 7 Frederick St, Birmingham. £12.50

Socialist Action apologises to Zoke for failing to credit him with last week's front page cartoon, which has received many compliments. Our thanks to Zoke.



American socialist tours Britain

MEL MASON is a socialist candidate in the United States presidential elections. He toured Britain last week, after a nine-day visit to Ireland which included meeting with political prisoners in the North. A former member of the Black Panthers, Mel was subsequently elected city councillor for Seaside, California in 1980 — the first socialist to hold public office since the days of McCarthy. He explained that his tour was one of solidarity with workers in struggle. Much of his time in Britain has been spent meeting striking miners. Mel Mason is shown here speaking at his London rally on the eve of the massive anti-Reagan demonstration.



New politics for old

ENRICO BERLINGUER, who died on Tuesday, was described by the *Sunday Times* in 1977 as 'The Marxist with sex appeal'. He also had the almost unique tribute for a Communist Party general secretary that his coffin was accompanied on its journey from Padua to Turin by the Italian president Pertini.



ly on a Christian Democratic party whose corruption and inefficiency was a permanent public scandal.

To the labour movement in Western Europe Berlinguer was best known for his phrase 'the historic compromise' — a proposed coalition government of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the Christian Democrats. But to the Italian ruling class Berlinguer was the acceptable face of Italian Communism.

By John Ross

The emergence of the PCI from the resistance movement of the Second World War as the strongest Communist Party in Western Europe created enormous problems for Italian capitalism. Here was a party which dominated the trade unions, and the working class vote, whose primary historic allegiance was to Moscow and not to Rome.

It was not that any serious ruling class circle feared that the PCI intended to overthrow Italian capitalism. It was simply that a pro-Moscow party could not be integrated into the normal functioning of Italian capitalist politics. It left no option but to rely for government sole-

The way out of that situation for Italian capitalism was a PCI, and a PCI leader, who would decisively break the PCI from Moscow and attach it directly to the needs of Italian capitalism. In Enrico Berlinguer, the Italian ruling class thought they had found their man. That is why Pertini, and the entire Italian political establishment, so openly honoured Berlinguer.

Actually the press overestimated the general secretary's role. The PCI had embarked on a practical course of 'historic compromise' with Italian capitalism long before Berlinguer invented the term. But nevertheless the now dead leader of the Italian Communist Party was a fitting symbol of the process.

To be openly and publicly mourned by the mass of the Italian population, as Berlinguer has been, would be a fitting tribute to a communist leader. But when the state president mourns you can be sure something more is involved as well!

Response on teachers

AS MEMBERS of the NUT, and Socialist Teachers' Alliance supporters, we wish to point out the implicit dangers contained in Rich Hatcher's article (*Socialist Action*, 25 May).

The article states: 'the STA is arguing that, as a minimum condition, arbitration should not be entered into unless the employers have made a substantially increased offer as a starting point.'

It should not need pointing out to Socialist Action or the Socialist Teachers' Alliance that the mechanism of arbitration is a mechanism of class collaboration, whereby trade union struggle is dropped in favour of the state machinery deciding the outcome. Therefore, what is being said in this case is that we'll fight for eight per cent but we'll leave the rest to the state, the government, the Tories etc to decide.

Our minimum condition should be that our support is so overwhelming, our action is so intensive that the outcome of the arbitration could only be favourable or easily ignored (the miners case in 1972, for example) where the real outcome wasn't decided by arbitration, but by the level of action.

Needless to say, our action hasn't reached anything like that, so we should not be talking about arbitration — only about escalating action.

Siu Ming Cheung President Lambeth Teachers Association; John Esterson, Vice President Inner London Teachers Association, Secretary Lambeth Teachers Association; Gary Jones, NUT Representative; Mike Smith, Stockwell Park NUT; Ray Sirotkin, Assistant Secretary Lambeth Teachers Association; (All in personal capacity).

Photo: GM COOKSON

A Socialist ACTION

Decisive phase of Iran-Iraq war

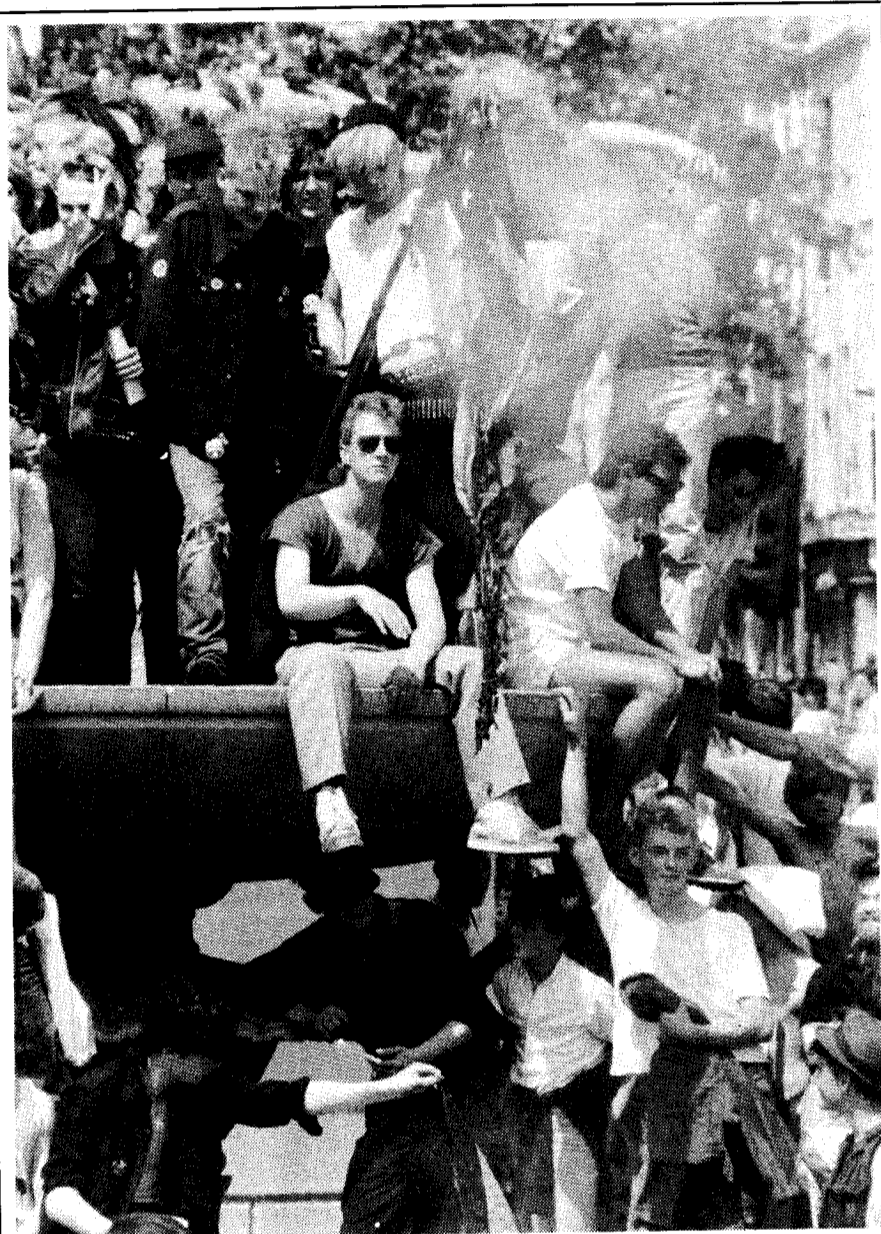


Photo: GM COOKSON

Uncle Sam not welcome!

OVER 150,000 people marched through London last weekend to show exactly what they think of Reagan's plans to station hundreds of missiles in Europe. Thousands more took part in non-violent direct actions around Lancaster House, venue for the summit, and Grosvenor Square, site of the US embassy.

Hundreds of miners led and participated in the march, and many slogans made the link between the miners struggle for jobs and the missiles. Hostility to the policies of the US in Britain and worldwide was obvious in every aspect of the march. Ac-

tions like this one — a symbolic burning of the stars and stripes — were a common feature.

But the most militant and exciting section of the day's events was definitely the actions around Lancaster House where traffic was stopped all around. These actions successfully brought the message of the march right to the summit's door step.

The massive turn-out, despite the lack of enthusiasm from the CND leadership, will help defeat the move away from mass action that will probably be proposed to this year's CND conference.

THE SHOOTING DOWN of an Iranian Phantom jet by Saudi F-15 fighters has brought direct imperialist intervention in the Gulf war much closer. The Iranian plane, allegedly brought down in Saudi Arabia's territorial waters, could not have been attacked without US co-operation in the form of their AWACS surveillance planes, and US aerial tankers refuelling the Saudi fighters.

Now it has been revealed that a joint US-British-French plan exists to intervene in the war should vital Western strategic interests be threatened.

For a long time now the United States has made it clear that it would keep open by force the vital Straits of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the West's oil passes. This new plan for joint action with the French and British was probably hatched at the London international summit.

By Phil Hearse

The three and a half year war which has cost more than 250,000 lives has for most of that time been stalemated. The Iraqi economy has been wrecked, and tens of thousands of young Iraqis have died in 'human wave' attacks.

In order to break the impasse Iran has assembled an army of nearly half a million to make one final push 'to conquer Baghdad'. At the same time the Iraqis have attempted to make the Iraqis pay a high economic price for the war through repeated attacks on oil tankers going to Iran's Kharg island oil terminal.

Whatever the West's feigned outrage at the four or five Iranian attacks on shipping going to Iraq, the fact of the matter is that the shipping war is primarily the responsibility of the Iraqis themselves.

Iran seems strangely reluctant to launch an offensive. Its reluctance is understandable. This is a make-or-break offensive, in which Iran is ultimately in a no-win situation.

In the first place Iraq has superiority in air power and in ground armaments. Although the war has wrecked its oil industry and through that its economy, huge subventions from the reactionary Arab regimes have paid for weapon replacements. To this, the Soviet Union has now added supplies of ground-to-ground and ground-to-air missiles.

But even should the Iranian forces score major military successes, the real problems then begin. Over the last three weeks the United States has made it abundantly clear that it will not stand by and see Iraq's Saddam Hussein's government overthrown.

Reagan has secured Saudi permission for the

use of airfields for the US air force. A new squadron of air tankers has already been sent to refuel US jets. US naval units have either moved into the Gulf or are waiting just outside the Straits of Hormuz. In other words, if an Iranian offensive is too successful it will rapidly face the intervention of the United States.

In any case, Iran can gain nothing from a military success in the war except a bit of prestige and minor territorial concessions. Iraq's Shia Muslim community have not responded at all to the appeals of the Iranian Shi'ite leaders to rise up against the Saddam Hussein leadership. Saddam's Ba'ath Party has apparently been successful in presenting the war as an Arab-Iranian war, and the Iraqi Shia community, the majority of the population, has remained loyal.

Lacking

Lacking any popular base of support, the Iraqis could hardly have serious expectations of administering Iraq from Tehran.

A failure for the coming offensive would bring home the reality to the Iranian population that the war cannot be won.

The Gulf war was begun by Saddam Hussein in the hope of a quick victory, and cheap success based on the expectation that the anti-Shah revolution had severely weakened the Iranian army. Saddam failed to take into ac-



count the stiff resistance of thousands of Iranian workers and peasants, many of them of Arab nationality, who took up arms to defend their towns and villages in the early stages of the attack. But the war was rapidly brought under the control of the central Tehran authorities, and the popular resistance disarmed and dispersed.

For more than three years the war has been utilised by the barbaric Khomeini dictatorship as a means of whipping up support for the regime. But this process too has its limits. Despite a partial revival of the Iranian economy, the poor have not profited. The social and economic gains of the working class from the anti-Shah revolution have all but been wiped out. Disillusionment now is widespread.

United States' credibility in the Middle East has suffered some hard knocks since the

overthrow of the Shah, the catastrophe of Carter's rescue mission for the US hostages, and the debacle of US intervention in the Lebanon. Nothing would please the hawks in the Pentagon and the State Department more than an opportunity for a display of military firepower against Khomeini's regime.

But neither the Iranian nor the Arab masses have anything to gain from such an intervention, or from the different kind of tyranny which the US would like to establish in Iran.

Both the Iranian and Iraqi regimes are anti-working class dictatorships sacrificing thousands of lives for their own interests. Socialists in the West can take neither side in the war, but should oppose any imperialist intervention. The work of dealing with the Ba'ath and Islamic fundamentalist butchers can only be that of the Iranian and Iraqi workers.

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Iraqi prisoners — victims of the war