

# SOCIALIST

**Socialism  
and Democracy**  
*Direct action and Parliament*



A debate between  
**Michael Foot** and  
**John O'Mahony**

opening remarks and chaired by Alan Simpson MP

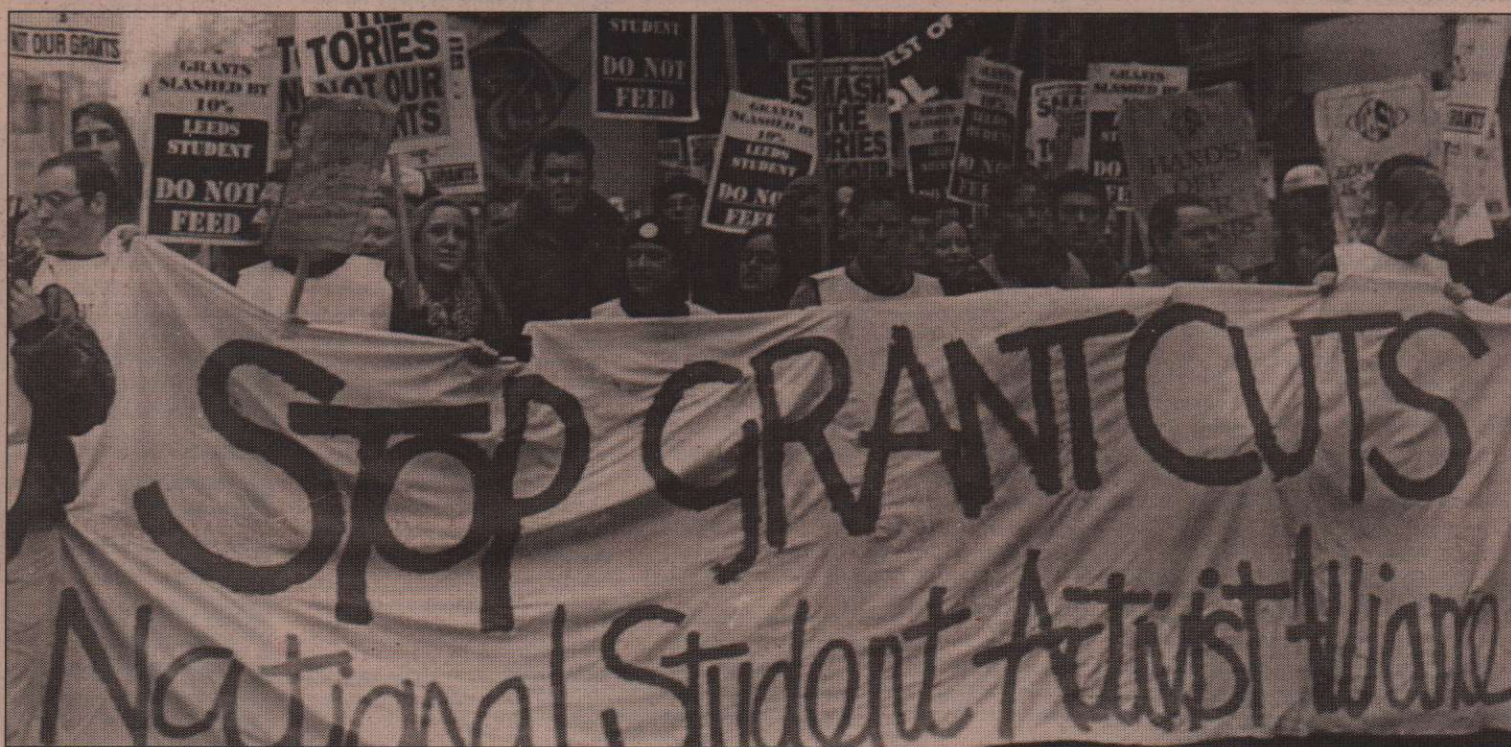
**ORGANISER**

*It will be socialism or barbarism!*

Conway Hall • Wednesday 9th March 1994 • 7.30pm

**STOP THE CUTS!**  
**20,000 students march in London**

**SHUT DOWN  
EDUCATION  
ON 1 MARCH!**



**Support  
the  
NATFHE  
strike!**  
see pages 4 & 5

## South African socialists face election challenge

This weekend, 26-27 February, the Movement for a Mass Workers' Party is to hold a special conference in Johannesburg to discuss standing candidates in this April's South African general election. As we reported last week the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), the largest far left grouping in South Africa will be arguing for a Workers' List of candidates to stand on the basis of demands such as the right to work, homes, education and health care for all.

They will also be focusing on the need for workers' self defence and a workers' militia in response to the far right's preparation for civil war.

This extract from the South African bosses' paper Business Day spells out why WOSA are right to make a stand:

"Cape Town — Nearly 60% of black people would support a separate workers' party to represent them politically, a national survey has found.

The poll's surprise result follows the recent announcement by the militant Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action that it would convene a congress early next year to launch a workers' party.

While the established political organisations and trade union federations have expressed considerable scepticism about the viability of a workers' party, the survey finding does reflect significant disillusionment with the compromises reached in the negotiations.

The extent of black support for a workers' party was found in a nationwide survey of 1400 people conducted by monthly magazine Barometer on Negotiation during August and September.

While many black respondents indicated that workers' interests would be better represented through a workers' party, the magazine said, most white respondents (76%) rejected the formation of a workers' party, citing as a major reason the damage to the economy resulting from the implementation of socialist policies."

Neville Alexander of WOSA analyses the current situation in South Africa: page 7

## AWL Dayschool

By Caroline Henry

'QUESTIONS for Socialists' was the theme of an Alliance for Workers' Liberty day school held in Sheffield last Saturday, 19 February. It was an opportunity for people to discuss and debate socialist ideas, and to find out more about the AWL. The day was a great success with 40 people attending from around the region — for many it was their first AWL event. There were lively discussions on what capitalism is and how we achieve socialism, fascism and how to fight it, the role of the police and the state, and what socialists should say about the family. Such events are an important part of building the AWL and we will be inviting all those who attended to come to our conference in London on 26/27 March.

# German workers to strike from 7 March

## Shorter hours, more jobs!

MEMBERS of the German metalworkers' union IG Metall, the strongest trade-union in Europe, plan to start strike action over hours and jobs from 7 March. Even the bosses concede that the union will get the necessary 75% ballot majority for the strikes.

The union is demanding shorter working hours to save jobs. It calls for a 35 hour week, already agreed from October 1995, to be implemented immediately, and for a 30 hour week in individual plants, with only limited loss of pay. The bosses demand the right to return to a 40 hour

week, and to cut pay by the full amount where factories work shorter hours.

The union leaders, however, have deliberately planned to start action on a small scale and in non-strategic areas. "We want to avoid massive social conflict", says union leader Klaus Zwickel. "In order to

keep the conflict within boundaries, we will at first call our strikes at companies where there will be no knock-on effect". The bosses are militant and ready for lock-outs. IG Metall members will have to challenge their leaders' timidity if they are to win.

## No deportations of Islamic fundamentalists!

ACCORDING to Islamic fundamentalist activists, Algerians seeking asylum in Britain are being deported to Algeria to persecution, jailing, torture and possible execution by the regime.

Slimani Djfar, the 40 year old father of four children, was detained in Portsmouth detention centre for nine months after applying for asylum in this country. He was deported to Algeria three weeks ago where he was immediately thrown in Beroujthia prison, a top security prison.

Another Algerian who applied for political asylum in the UK, 21 year old Riad Khassioui, was deported from the UK to Algeria six months ago. On 22 January 1994 the secret police came to 20 Rue Danton where Riad was with his brother-in-law, Mohamed Mazni, and a friend, Yacine Zouiche.

The police threw Yacine Zouiche from the balcony to his death. They then tortured Mohamed Mazni in his bath, and murdered both him and Riad Khassioui.

Here in Britain, eight Algerians were released from Pentonville prison on Friday 11 February, after a 12 day hunger strike. They have been held there for varying periods, one of them for seven months. Their 'crime', for which they have been held in prison alongside common criminals, is to be refugees from torture and death in Algeria. All eight of them are still under immediate threat of deportation.

Socialist do not support Islamic fundamentalism in any sense.

If they came to power in Algeria the FIS would institute a dictatorship little different from Fascism.

Working class organisations would be smashed, activists killed.

Women would face barbaric and primitive forms of oppression.

Nevertheless, we should not treat the fundamentalists as they would treat us. All immigration laws are unjust. All deportations must cease.

## South Africa: towards civil war?

By Anne Mack

A FULL SCALE South African civil war is starting to look more and more like a real threat as April 27th, the date for the countries first ever democratic elections, draws nearer.

Last weekend, 15 ANC election campaigners, including two twelve year olds and 10 teenagers, were killed by gunmen almost certainly operating under the control of the far right and linked to sections of the security forces.

Terror in the townships has been coupled to a drive by Afrikaners to establish a "Volkstaat" composed of large parts of the Transvaal and Orange Free State.

Over 100 white towns have declared "independence" — some in whites-only polls supervised by the fascist AWB (Afrikaner Resistance Movement). Former South African army generals who are now leaders of the Afrikaner Volksfront — the white far right alliance — have promised strikes by white mine supervisors, railway signalmen, and civil servants to paralyse the country. This is to be the first step in a campaign of "defiance" to stop this April's election taking place.

The white right and their allies, like bantustan bosses, are talking openly about civil war and are preparing for it. They hope that though today's generals back De Klerk, the white rank and file of the army will back them.

To date, no attempt has by De Klerk to test this claim, but there are plenty of examples of the security forces not being used seriously against the far right. This includes the AWB armed attack on the main negotiations centre.

The left wing Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA) are thus completely correct to make the question of self-defence, including a workers' militia, central to their political activity and part of their campaign for a mass workers' party.

It would be wrong, however, to jump to criticise the ANC leadership for attempting to conciliate the far right. The ANC's proposal for extensive self government and even the creation of an Afrikaner homeland are not in principle wrong.

What should be opposed, militarily if necessary, is any drive by the far right to create an "Afrikaner state", the majority population which would be made up of right-

less and voteless black workers. Even a pro-capitalist and anti-trade union ANC/National party coalition government would be justified in putting down such a slaveholder's rebellion. The question is, could such a government rely on "it" army to do it?

Right now, it is right for the ANC to demand that De Klerk sends in the army to deal with the lynch mob white police who have shot black people protesting at their area being declared part of a "white state" by local councillors.

The black far right — based mainly on the old bureaucracy of the bantustan puppet states, and their corrupt hangers on — are also

pushing for "independence". In principle, a separate Zulu or Tswana state cannot be opposed by socialists if the majority of people in a given area want it.

The point, however, is that the people should decide. Buthelezi's declaration of a separate Zulu kingdom is designed to prevent the majority of people in KwaZulu/Natal having any democratic say. He knows that most Zulu workers and youth would want to be part of a democratic and non-racial South Africa. The same goes for Lucas Mangope, boss of Bophothatswana bantustan — home of "Sun City" — and his ridiculous claims to speak for the Tswana people.

## Labour's rank and file are moving

By Alan Simpson MP, Nottingham South

I THINK THINGS are changing and they're changing in a series of quite complicated ways. The first thing is we have had over a decade in which the Labour Party and the trade union movement has been told — keep quiet and stand in line and that is the way we will win elections. We have now managed to lose at least three general elections on the basis of say 'nowt' and stick together.

And I think what's happening in the trade unions is the rank and file are starting, at their conferences and in their branches, to say that this is not a runner. I think this message is percolating through to the leaders of the trade unions. They can see the writing on the wall for them. Being seen with the Labour Party pushing for bland slogans has very little mileage for trade union leaders who want to stay trade union leaders.

It has to be a really good thing that trade unionists are starting to reclaim and restate a radical agenda of their own. This has been going on whilst the right has been working furiously to get rid of the trade union link, and, in many ways, to prepare for the abolition of the party. There are certainly some people on the right of the Labour Party who see the future as a sort of social-democratic Lib/Lab pact.

What stood in the way of that was a whole series of policy commitments and the structural link between the Labour Party and the trade unions.

I think that the right were really set back at last year's annual conference. I think it was a shame some of the policy scraped through, but they were absolutely astonished at how far the unions were prepared to go and to step out of line. They were also surprised that the unions appeared to be far more in tune with where the rank and file of the party is. That for me is a really exciting basis for the possibility of change.

The second point is, it is hard to over-state how hated this Tory government is. Up and down the country, in almost any county you go to the government is regarded with outright contempt — with real venom. Yet people still want to know what Labour stands for. A Labour Party which presents itself on slogans and sound bites will be no more credible in the next election than it was in the last.

There is a longing in the country for something identifiable to get their hands on to say "this is why I'm voting Labour," not what I'm voting against.

It is very exciting. It is a wonderful opportunity for the left.

Next week Alan looks at the issues on which Labour should be campaigning.



BT managers stage unofficial walk-outs. Last Friday, February 18th, hundreds of British Telecom lower and middle managers walked out in protest at BT's pay freeze. BT's profits all up 4% to £2.2 billion. The managers' union STE should link up with the engineers union NCU for a joint fight over pay, jobs and the shorter working week.

## Back TUC march against racism!

Statement by the Newham Monitoring Project

NEWHAM Monitoring Project welcomes the decision of the TUC to rise above the petty squabbling of other national organisations and organise the march against racism in Tower Hamlets on March 19th in conjunction with local community groups. This march is in support of Qudus Ali, who was brutally beaten by racists in September 1993; in support of the Tower Hamlets Nine, who face serious charges because of the police's attempts to break up the vigil for Qudus outside Whitechapel Hospital; and in support of Muktar Ahmed, currently lying in Whitechapel Hospital after being viciously attacked by racists in Bethnal Green. Local community groups, including NMP and the Tower Hamlets Nine Defence Campaign, will be leading the march with trade union leaders.

Muktar is the latest victim of communities under siege, facing rising levels of racist attacks and the prospect of the BNP winning more seats in Tower Hamlets. This threat is faced by black communities across east London, with the BNP also standing candidates for the local government elections in May in Custom House and Silvertown, an area of south Newham with many similarities to the Isle of Dogs. NMP is already organising against the BNP in Newham, countering every attempt by the fascists to spread their racist propaganda in the borough and use popular racism to recruit.

The demonstration on March 19th is simply the first step. What happens after the marchers have gone home is even more important, particularly in the run up to the elections. We call upon all progressive forces to support NMP's major campaign against racist violence and fascism in east London, and to give their full support to the Tower Hamlets Nine Defence Campaign, whose imprisonment would represent not only a defeat for the Nine but also for the whole community.

For further information on NMP's campaign, contact us at 382 Katherine Rd, London E7, Tel: 081-552-6284. The Tower Hamlets Nine Defence Campaign can be contacted via PO Box 273, London E7, Tel: 081-548-0099.

**Tower Hamlets Nine Benefit • March 4th • The Rocket, Holloway Rd, London N4 • Performances from JC001, London Posse, Hustlers HC and others • Special appearance by Apache Indian • Ticket outlets across London • For further details contact the Campaign on 081-548-0099**

Labour's leaders play Tory game, but left needs a real alternative

# Cut hours, restore services, tax the rich



Trying to outdo the Tories at their own game

LABOUR'S right-wing Shadow Chancellor, Gordon Brown, told the press this Monday, 21 February, that he had "stolen a march on the Tories". How? He has stolen their policies.

That's how bad the Labour leadership is these days: all thought of arguing a straightforward alternative to the Tories is replaced by a desperate search for ways of outdoing them at their own capitalist games.

Brown argues: "instead of a battle for territory between public and private sectors, the modern way of applying lasting socialist values is to mobilise the energies of both to build modern public services" (Guardian, 22 February).

For many years now the Labour leaders have refused to commit themselves to restoring Tory cuts in the Health Service, education, and other welfare provision. At the 1992 election they made a mild proposal for some limited restoration of the welfare state, to be paid for by increased taxes on the well-off.

The Tories ran a dirty, lying campaign about Labour's supposed "tax bombshell". In fact the Tories themselves had already increased taxes (including VAT) for most people between 1979 and 1992, and have now increased them further than even their scare propaganda claimed Labour would.

The Tories are going to run a tax-scare campaign about any Labour proposal to restore public services. But instead of standing and fighting, the Labour leaders have run like rabbits.

Last month, Meghnad Desai, former Labour economic spokesperson in the House of Lords and no left-winger, was sacked as a Labour whip for writing: "The problem of raising resources for [public investment] is being avoided like the plague by Labour's front bench. But, if you want to invest a lot of money, you either tax or you raise interest rates... An element in [Bryan Gould's] policy that I particularly like is its will-

ingness to contemplate higher income taxation".

Closed hospitals, overcrowded schools, mass homelessness — none of these alarms or worries the modern Labour leadership as much as the daring idea of taking back some of the billions that the Tories have handed out in tax cuts to the rich!

Brown's clever-clever scheme for

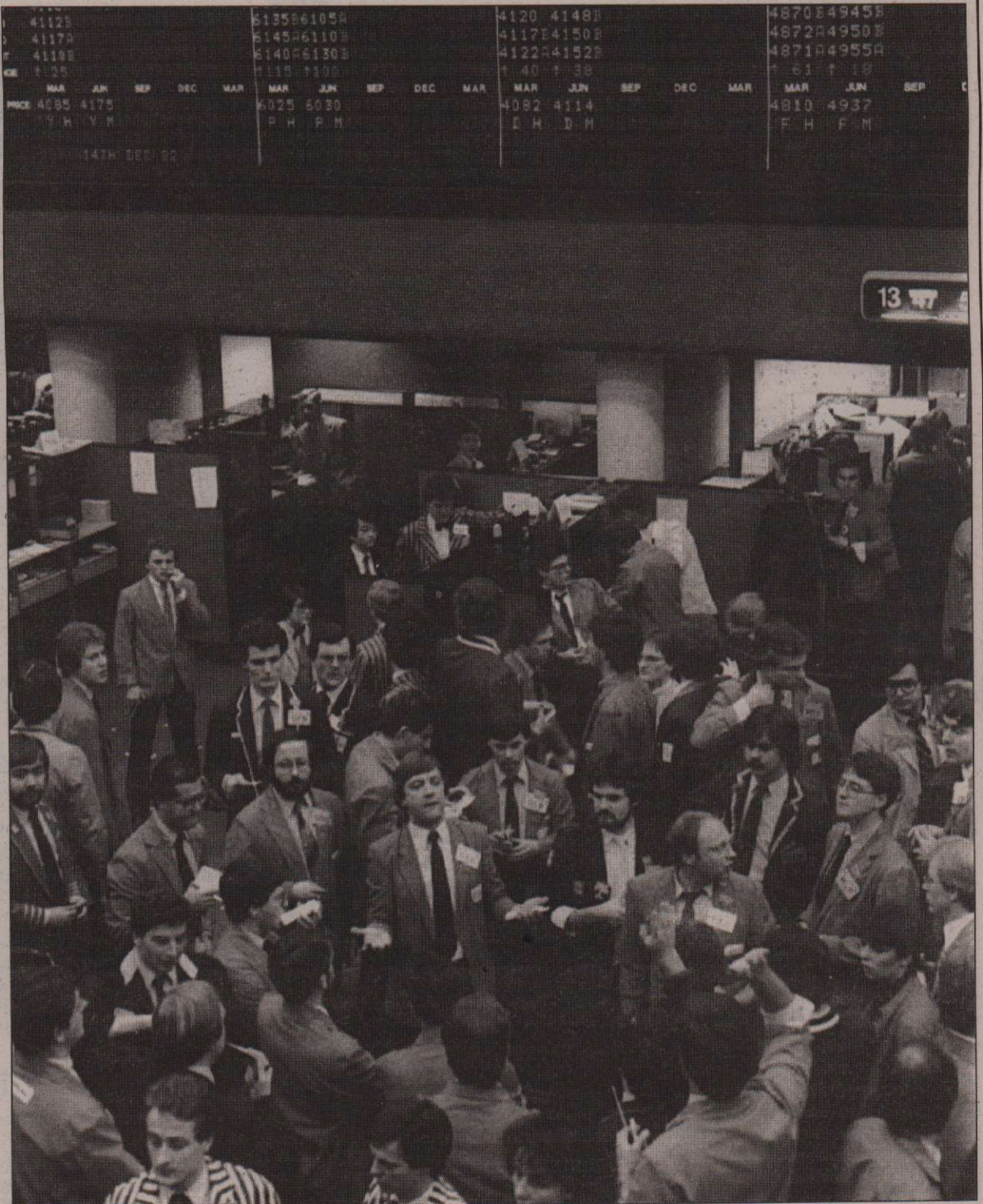
*"For many years now the Labour leaders have refused to commit themselves to restoring Tory cuts in the Health Service, education, and other welfare provision."*

"stealing a march on the Tories" is to propose that new schools, hospitals, roads, and railways be financed by asking private capitalists to invest in them — on commercial terms, that is, with a handsome profit.

If this did work, it would give private capitalists a licence to leech the public sector. Brown does not and cannot suggest that the capitalists will suddenly be transformed into philanthropists who build schools or hospitals just for public benefit. The capitalists will demand guarantees that they are paid back every penny they invest, plus a good whack of profits.

In fact not even Brown is likely to be able to offer the capitalists sufficiently lavish guarantees. And restoring the welfare state is not only, and not mainly, a matter of new buildings. What about providing adequate numbers of adequately-paid staff in the buildings that already exist?

A policy for full employment and



Gordon Brown wants to give these people — capitalist exploiters — licence to rob the public sector

restored public services which depends for every inch of progress on the goodwill and cooperation of the capitalist sharks who have gnawed at our jobs, conditions, livelihoods, and public services for the last 15 years — that is no policy at all!

John Prescott's signature on Gordon Brown's scheme should finish off any reliance that anyone had in him as a "left-wing" or "working-class" voice in the Shadow Cabinet. The left, and all those who seriously want a restored welfare state and full employment, must organise independently.

There is a basis for a powerful campaign in the trade unions and the Labour Party. Two big unions, the TGWU and the GMBU, are obliquely but clearly voicing discontent with the Labour leaders.

Yet the GMBU leaders' alternative

— support for European Commission president Jacques Delors' plan for increased public investment across Europe — is only marginally less feeble than Brown's scheme.

We need a direct response to the scandal of four million people unemployed while others work long, life-wrecking hours, and public services are grossly understaffed.

The trade unions should follow the example of the German workers, and campaign for a shorter work week without loss of pay. Labour should pledge that the next Labour Government will legislate for a 35 hour maximum work week and an adequate national minimum wage.

The trade unions should campaign to defend public services and stop contracting-out and privatisation. Labour should pledge that the next Labour Government will restore and

expand the National Health Service, education, and other public services and benefits, and bring contracted-out services back into the public sector.

These measures can and should be paid for from the incomes of the rich, which have increased so hugely over the last 15 years, and by cutting military spending.

That will not be possible, however, if the commanding heights of industry and finance are left in the hands of private capitalists. They would quickly wreck a full-employment policy by holding back investments and transferring money out of the country.

Labour must therefore be committed to public ownership of the commanding heights of industry and finance, under workers' and democratic control.

*"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race."*

Karl Marx

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## WE SAY

**AWL vs Michael Foot on socialism and democracy**

# A vital debate

SHOULD WE accept what the Tory Government does – because it would be undemocratic to go against the decisions of Parliament and wait for the next General Election for a chance to reverse the Tory policies?

Yes, said Labour leaders Michael Foot and Neil Kinnock in the early '80s, when the labour movement could have stopped the Tories if its leaders had organised a serious resistance to them.

No, say Labour's leaders today – we should not even be as radical as that! We should accept what the Tories do, and wait for the next General Election – but not even hope for the policies to be reversed after that.

The selling-off to private profiteers of the public utilities; the semi-privatisation of the Health Service through "trusts"; the devastating cutbacks in resources for public services; even VAT on fuel – we should accept all these as irreversible, because a Labour promise to reverse them would be too disruptive. It would disturb the bosses, the bankers, and the top bureaucrats and managers, too much.

There is one good thing about this craven policy. It sheds a harsh and clear light on the realities of "democracy" in Britain today.

We have the forms of democracy. We have elections in which different political parties can compete. But those forms have been increasingly hollowed of real substance – of any real capacity to enable the mass of the people to debate our options, decide the majority view, and see it carried out – that is, truly run our own lives.

Policies opposed by the big majority even of Tory voters – like the running-down of the Health Service, or the mass closure of coal mines – can be pushed through by an entrenched government, to become, for all immediate purposes, irreversible.

The entrenched power of the permanent, unelected state machine; the overwhelming unelected power of the bosses of industry and finance; the domination of governments over Parliament, and the gearing of parliamentary democracy to "stable government" (so that a government has five years' free run, without being called to account); and the Labour leaders' suppression of democracy within the labour movement – all play a part in this emptying-out of democracy.

Despite everyone paying lip-service to the abstract concept of democracy, there is almost no real debate today about the hollowing-out of the reality. The Labour leaders respond to criticism with the bludgeon of the National Constitutional Committee's machine for expulsions, not with political argument. On the left, groups like the SWP reckon that it is enough to jeer at the Establishment and advocate industrial militancy.

The debate which the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is sponsoring in Conway Hall, London, on 9 March, is therefore very important. Former Labour Party leader Michael Foot will take the platform – like a time-traveller from the days when the Labour leadership did feel the need to argue politically with the left – to debate with Socialist Organiser's editor John O'Mahony.

O'Mahony will argue that mass working-class direct action to defeat Tory ruling-class policies is in fact democratic; indeed, such mass action from below to resist the tyranny and oppression of a ruling minority is the heart and soul of any real democracy.

Rather than bowing down to the withered husks of British parliamentary democracy, we should fight to defend and extend every element of democracy. Rather than accepting the bosses' dictatorship in industry, we should fight for workers' control.

The labour movement has an inalienable right to use direct action against bourgeois governments, including those with a Parliamentary majority and, where such action is feasible, a class duty to use it.

**John O'Mahony (AWL) debates Michael Foot, Wednesday 9 March, 7.30pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London**

# 20,000 students

# We

# accept

## The record of Left Unity

- LU supporters proposed the anti-poll tax policy passed by national conference.

- LU supporters in Manchester Area NUS organised an annual demonstration in early November against the government's attacks on students and education.

- LU supporters proposed the anti-loans policy adopted by the national union.

- LU supporters initiated the only broad-based campaign to oppose the government attacks on NUS and student unions.

- LU women organised a tour of Ireland in liaison with Irish women in support of abortion rights.

- LU supporter Kevin Sexton organised a lesbian, gay and bisexual lobby of Parliament with over 200 students from all over Britain.

- LU supporters launched, with student CND, the biggest anti-Gulf war students' coalition.

- LU has consistently supported all anti-racist, anti-fascist activities and has been the force in non-sectarian support.

- LU supporters in South Yorks Area recently organised the only national Further Education conference this year. With over 75 colleges represented this event was a resounding success.

- LU supporters on the National Union of Students (NUS) Executive have been suspended, "grounded" – denied fares and expenses – and excluded from NUS for their ideas and actions – such as supporting occupations!

- LU women have maintained a national network of women in NUS despite the NUS Women's Campaign being deliberately run down by the NUS leadership.

- LU supporters have organised two major lobbies of Parliament since October

- LU supporters organised occupations, lobbies and pickets immediately the Tories announced their cuts in the student grant.

- LU supporters on the NUS Executive have persistently fought for NUS to call and build a national demonstration.

- LU supporters initiated and co-ordinated the national demonstration in London on 23 February.

**Left Unity stands for immediate, direct action in defence of students and education. We don't pick and choose issues that seem "sexy" i.e. that will build our own organisation regardless of the rest of the student movement. We take up the fight on all issues attacking the daily lives of students. We strive to do this alongside and in support of struggles taken up by workers in education. More information: Left Unity, c/o 9 Love Walk, Camberwell, London SE5. Telephone: 071-639 7967.**



The rally after the 23 February demonstration heard speakers from a variety of other struggles: a FE lecturer on strike, the Tower Hamlets 9 Campaign and a speaker from the French student struggle. The message of the rally was clear: united we are strong!

## Where we stand

**L**EFT UNITY has a fighting record second to none. We make no left postures or excuses, but fight consistently on the issues affecting students and education.

Left Unity is an activist based organisation with the following aims:

- to get NUS to campaign
  - to build support for collectivism and direct action
  - to turn the student movement outwards towards the struggles of workers and internationally.
- When the Tories announced their attacks on the student grant, Left Unity initiated and was involved in action all over the country. Demonstrations, occupations and

lobbies of Tory MPs' surgeries happened everywhere.

Left Unity, with activists from London colleges, built at very short notice a 2,000 strong demo topped off with a lobby of Parliament and an activist meeting with over 400 students in the Grand Committee Room in Westminster.

From that meeting, Left Unity supporters called and co-ordinated the national demonstration on 23 February, the most important collective action in the student movement for a long time.

The NUS leadership, despite a groundswell of pressure, have so far flatly refused to organise any action against the Tories' outrageous proposals to slash the student grant.

# nts say: ill not pt cuts

**YOUTH  
FIGHTBACK**



**Rebellion**

... the voice of revolutionary socialist youth.

This page is separately edited.

Editor: Mark Sandell

Phone: 071-639 7967 for details of our activity.

Letters and articles to *Youth Fightback* c/o PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

*Youth Fightback* is...



A massive show of strength against the Government's cuts

By Jill Mountford

**U**P TO 20,000 students marched in the rain through London in a great national protest against Tory cuts today (Wednesday 23 February). Over fifty colleges backed the demonstration called by the Student Activist Alliance. Coaches of students came from all over the country and from as far away as Scotland.

The demonstrators have sent this message to the Tory government: "We will rouse up the entire student population of the UK and force you to retreat." Today's demonstration was a massive show of strength by students against the Government's attacks on grants and education.

The demonstration is only the beginning. Those who marched through the rain today are going back to their colleges to build an unstoppable movement that will take students onto the streets of every city in Britain in protest against the savage Tory decision to cut grants by 30% over the next three years.

The Government are weak. They have made several U-turns. United,

we can defeat them.

To win we need a nationwide campaign involving hundreds of thousands of students and linking up with workers who want to fight up with workers who want to fight the Tories.

Last month a march in Paris of nearly one million students and workers forced the right wing government there to drop attacks on education. We need that sort of movement here. Today's demonstration was a giant step towards such a movement.

After the demonstration, 100 students attended a meeting called by the Student Activist Alliance to plan future action. The next big step is 1 March.

On 1 March we have an ideal chance to spread the campaign. NATFHE, the biggest lecturers' union, has called a one-day strike against government attacks on education and their working conditions. We must link up with them and build a national shutdown of education.

Students and teachers together can put the frighteners on the Tories.

Colleges must shut down on 1 March.

Today's national demonstration shows what could be done if the leaders of the National Union of

Students would put the national student organisation where it belongs, at the head of the growing student movement against the Tories.

We call on them now to act. But we will not wait for them. If they

won't lead, the rank and file students, organised in the Student Activist Alliance will.

We will continue the work of today's demonstration by closing down higher education on 1 March!

## Gutless loudmouths

**Socialist Worker**  
Occupy, Organise, Demonstrate  
Kick the Tories Out.

**NO 30% GRANT CUT**

The 30% grant cut announced by the Tories will ensure education is only for the rich. Students will be forced to drop out of college. They must be stopped. The government is one of corruption, sleaze and a scandal who moralise to the rest of us. John Major back to back means education for the rich.

In France students have stopped their Tory government in its tracks over attacks on education. They did it by organising a demonstration of a million students in Paris. The lesson for us is obvious. Students at SOAS, UEA, Bradford University and Glasgow University have all occupied against the grant cut.

In Britain a national wave of occupations and a march on Parliament would stop the Tories and bring the government down.

**National Demonstration  
No 30% Grant Cut  
Central London  
23rd February**

NUS have so far refused to name the date. This is why SWSS is calling for activists everywhere to back the National Demonstration in London on the 23rd February. To organise occupations in their own colleges, and to come to the National Activist meeting on 4th February.

**What you can do**  
Call on activists meeting in your college and campaign to back the National Demonstration in London on 23rd February.  
Build a union meeting to organise an occupation to close down the college.  
Invite speakers from a college which has been in occupation: SOAS, Bradford Uni, LSE, UEA, Edinburgh Uni, Glasgow Uni.

Sponsor the National Activist Meeting on Friday 4th February 7.00 p.m. University of London Union, Malet Street, Central London

If you would like more information about Socialist Worker, or would like to join the SWP, send this slip to: SWP, PO Box 82, London E3 3JH.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Union \_\_\_\_\_

Hyping it up before the demonstration, the SWP claimed that the student march could trigger a political explosion bigger than May 1968 in France and, if it headed for Parliament, could "bring the government down." On the day, all the SWP did was a little half-hearted shoving at police lines, a mile from Parliament!

## Sectarian stunt fizzles out

**T**HE THREAT by the sectarian Socialist Workers Party (SWP) to disrupt the student demonstration looked serious for a while. They had produced thousands of posters saying "March on Parliament." On Wednesday it fizzled out.

They did make a feeble attempt to turn the march in the right direction so that it could "march on Parliament", but the demonstrators — contemptuously — surged past them and they had to run to catch up.

As we understand it, they had decided that they would sit down on the road in an attempt to provoke a clash with the police. But the weather was wet and nasty, and so they decided not to get their backsides wet.

This was an altogether feeble effort from an organisation that claims 2,000 and may have as many as 1,000 students in its ranks.

What were they up to? Posturing as usual. "Exposing" *Socialist Organiser*.

They were never ever remotely serious about "marching on Parliament".

It was all neatly summed up in an exchange between an *SO* supporter and an SWP student organiser.

"Why", said the *SO* man, "do you not at least attempt to break through the lines of police over there, if you are serious about 'marching on Parliament'?" The reply came back pat: "Because we're not adventurist!"

That is true, they raise preposterous adventurist slogans to "expose" *SO*, but they are not serious, when it comes to doing anything about it. They are not adventurists: they are just windbags.

Last Wednesday's performance must prompt serious people in the SWP to have a fresh look at themselves.

# Is Michael Howard hooked?

**A**S Home Secretary Michael Howard announced a clampdown on soft drugs last week, with the maximum fine for possessing cannabis increased from £500 to £2,500, experts pointed out that a brown smelly substance can be highly dangerous, especially when Michael Howard talks it.

"While law and order is not addictive," said a spokesperson for a drying-out clinic for political speech writers, "its use can be compulsive. The roar of the Conservative Conference can create a euphoric high, causing cabinet ministers to make increasingly bizarre policy statements".

There is little evidence that making speeches on "soft" subjects such as law and order leads on to making speeches on hard subjects such as the economy or British manufacturing industry. "Only real lunatics in the Cabinet try those" said the clinic's spokesperson, continuing: "Speeches like this really don't have too many lasting effects. We just suggest that people avoid operating any complex machinery while they're on it. For example, the machinery of government."

**M**ICHAEL Howard's mouth is still making policy while his brain is at lunch.

Ever since Howard visited a young offenders' day centre three weeks ago, he has been talking about a 15 year old he met there who had admitted receiving four cautions from the police, two for arson. The lad should have been shut up long ago, claims Howard.

The shame is, Howard never checked his facts. The youth received three cautions in 1989 for shoplifting, when he was 11. He received one for arson (he claimed two because, it seems, he was overawed by Howard) after setting light to some straw while mucking around with matches in a field.

Obviously a menace who should be locked up for the safety of society — Howard that is.

**J**APAN is the model towards which every capitalist strives. It

## GRAFFITI

VIVELA  
REBUCION

By Cyclops

hardly has a welfare state. Once you've been unemployed for six months, all welfare payments are cut off.

Last week 110 homeless people who slept in cardboard boxes in a covered passage in the back streets of Tokyo's city centre found their homes, and personal effects removed by the city, to be replaced by a waist high fence and potted shrubs.

The homeless were told that they would be transported to temporary sheltered accommodation — which, in a move that our own Westminster Council could be proud of, was several miles outside Tokyo. The homeless complained it would be impossible to find the casual work on which they survive.

The cost of the operation, officially described as an "emergency measure to help the homeless", was approximately £300,000.

**L**UCKILY in Britain we have a welfare state where cost is no matter — especially when it comes to Conservative Party publicity. The Department of Health's publicity for its Citizens Charter has so far cost £4,101,227. The advertising industry is safe in Conservative hands.

**W**ANT A job heading a quango? Here is your chance with "Team 1000" a fund raising initiative from the Tory Party.

All you have to do is give the Conservatives £1,000, and you not only get preferential treatment for government-appointed jobs with the optional knighthood, but you'll get a chance to meet members of the Cabinet and have that all important souvenir photograph taken.

For £2,000 they'll send you the negatives, and for £3,000 you can just have the job and avoid the cabinet totally.

# Monty's double trouble

## PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

**C**ALL ME an old softie if you want but I can't help feeling just a little sorry for David Banks. Men who are, shall we say, horizontally challenged, are supposed to be jolly, happy-go-lucky types. Mr. Banks — once a carouser of Falstaffian proportions — now more often resembles Oliver Hardy after a particularly irritating and humiliating spot with Stan Laurel. Banks was in Ollie mode at last week's *What The Papers Say* awards as the camera repeatedly focused in on him as though he was the star of the show. But star he wasn't: the *Daily Mirror* failed to pick up a single award.

To add to poor Banksie's discomfiture, he was forced to witness Richard Stott of *Today* picking up the Editor of the Year award. The significance of Stott's victory cannot have been lost on Banks: Stott was his immediate predecessor at the *Mirror* and since joining *Today* has set about recreating in the image of the old style *Mirror*. Stott's team at *Today* now includes a swathe of disaffected ex-*Mirror* staff and the paper's political line is now solidly pro-Labour. Against all the odds, Stott has built the paper's circulation up to well above the half-million watershed. Meanwhile, under Banks's editorship, the *Mirror's* sales have plummeted amid

continual rumours that its loyalty to Labour can no longer be relied upon.

In fairness to Banks, the decline of the *Mirror* is not entirely his responsibility. The reputation and standing of the once-great title had already been badly damaged by Robert Maxwell. But even under the mad Captain, independently-minded editors like Stott, Mike Malloy and (briefly) Roy Greenslade, had

just about managed to retain some vestiges of the paper's old integrity and panache.

The real responsibility for finally destroying the *Mirror* lies with its present boss, David Montgomery — a man with no understanding of the *Mirror's* traditions and no priorities for the paper beyond turning in a

profit for the banks who still own the majority of *Mirror* Group's shares. Poor old Banksie is no more than Monty's tool and from his face last week it was obvious that he knows it. The *Mirror* will survive and the banks will be paid off. Montgomery will probably succeed in becoming a second division media baron. Banks will go down in history as the *Mirror's* worst ever editor: and he knows it.

Meanwhile, Monty faces more problems with his much-publicised bid for control of the *Independent* (another ailing paper that failed to pick up a single award last week).

Having been well and truly outmanoeuvred by Tony O'Reilly's *Irish Independent* group a couple of weeks ago,

Monty has hit back with a bid that equals what O'Reilly paid. Monty's consortium included *El Pais* of Spain and *La Republica* of Italy plus the *Indie's* editor and founder Andreas Whittam Smith. It should have been a winning team but has met resistance all down the line from the *Indie* staff and the board of Newspaper Publishing. The reasons are simple: Montgomery's record of mass sackings and union-bashing at the *Mirror* has understandably alienated the *Indie* staff while Whittam Smith's repeated misjudgements have cost him the confidence of the board.

The chair of Newspaper Publishing, Ian Hay Davison, and his chief executive Patrick Morrissey will refuse to endorse the *Mirror* bid at any price. And without their backing a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission is virtually inevitable.

The rift between the Montgomery/Whittam Smith camp and the board is now so bitter that sackings are certain. If the consortium wins, Hay Davison and Morrissey will be fired; if it fails they will sack Whittam Smith.

No good could possibly come from getting mixed up with the singularly unlikeable Mr Montgomery. Poor old Banksie's sad clown face should have been sufficient warning.

# Should a 59 year old woman give birth?



**1**994 LOOKS like being the year in which advances in assisted fertility, real and imaginary, provide a disproportionate amount of the headlines. So far, there has been no shortage of volunteers to pontificate on how others should run their lives.

We have had a 59 year old British woman giving birth to twins after treatment in Italy (opportunities for ageism, sexism, anti-Italian prejudice); two "black" women opting for donated "white" eggs, one to avoid her child suffering racism, the other because there are no "black" eggs from aborted foetuses (the "yuk" factor substitutes for sensible discussion).

One exception to the media mud-bath has been New Scientist. In editorials, it has pointed out that a 59 year old man and a 45 year old woman having twins, the reverse of the situation above, would raise not a whisper. The so-called dangers of childbirth in the elderly have been much exaggerated in the past, too,

with the over-40s being deemed at a risk now seen to be illusory.

It has also pointed out that the answer, if one is needed, to "race" selection in fertility clinics is to work harder for race equality. Furthermore, NS argues that the preoccupation with skin colour is little to do with genetic relatedness. Choosing one's offspring's skin colour is no more genetic engineering than is choosing height or eye colour, both things which are done now without question. Also, since the spread of genetic differences within "races" is greater than between them, there is no reason why a "black" egg should be any closer genetically to a "black" woman than a "white" egg.

The furore over "eggs from foetuses" has provided more opportunities for poor logic and emotive arguments. NS comments on the concentration of the media on the "unpleasantness" of the idea, with the intellectual *Independent on Sunday* coining the phrase "The Yuk Factor". It castigates the Human Fertility and Embryology Authority's abdication of its role in laying on the public the responsibility of deciding in a sort of opinion poll what its view should be. Instead of kow-towing to the "instinctive repugnance" many

people are alleged to feel to this, NS believes the HFEA should be tackling the problem of the shortage of donated eggs and confronting the emotive claptrap about a resulting child's having a foetus of a mother. The mother, says NS, would be the woman who brought the child to term and brought it up.

"...a 59 year old man and a 45 year old woman having twins... would raise not a whisper."

But in any case, using eggs from foetuses would be extraordinarily difficult and possibly not worth even attempting. The techniques for doing this have been developed in animal embryology research, reports NS's Gail Vines, but so far have only succeeded with immature eggs taken from the ovaries of slaughtered adult animals. At the Institute of Animal Physiology, near Cambridge, researchers developed techniques that would allow about half the immature

eggs from sheep and cows to develop, techniques that allow biotechnology companies to offer pedigree test-tube livestock to farmers.

The research took years to do, though involving the transfer of thousands of eggs, few of which developed. Even now, it is still not understood why some eggs develop and others don't. The idea of carrying out years of research on humans, with thousands of failures, would not be a very attractive one, either to the researchers or the researchees, particularly since it seems to be more difficult for humans to conceive than domestic livestock even in the most favourable circumstances.

Culturing eggs from ovaries removed from women for medical reasons or from women who have died is perhaps a more viable option but where this has been done, there has been a very low success rate. Grafting ovaries may not work very well, due to the problem of rejection, but the grafting of foetal ovarian tissue might work. This has been done in mice but the ovaries did not seem to be under control and released their eggs too fast.

All in all, it seems that there are probably more profitably courses of action than pursuing the path of eggs from embryos.

# South Africa: the real struggle has just begun

By Neville Alexander, National Chairperson, Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (South Africa)

**T**HE DEAL has been struck. The political elites of black and white South Africa have clinched the historic compromise. In future, the former representatives and leaders of white (Afrikaner) nationalism will work together to build one nation in a "non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and united" South Africa. All of them proclaim from the unavoidable screens of our television sets

*"Formal civil war will break out either before or after the election on 27 April 1994."*

every night and every morning that we are free at last. On 27 April this year, we shall exercise the power of our voting muscle by electing the first truly representative and democratic government ever to sit on the tarnished seats of parliament in Cape Town.

So this is our Azanian uhuru? Well, even the recognised leaders of this pact have become increasingly uncertain about it as we get closer to April. Just as the slaves were tied down to their former masters for a further five years on the much heralded day of Emancipation (1 December 1834) we have been tied to our apartheid oppressors for at least another five years through the mechanism of the government of National Unity and a cabinet governing by consensus of sorts.

The advice of the ANC's "Chinese comrades" as far back as June or July 1988 has been taken. We are making a distinction between demanding apartheid and ending white rule. Does anyone still remember the Confucian wisdom? We had better do so because we are going to pay dearly for it.

The laws of apartheid have all but gone. But white minority rule continues. Openly racist mechanisms

and institutions will disappear gradually but the fundamental relations of power and domination will continue almost unchanged.

A few tens of thousands of middle class blacks will be allowed to crawl in between the silken sheets of the bourgeoisie, a few thousand blacks will become directors of companies and owners of satellite companies. They will be allowed to share in the sparks of exploitation, but in reality they will merely be taking office, not power.

We will see more and more black faces in white places. But precious little will change for the vast majority of our people. The lives of unskilled and semi-skilled black workers are going to get much worse because of the economic crisis of the world capitalist system and because of the particular problems faced by the apartheid-capitalist economy of South Africa.

The COSATU leadership's attempt to be a main actor in the play called "Economic Restructuring" written by Minister of Finance, Trade and Industry, Derek Keys, will turn out to be a farcical failure, because it ignores the brutal realities of the global and the domestic economy.

Economic and political struggles will continue with greater intensity, fanned by the rising flames of the frustrated expectations of our tortured youth. With slight changes to the picture to accommodate the historical differences between the two countries, our future according to this scenario can be read in the situation of African-Americans in the United States of America in the post-civil rights era.

That is the good news. The bad news is that things will probably happen very differently. The right wing is going to destabilise the process even though it cannot stop it. Like a bird that cannot depend on the "co-operation" of its stronger right wing nor on that of its weaker left wing, the moderate centre of South African politics will plunge down to earth. Like Icarus, whose wings were scorched by the searing heat of the sun of social realities, the negotiators are going to be forced to fight the war they hoped to avoid by talking to each other. Already South Africa's transition from "authoritarian" to "democratic" rule has been one of the most violent of recent attempts at tran-



South African miners call for the nationalisation of the miners. These are the kind of anti-capitalist campaigns the workers need.

sition.

Formal civil war will break out either before or after the election on 27 April 1994. And, if that war is short and sharp, we will be plagued by counter-revolutionary terrorist actions for years to come.

For this reason, we in WOSA (Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action) believe it is essential to prepare for the worst. We disarm our forces physically and psychologically by making our people believe in the best of all possible worlds.

The negotiations will not be able to deliver the goods, the situation will become unbearable for most of our people. Counter-revolution and revolution will soon be the

*"Only socialism can finally resolve the question of racial and class inequality."*

order of the day. Hence our insistence on the formation of an independent mass workers' party that will be able to provide leadership to the urban and rural poor fearlessly and without compromise. Hence our insistence on strong worker organisation and mass mobilisation. Only this strategy, together with self-defence units, the beginnings of a workers militia, can guarantee that we will not be pushed into the hell of a repression such as this country has not yet seen.

Despite all the talk about "democracy", the Bill of Rights, etc., every politically conscious person knows that the only way in which negotiations, and the ruling class more

generally, can negotiate the rocky transition to a formally deracialised capitalist system is by means of some variant of repressive rule in order to preclude destabilisation from the right and/or the left.

Only socialism can finally resolve the question of racial and class inequality. Again, every serious politico from the ex-liberation movement knows this. All the stuffed-up cant about the triumph of the market and the end of history is coming apart at the seams in places like Russia, Yugoslavia, Somalia, Angola, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Haiti and last but not least, in Southern Africa itself.

The real struggles have only just begun. South Africa is at the vortex of the earthquakes that are about to shake the world. The unprecedented violence we have been experiencing since 1990 — thanks to the misnamed National Peace Accord — is merely the calm before the storm.

It is easy to criticise. In a paradoxical way the "settlement" marks some progress away from exclusive white rule. It involves the enfranchisement of further layers and segments of South Africa's population. The formal commitment to democracy opens space for important social developments in areas such as education, health, welfare, recreation, culture, etc. In the final analysis the relations of economic and political power remain essentially unchanged:

- 60,000 white farmers and companies own almost 90 per cent of land;
- less than one per cent of the people own or control 80 per cent of the wealth of the country;
- more than 50 per cent of workers are unemployed, including more than 80 per cent of young people between the ages of 25 and 35;

- between 30 per cent and 40 per cent of our adult population is illiterate;

- some two million housing units have to be built to deal with the question of homelessness.

It would be terribly easy to extend this sinister list of statistics that spell out what the social reality is in South Africa.

*"Only a workers' party and mass mobilisations together with... the beginnings of a workers' militia can guarantee we will not be pushed into a hell of repression such as this country has not yet seen."*

All the negotiators know these stubborn facts, most of them even better than I do. If, like ostriches, they choose to ignore them or to play them down in the vain hope that things will get better after they have got worse, we in the socialist and workers' movement for whom Ubuntu is more than a fashionable sentiment cannot allow ourselves to believe these fairy tales. We say this with sadness, but we cannot remain silent on such matters of life and death.

Taken from the *Sunday Nation*.

## WOSA speaking tour

**NEVILLE** Alexander and **SALIM** Volly of the Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action are to speak in Britain next month.

Neville is a long-standing revolutionary socialist opponent of the apartheid regime. He spent 11 years in jail on the infamous Robben Island along with Nelson Mandela and other leading figures in the liberation movement.

After his release in 1974 he spent six years under house arrest. He was elect-

ed Chair of WOSA by the biggest of the far left organisations in South Africa when it was formed in 1990.

Salim is also a leading activist in WOSA. He used to be an organiser in the militant shop workers' union CCAWUSA (which is now called SACCAWU) and supported the socialist journal "Action Youth" from which Socialist Organiser used to print material in the mid-'80s. The tour has not yet been finalised. For more info phone Tom on 071-639 7965.

# How the labour mov

Garry Scott looks at the history of the Chartists

*"Universal suffrage is the equivalent for political power for the working class of England, where the proletariat forms the majority of the population, where, in a long, though underground, civil war, it has gained a clear consciousness of its position as a class." Marx*

**C**HARTISM WAS a movement that organised to achieve universal suffrage. In the context of England in the 1840s this amounted to a revolutionary demand: the political supremacy of the working class.

Trotsky wrote of Chartism:

"It affords us an abbreviated and systematic view of practically the entire course of the proletarian struggle — from petitions to parliament down to armed insurrection. All the fundamental questions of the class movement of the proletariat, the relations between parliamentary and extra parliamentary activities, the part played by the universal suffrage right, the trade unions and cooperatives, the importance of the general strike and its relation to armed insurrection, even the mutual relations between the proletariat and the peasantry — were not only crystallised in practice in the history of the Chartist

mass movement, but found their answer in it as far as principles were concerned."

Chartism had its origins in the unstamped press movement. That movement in turn originated from an 1819 law which tightened up the newspaper "stamp" regulations to suppress the radical press by defining cheap weekly papers as newspapers whether or not they actually contained news. The effect of the law had been to force up the price of such papers and restrict their circulation among the working classes.

In 1830, John Doherty in Manchester and William Carpenter in London challenged this law openly by publishing cheap unstamped papers. Other publishers followed suit, including one of the most popular radical papers of the day — *The Poor Man's Guardian*. At its height, it sold 16,000 copies a week.

The unstamped press movement was particularly strong in London and a national network of supporters was set up.

On 16 June 1836, the London Working Men's Association was established, supported by a dozen MPs.

Lovett, one of the leaders of the LWMA, was responsible for drafting the six points of what was to be known as the People's Charter. These were: universal male suffrage, equal electoral districts, annual parliaments, payment of MPs, secret ballots and no property qualification for MPs. The Charter was to unite a diverse movement of already politically active radicals. The movement included such people as the George Julian Harney, who was inspired by the French Revolution, and influenced by such writers as Thomas Spence.

*"The strategy was a massive petition, public meetings, appearances at hustings — to be backed up by 'ulterior measures'..."*

It also included such people as J.R. Stephens, a Tory expelled from the Methodist Church. He campaigned against social evils such as the New Poor Law of 1834 (which drove the poor into miserable workhouses to get any relief) and excessive taxation on the poor. His fiery rhetoric made him popular in areas like Newcastle

that were to be associated with the "physical force" side of the movement. Speaking in Newcastle on 1 January 1838 he said:

"If the musket and the pistol, the sword, and the pike were of no avail, let the women take the scissors, the child the pin or needle. If all failed, then the firebrand — aye, the firebrand, the firebrand, I repeat. The palace shall be in flames."

Influenced by the success of agitation around the 1832 parliamentary Reform Act, which gave the vote to a section of the middle class, the Chartists adopted a strategy labelled by Feargus O'Connor "open, intimidating constitutionalism on a huge scale." This was to involve a massive petition, public meetings, appearances as non-electors at hustings. The mass mobilisation of the people was to be backed up by "ulterior measures" should the petition be rejected. These measures were to include "exclusive dealing", a run on the banks and a "Sacred Month."

Lecturers were sent out to outlying areas as missionaries, speaking about social evils such as the New Poor Law, taxation and duties on goods such as coffee, tea, sugar and soap — taxes on the poor that were contrasted with the extravagant lifestyles of the rich.

Much of the agitation of the Chartists articulated a feeling of betrayal by the Whig government. It was obvious that the 1832 Reform Act gave political power to the middle classes and this was used to oppress the majority of the people. This feeling of betrayal can be seen in a poster issued by the Northern Political Union to agitate for a General Strike in 1839 (the "Sacred Month"). On the poster are listed a number of betrayals of the Whig Government:

"This brings us up to the Passing of the Reform Bill, that measure we fondly hoped would remove our grievances. For... let us examine the Fruits which the

Reform Bill brought forth! By their fruits ye shall know them. First — The despotic and bloody Irish Coercion Bill, which gave Military Officers the Power to transport or hang the Irish People without either Judge or Jury. Second — the hideous and accursed New Poor Law, which tears asunder the dearest and holiest Ties of the Human Heart, which consigns even the old and infirm to flourish amid the Gloom and Solitude of a Dungeon Workhouse. Third — The open Violation of the Constitution of Canada and the inhuman Murder of the gallant hearts which stand forth to defend their Rights — Rights given and guaranteed by our own Government."

**O**NE OF the largest Chartist meetings took place on 21 June 1838 in Newcastle, a year before the first petition was to be presented. One of the main speakers, miners' leader Thomas Hepburn estimated that there were 400 banners and 40 bands in attendance, including a large number of miners.

Present at the meeting was the cavalry of the 5th Dragoon Guards and the infantry of the 52nd Foot. Their presence created an atmosphere of fear as many of the people at the meeting would have remembered the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 and been aware of the coercive measures carried out against the Irish.

The presence of the soldiers at the Newcastle meeting prompted Feargus O'Connor to raise the issue of "Physical Force" in the *Northern Star*. In an article headed "Physical Force" he wrote:

"I believe that the introduction of these words into Radical vocabulary was caused by, and arose out of the interference of the military with the Newcastle meeting upon the 28th of June last. Upon the following Saturday a meeting was convened in the Music Hall; when many of those present declared their intention of not attending future public meetings without that protection which arms afforded."

At this time it was not illegal to possess arms. Adverts for arms appeared in the *Northern Liberator* — the arms being sold in shops owned by Chartists.

The local Tyneside media reported that the Winlaton ironworkers manufactured and sold "pike-heads" for fourpence and sixpence, and that "men who formerly made less than three shillings a day were now obtaining fifteen shillings by this illegal calling."

With the introduction of the Rural Police Bill in the spring of 1839 attitudes towards physical force were to change. The proposed Rural Police Bill was interpreted as giving more powers to the police to intervene in industrial disputes particularly in mining areas.

James Williams, a delegate from Durham was to state:

"I, who have hitherto been and still am a moral force man, will never allow this Rural Police Law to be enforced without arming myself."

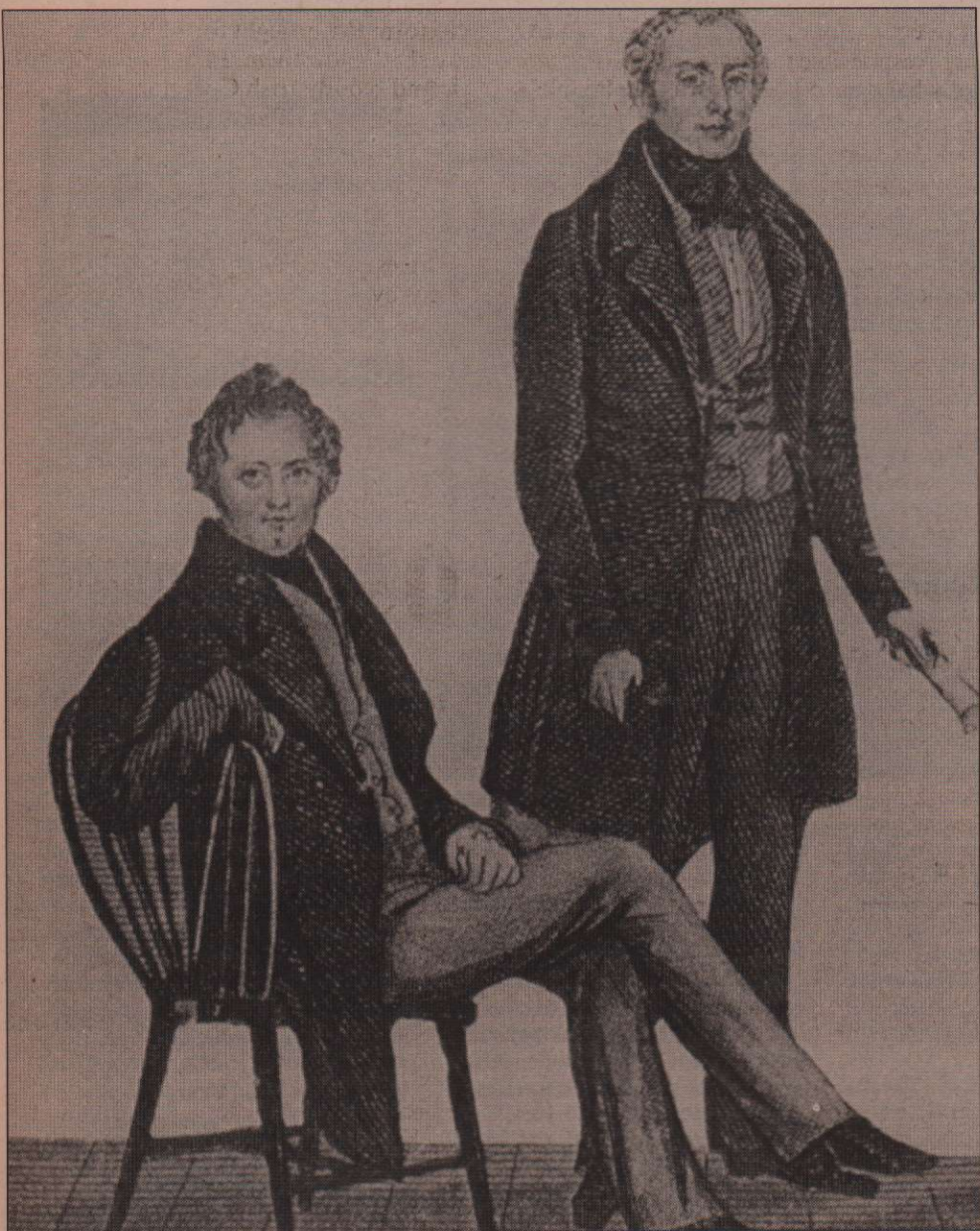
When it became clear that the petition would be refused, Lovett and Harney drew up eight questions of the Convention intended to prepare to put into effect previously discussed ulterior measures. Meetings were organised to



Welsh quarrywomen from the middle of the 19th century. The industrial revolution meant terrible conditions and grinding poverty for the working class. The workers began to fight back and organise.



# ovement started



Two Chartist leaders, Feargus O'Connor and James Bronterre O'Brien (seated) in 1839. O'Brien was, at the time, editor of *The Poor Man's Guardian*. Later, he became a pioneering socialist.

raise questions among the Chartists like: would you be prepared to start a run on the banks? would you boycott hostile dealers? and have you armed yourselves? The authorities, meanwhile, had prepared themselves for any disturbances — the extent of their preparations suggested they feared insurrection.

Sir Charles Napier took up an appointment in the industrial north, his troops being stationed in areas where unrest seemed most likely. Special constables were recruited and associations of armed citizens were formed. Meetings were banned and when they took place in defiance of the law its leaders were arrested.

On 4 July what were to become known as the Bull Ring riots took place in Birmingham. Chartist speakers defied a ban on meetings in the Bull Ring. Sixty London police were sent to break up the meeting. The Chartists fought back, driving the police off until soldiers were brought in. After the Bull Ring riot Lovett was arrested.

The petition with 1,280,000 names on it was debated in Parliament on 12 July 1839, and rejected by 235 votes to 46.

Throughout July 1839 disturbances took place in the industrial north, followed by state repression that resulted in the arrest of more Chartist leaders. On 9 July Harney was arrested at Bedlington, Northumberland where Chartist drilling

had taken place.

The Chartist Convention discussed the tactic of the "Sacred Month". Proposed by Thomas Attwood, the Sacred Month was seen by him as a "peaceable protest by employers and employees together against the misdeeds of the government — a demonstration of moral force."

There appeared to have been little support for the Sacred Month and it was decided on 5 August to abandon it.

News of the abandonment of the Sacred Month did not reach the North East until 10 August by which time it was too late for many of the plans made for the strike to be cancelled.

While Attwood saw the Sacred Month as a "peaceable protest by employers and employees together", the authorities saw things differently.

On Tyneside 2,000 special constables had been sworn in and stationed in the surrounding coalfields. The fear of state violence deterred many workers from supporting the strike. Despite the fear of violence miners supported the strike in areas of Northumberland and Durham where Chartism exerted a strong influence. Miners from Thornley, County Durham had previously commandeered a train to attend a Chartist meeting in Sunderland.

**Next week: reorganising after the First Charter and the 1842 General Strike.**

## Times, places, people

### Thomas Spence

AN AGRARIAN socialist, born in 1750. He developed a "plan" that included land nationalisation and public ownership of industry at a local level.

"In plain English," he wrote, "nothing less than complete extermination of the private system of holding land... will ever bring the world into a state worth living in".

### New Poor Law

CARRIED IN 1834. Commissioners were appointed to cut off all outdoor relief to able-bodied workers and confront those who applied for relief with the "workhouse test" — admission to the workhouse is the only form of relief.

Workers thrown out of work were faced with entering the workhouse — known as "Bastilles" — or starving.

The law was influenced by the ideas of Malthus — concerning the tendency of the population to rise faster than the means of subsistence available — and on entering the workhouse, men and women were separated.

### 1819 Peterloo Massacre

IN 1819 Manchester reformers held a meeting at St. Peter's Fields. The main speaker, Henry Hunt, was wanted by the authorities. While Hunt was speaking, soldiers rode into the field to crowd to arrest him. The crowd panicked and fled as soldiers on horse-back charged them, slashing with their sabres. Eleven people were killed and hundreds injured.

### Thomas Attwood

FOUNDER OF the 1830 Birmingham Political Union to campaign for the 1832 Reform Bill. Became a Member of Parliament after the passing of the 1832 Reform Act as a Radical. Although he supported the six points of the Charter, he was against the use of physical force and in favour of reconciliation between the working class and middle class.



## Albert Bowns

I WAS DEEPLY saddened to read in *Socialist Organiser* last week that Albert Bowns is dead. I will always remember Albert as comrade, mentor, tutor and friend. I also felt a small unreasoning pang of anger. Albert, you had no right to leave the battlefield at a time when your class and the rank and file of your union needed you like never before.

Albert was a comrade who always made the point that those who fail to learn from history are condemned to relive it. Albert never failed to learn those lessons.

Conventional history recalls the great ruling class generals, commanders and leaders of the past — Hannibal, Alexander, Rommel, Zhukov... Our history — working class history — tells of great leaders too: AJ Cook, Thomas Hepburn, Tom Mann, Aneurin Bevan. But generals and leaders count for nothing without great fighting foot soldiers. Albert Bowns was just that — a great fighting soldier in the army of the working class.

He was always in the front line of the battle on behalf of his class. I can think of no-one I would prefer to stand shoulder to shoulder with when the chips were down and the class fight was on than Albert Bowns.

I find it sadly ironic that Albert died so near to the 10th anniversary of the death of Davy Jones, a miner killed on a picket during the Great Strike. In my mind, Albert, like Davy Jones, Joe Green — another miner killed during our strike — and Joe Hill, will never die.

There will be a picket line somewhere, sometime in the future. I don't know when and I don't know where, but I do know that as the song about Joe Hill says, "when working men defend their rights," that's where you'll find Joe Hill/Davy Jones/Joe Green — and Albert Bowns."

When the working class picks itself up and goes on the offensive once more, Albert Bowns will live again.

When some student — 10, 20, 50 years in the future — reads through the back issues of *Socialist Organiser* to learn and write about the Great Strike of 1984-85 Albert Bowns will live again. So long as the labour movement survives Albert Bowns will never die. And it will survive: we will make sure of that.

Those who debate the Great Miners Strike of 1984/85 in terms of win, lose or draw, fail to grasp the essential point — we were challenged, we stood, and we fought. The outcome was of secondary importance in terms of class history. Albert was one of those who recognised that. Don't let the bastards grind you down he said, fight back!

With the death of Albert Bowns the working class has lost a first class fighter. Because he was that, above all else, a working class fighter, Albert would be the first to say: 'don't mourn, organise!'

On behalf of the rank and file of the NUM: Albert — we salute you, and assure you that your fight goes on.

Paul Whetton.

(Paul Whetton was secretary of the rank-and-file strike committee in Nottinghamshire during the 1984-5 miners' strike).

# Why we publish Socialist Organiser

# Agitate, Educate,

# Organise!

"A newspaper is what we most of all need; without it we cannot conduct that systematic, all-round propaganda and agitation, consistent in principle, which is the chief and permanent task of [socialists] in general.

"Our movement suffers in the first place, ideologically, as well as in practical and organisational respects, from its state of fragmentation, from the almost complete immersion of the overwhelming majority of [socialists] in local work, which narrows their outlook, the scope of their activities.

"The first step towards eliminating this shortcoming, towards transforming divers local movements into a single, all-Russia movement, must be the founding of an all-Russia newspaper. What we need is definitely a political newspaper. Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable in the Europe of today. Without such a newspaper we cannot possibly fulfil our task — that of concentrating all the elements of political discontent and protest, of vitalising thereby the revolutionary movement of the proletariat."

VI Lenin (From "Where to Begin", Iskra No.4, May 1901)

By John O'Mahony

**W**HAT DO serious socialists do? What we do was long ago summed up in these three words — "Agitate, Educate, Organise".

You will find those words emblazoned on labour movement banners today. You will find them in files of old socialist newspapers, decade after decade, back for 150 years.

You will find them spread in socialist literature across the world in the writings of Lenin, for example. These words sum up what a socialist does and why the Alliance for Workers' Liberty spends so much of its resources in publishing *Socialist Organiser*.

What do they mean? Take them one at a time.

Agitate means to move, to stir up. It means:

- \* that you object to the way people are treated, and that you urge them to fight back;

- \* that you expose and show up in detail the human meaning of capitalist exploitation, oppression and indifference;

- \* that you expose and bring to light conditions in factories, offices, colleges, housing estates;

- \* that you expose the brutalities and injustices of the police and the law courts;

- \* that you point out the exploitation and corruptions at the heart of the capitalist economic system on which all our lives depend.

It means, in short, that you, as a socialist, hold the mirror up to the world around you, draw the details to people's attention, show them their situation, and urge them to act. You stir them up. You move things out of congealed inertia.

But don't people already know their own situation? Don't they know that they are badly treated and oppressed?

Of course they do! They know it in the pores of their daily lives. They feel it minute by minute as they are driven into degrading drudgery for money which does not even buy them all they need; when they are forced to live on the dole, or made homeless on the streets; when they experience the countless grades and degrees of humiliation and exploitation that working-class people are heir to. Of course they know!

But it is not as simple as that. People get used to conditions that are really terrible, even when they directly experience them as terrible.

Things are now accepted in Britain that would, a dozen years ago, have provoked outrage and spurred the labour movement into vigorous action to end them. The hordes of young people sleeping out on the pavements of our cities are one example; the vast growth of a cheap-labour, sweatshop, un-unionised economy is another. The shout of anger, protest, outrage is a great creative force in human life.

One of the most important strikes in British working-class history was the



Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnought* — the best of the anti-war Marxist papers during World War 1.



show them their wrongs and yours "Plant in their hearts that hatred deep that suffers and endures."

**W**HAT IS education? Agitation is education. But it is not rounded, deep education. And that education is needed, too.

To urge revolt against particular conditions is good. Hatred of those particulars, which add up to much of the reality of working class life under capitalism — that is the beginning of wisdom for the socialists themselves. If they lack that hatred, if they let it fade, if they do not keep in their minds all the time the bitter details of the capitalist reality against which socialists pit themselves, then they themselves will soon wither and fade away.

Yet it is not enough. It is also necessary to understand — to educate yourself and to educate others, who will then educate yet others.

Workers react against particular outrages. They fight. They strike, demonstrate, lobby MPs. They feel burning indignation.

But unless they are educated to see how their concern — what "agitates" them — fits into the whole capitalist system, and educated, too, to see capitalism for what it is — one phase in history — then they will never go beyond blind reaction to aspects of capitalism. No matter how violent and spectacular that reaction may be — think of the riots of the early 1980s for example — it cannot change society.

The workers will get what they want, or fail to get it, or get some of it. They will never understand the system. They will never fight capitalism, but only aspects of capitalism.

Militants in one cause will be unable to "make the connection" between their concerns and the concerns of others of the oppressed. They will never be socialists.

For example, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some of the most consistently militant workers in Britain, London dockers, marched through London in support of racism. They were militant on wages and conditions, and even on broader questions like asserting a high degree of day-to-day workers' control in their industry. But they were politically backward, that is to say they were not educated in the general socialist view that matched their outlook on immediate



Justice was the first Marxist newspaper in Britain. The Call, produced by people who split off from Justice when it veered to chauvinism, organised the main forerunner of the Communist Party.

industrial issues. Worse, they were poisonously mis-educated. That determined that ultimately they were unable to defend themselves industrially: they were crushed in the 1980s.

The other side of such phenomena as militant workers who hate the Tories but are also racists is that very often black militants, seeing only their own large concern, are one-sided too, lacking an overall view and a view of where they fit into the general picture.

Without all-round socialist education, all the agitation in the world will not shake capitalism or replace it. Blind agitation on particular issues without coordination with other agitation and without being integrated into a coherent outlook on the world can even strengthen capitalism when it pits one group of disaffected people against another. The organisation of politics in the USA by way of ethnic blocks is probably one reason why no Labour Party of the British or Belgian type emerged out of the US trade unions.

Most people involved in direct action of the sort that occurs spontaneously and which we try by agitation to evoke, tragically never attain an overview. It is the job of socialist education to help them develop such an overview.

**S**Ocialist education is necessary not only to help the workers make sense of the overall position but also to help militants avoid what is often the nonsensical picture you would get by extrapolating from immediate impressions.

It is not enough to urge people to be guided by mere instinct — by such rules of thumb as siding with the oppressed, opposing what the ruling class wants, siding with militancy, and being sympathetic to our rulers' enemies.

Of course you should side with the oppressed! But what does it mean? Do you adopt their views? But their views may be, and usually are, sectional, one-sided, narrow-minded, or even blindly self-centred and chauvinist.

For example: the Palestinian Arabs are oppressed. History has dealt with them very harshly. In general socialists must support them.

But for decades their leaders proposed a solution to their condition based on destroying the state of Israel



French Trotskyists published La Verite in Nazi-occupied France, arguing for working-class action and internationalism. Some of them also produced a paper for German soldiers, Arbeiter and Soldat — until they were seized and sent to death camps. Labor Action was the paper of the faction of the American Trotskyists led by Max Shachtman.



The slogan for the labour movement: "agitate, educate, organise!"

and subjugating its population. That was to be done by the surrounding Arab states. Until the late 1960s, this was expressed in the crudest terms by Yasser Arafat's predecessor Ahmed Shukhairi: "Drive the Jews into the sea!" Thereafter it was proposed in the disguised form of calling on Israel to abolish itself and cede its territory

to a new Arab state of Palestine, in which the Jews were to be guaranteed religious, but not national, rights. That too could only be achieved by Arab subjugation and conquest, but it sounded better.

It was not only an Arab chauvinist programme; it was, in the circumstances, so unrealistic that it helped Israel's chauvinists isolate the Palestinians for decades. Whatever that position did, it did not serve the interests of the Palestinian people.

We advocate two states for the two peoples — as the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has done since 1988.

The point is that without all-round socialist education in the history of the conflict and in the general principles and politics which Marxists bring to bear in all such conflicts — consistent democracy — you could not make sense of the issues. You could not arrive at rational solutions. To endorse the old PLO programme because it was the programme of the oppressed would have been to substitute other concerns and principles for socialist concerns and principles. For many socialists — including ourselves for a time — that is exactly what it was.

The same follows for all the other crude rules of thumb. Support militancy? Yes; but the most militant in a national or communal conflict are likely to be the reckless chauvinists.

Side against the ruling class? Yes, but if we just say yes when the ruling class says no, and no when it says yes, then we surrender all independence and become a negative imprint of the ruling class. We abandon all objectivity and all attempts at an independent working-class outlook on the world.

For example, large sections of the British left have responded to the fact of European semi-unity, organised by the capitalists, with the knee-jerk slogans "Britain Out!", "No to the European Community!" — when they should instead have been fomenting cross-Europe working-class unity.

Therefore all-round Marxist education is necessary, it is as essential as that which it produces: an independent working-class outlook.

**WHAT ABOUT** the third big word, organise? Socialists organise on many levels. We organise trade unions that fight to get the best price for our labour-power. We organise broad trade-union-based parties like the Labour Party. We organise ourselves, the hard-core socialists, in our own organisation.

A newspaper like *Socialist Organiser* is a means of doing all these things.

It exposes, pillories, and points the finger at the horrors of life under capitalism. It educates into a rounded view of society, fitting the things we denounce into the whole picture of capitalism and fitting capitalism itself into a conception of history and the role of the working class in history.

It educates its readers in the facts of history, and especially the history of the working class and its movement. And it organises.

Listen to Lenin, in the same article quoted above:

*"The role of the newspaper, however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser. In this last respect it may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and view the common results achieved by their organised labour."*

*"With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events. The mere technical tasks of regularly supplying the newspaper with copy and promoting regular distribution will necessitate a network of local agents of the united party, who will maintain constant contact with one another, know the general state of affairs, get accustomed to performing regularly their detailed functions and test their strength in the organisation of various revolutionary actions."*

Socialist Organiser structures and focuses the work of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. It is our tool. It ties us together in a common endeavour. It gives us a common voice with which we talk to our class. It allows us to talk to and educate each other by way of debate and persuasion. The latter — persuasion, discussion, debate — is essential.

For, of course, what we argue for in the working-class movement is not entirely given and fixed in advance. Not everything is known, or can be known. Marx died 111, Trotsky 53 years ago. An essential part of the work socialists do is to keep reality under review, to register, discuss, and assess new things in reality and in the continuing experience of our class.

We teach the working class, trying to be the memory of the class — but we also learn from the working class. We codify that learning through the reports and the discussion in the paper — which is our agitator, our educator, and our structuring organiser, all in one.

The precondition for effective socialist activity is the existence of a distinct working-class world outlook which has to be propagated, tested against reality, and developed in line with reality. We are first of all a movement of ideas, proposals, memories and historic perspectives. Therefore *Socialist Organiser* is irreplaceable for our work in every area.

**T**HE HISTORY of the international and British Socialist Movement is to a considerable extent the history of newspapers, which were in turn, more or less central to organisations. These papers were the bearers of a world outlook, of the ideas which leavened the movement of the workers and those in society who gravitated towards the workers' movement.

Karl Marx centred his work during the failed German revolution of 1848 around a newspaper, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. When Lenin, Martov, Axelrod, Plekhanov and Zasluch set out to organise a coherent revolutionary movement in Russia, they started a newspaper, *Iskra* (in English, Spark). From the spark can come a prairie fire, their motto said. From *Iskra* and its ideas came, once those ideas had gripped the Russian workers, the 1917 Revolution.

In Britain the first modern socialist newspaper was *Justice*, with its first issue in 1884. Then, from the mid-1890s, came Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader*, not a Marxist paper. In the same decade there was a mass-circulation socialist paper which tried to be as simple and popular as the vulgar popular press, the *Clarion*.

In the period of the First World War there were three revolutionary papers: *The Call*, a breakaway from *Justice*; Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnought*; and *The Socialist*, published in Scotland by followers of the American socialist Daniel De Leon.

Pankhurst's paper began as the *Women's Dreadnought* in 1914 (the "dreadnoughts" were battleships; its equivalent title today would be something like "Workers' Cruise Missile"), and became a general working-class paper in the course of the war. It was by far the best of the Marxist papers — militant, brave, honest, and opening its pages to debate.

When the socialists organised the Communist Party in 1920 and 1921, they published the *Workers' Weekly*. From 1930 the Communist Party published the *Daily Worker* — but by now this was a Stalinist organisation.

The first Trotskyist paper in Britain was *The Red Flag*, published from 1933. In the Second World War, when Trotskyism became a force, the main publication was the *Socialist Appeal*. Later there were other publications out of which developed today's left press: *Socialist Review* (1950) a forerunner of *Socialist Worker*; *The Newsletter* (1959) out of which came today's *Workers Press*; *Socialist Fight* (1959) out of which came *Militant*; *Workers' Fight* (1967) out of which grew *Socialist Organiser*. *Socialist Organiser* is the heir to the best of all

these publications.

Ideally we would have a series of publications: one paper for agitation, mainly very simple in its coverage; a more complicated paper for education; and a big magazine for theory and for involved discussions which presuppose a certain knowledge in their participants. We are limited by our resources. We do the best we can with the resources we have.

In *Socialist Organiser* we try to expose capitalism, explain it, argue the need to overthrow it. We live in a world where the left, after so many decades of Stalinism and after so many defeats, is in a condition of corruption and decay; so we try to regenerate the left by way of honest debate and polemic. And we organise.

When the left was more buoyant, we organised (and tried to educate) a sizeable broad chunk of the Labour left around *Socialist Organiser*.

We work to prepare the future by fighting in the struggles of the working class now and by socialist education. We prepare a movement of socialists by that work and by conducting a paper that is not a closed monopoly but an open vehicle for honest and free discussion.

We argue our views as sharply as we think necessary, but we aspire to be neither Popes, Cardinals nor the one true Church of the left. Our paper remains open to other views.

We organise ourselves as exclusively and as tightly as necessary, but all our work is aimed ultimately at serving the broad movement of our class.

You can define *Socialist Organiser* best by contrasting it with the most prominent of its contemporaries. *Socialist Worker* — the paper of a sect organised around a personality cult — is the *Clarion* of its age albeit one with a more 'left' face. It agitates, adopts posturing attitudes of pretend militancy, says no to every bosses' yes, sides with the enemies.

Continued on page 14



Agitating for working-class actions *Socialist Organiser* defends the poll tax rioters and calls for a general strike alongside the miners in 1984-5.



Agitation against racism: *Socialist Organiser* campaigning for the TUC march against racism on 19 March this year, and (in our first ever issue — October 1978) calls for defence of the Asian community in Brick Lane, East London, against a fascist march while *Socialist Worker* and others were instead mobilising for an anti-Nazi concert in South London.

# The spectre of Russian fascism



Dale Street reviews

*Last Dash to the South*

by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy

**V**LADIMIR ZHIRINOVSKY, leader of the far-right and hardline-nationalist Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia, is a sick man. This is the most charitable interpretation that can be placed upon his book *Last Dash to the South*, a rambling and incoherent work which combines autobiography with a statement of political beliefs.

Zhirinovskiy's middle name (Wolfovich — inherited from his father, Wolf) is clearly Jewish in origin. And Zhirinovskiy was born in the Soviet Asian republic of Kazakhstan. Anxious to stress his credentials as a Russian patriot, Zhirinovskiy feels obliged to try to explain away both these facts.

"Bureaucracy or pedantry — I don't know which," is his explanation for his unwelcome middle name. As for being born in Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan: "this town was founded by Russian people — I can therefore always justly argue that I was born in Russia(!) amongst Russian people."

Despite his aspirations of presenting himself as the hard man and natural leader who will restore Russia to its former glory, Zhirinovskiy's description of his childhood and youth is an exercise in whingeing, whining and self-debasement.

"I was always hungry, I never had decent-quality clothing... At home I did not have a corner I could call my own, I did not even have my own bed," he laments, "I was deprived of the most basic family cosiness and of human warmth."

It was the same story at school: "I was a naughty boy, I always had arguments with teachers and got bad marks for behaviour... I

lagged behind in arithmetic and algebra, and even more so in geometry and trigonometry."

And so too at college as well: "I constantly suffered setbacks, once very month. Of course, I ate poorly and dressed badly. But what could you afford on 65 roubles a month?... My life was one of poverty."

Sexual frustration also play a prominent part in Zhirinovskiy's formative years. He first slept with a woman at the age of 17: "I asked her to take off her panties. But what kind of girl takes off her own panties? I did not know that I had to do this myself, that I had to help her... I did not have the chance to begin my sex life when I wanted to do so."

His failure with women continued into his years at college: "During my student years I never had a woman. But I would have liked so much to fall in love with someone, to court someone. But this never happened, I just couldn't."

Zhirinovskiy delivers a tear-jerking verdict on his childhood and youth: "an unhappy childhood, an absence of close friends, bad living conditions, poor food, poor recreational facilities, no membership of a political party, and moving from one part of the country to another."

From the miseries of his childhood, Zhirinovskiy moves on to the wonders of the future which he envisages for Russia and other countries of the Northern hemisphere.

Central to his vision of the future is a "last dash to the South" on the part of Russia. To expand southwards is "the destiny of Russia, the fate of Russia. We have to do this because we have no choice. Our development demands this."

In Zhirinovskiy's version of his own "New World Order" Russia will expand southwards as far as the Indian Ocean and the Middle East, including

Turkey and Iran. He looks forward to Russian soldiers "washing their boots in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, and always wearing their summer uniforms."

There will be "equal conditions for all peoples" in the new, expanded Russia writes Zhirinovskiy. At the same time he proposes that "in this new



We should regard Zhirinovskiy as a threat

expanse of territory, stretching as far as the Indian Ocean, everyone will speak Russian."

Zhirinovskiy also promises an end to "nationalism and chauvinism on the part of large nations." And yet he calls for "the dismemberment of the Muslim world, the ending of the Muslim threat... and the necessity of breaking up the Turkish-speaking world." In any case, he explains, "There is no such thing as Turkish culture."

It is not only Russia which expands southwards in Zhirinovskiy's "New World Order". The USA and Canada will take over Latin America. Europe will take over Africa. And Japan and China will take over South-East Asia, including Australia.

Tidying up the dots and commas, Zhirinovskiy also suggest that Germany can have a large slab of Poland and part of the Czech Republic, Rumania can have part of Moldavia, Hungary can have part of Rumania, and a few other tit-bits can be set aside for Poland.

Despite proposing this global carve-up, Zhirinovskiy notices no contradiction in promising "guaranteed rights for everyone, freedom in everything, and an end to interference in the internal affairs of other people and countries."

Generous to a fault, Zhirinovskiy goes on to suggest that a Russia which has completed its "last dash to the South" will be able to assist other countries in the Northern hemisphere.

It will "lend a helping hand" to America, faced with "a growth in size of the coloured population and (therefore) a further growth in

crime." Similarly, Russia will help France "liberate itself from American and Zionist influence," and prevent Paris from becoming "an Algerian town by the year 2000".

(This is not the only occasion on which Zhirinovskiy's anti-semitism slips through. He claims that the last dash to the South will free Europeans and Arabs "from the Israeli trap", and also condemns Gorbachev and Yeltsin for making concessions to "the West, the USA, the CIA, and Israel.")

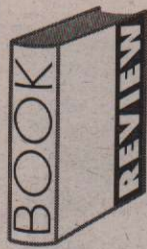
To be fair to Zhirinovskiy, he can — sometimes — find something to admire in non-Russian cultures. He praises polygamy for example, for "solving the problem of prostitution and one-parent families."

He also find something positive in the rule of Stalin: "Our country was almost entirely free of venereal diseases. Morality was at a high level. When I was at school all the girls in the class were virgins... in most cases a girl was still a virgin when she got married."

Given its lengthy descriptions of childhood deprivations and the author's thwarted sex life, Zhirinovskiy's book doubtless provides valuable material for a clinical case study by a psychiatrist.

Politically, the book serves as a warning to those who would simply dismiss Zhirinovskiy as mentally unhinged (which he undoubtedly is) and thereby fail to recognise the mortal threat his politics pose to national and democratic rights, not just in Russia but way beyond its borders as well.

## A book that built the labour movement



Martin Thomas reviews

*The Ragged Trousered*

*Philanthropists*

By Robert Tressell

**I**T MAY OR may not be true that *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* was, as Alan Silitoe once said (in the introduction to the Panther paperback edition) "the book that won the '45 election for Labour". It is certain that the book is worth more than that.

The author — Robert Tressell, a housepainter who died, aged 40 in 1911 — writes about the sort of life he knew, among the working class in the early days of the century.

As a picture of that life, it is vivid, critical but not contemptuous, brilliant in such passages as the account of "the Beano meeting". It also explains why the hardship and lack of dignity in that life were not inevitable.

In one chapter, for example, Owen, the socialist central character, explains to three of his workmates how the capitalist class exploits the working class. It is still fresh and relevant today.

"These pieces of bread represent the raw

materials which exist naturally in an on the earth for the use of mankind.

"I represent the landlord and capitalist class. That is to say, all these raw materials belong to me.

"I possess something else beside the raw materials. These three knives represent — all the machinery of production; the factories, tools, railways and so forth, without which the necessities of life cannot be produced in abundance. And these three coins represent my Money Capital.

"Now you three represent the Working Class: you have nothing."

Owen proceeded to cut up one of the slices of bread into a number of little square blocks.

"These represent the things which are produced by labour, aided by machinery, from the raw materials. We will suppose that three of these blocks represent — a week's work. We will suppose that a week's work is worth one pound; and we will suppose that each of these half pennies is one pound."

Owen now addressed himself to the working classes as represented by Philpot, Harlow and Easton.

"I am going to invest all my money in various industries, so as to give you Plenty of Work. I shall pay each of you one pound per week and a week's work is — you must each produced three of these square blocks. For doing this work you will each receive your

wages; the money will be your own, to do as you like with, and the things you produce will of course be mine, to do as I like with."

As soon as the Working Class had done a week's work, Owen paid their wages.

"These blocks represent the necessities of life. You can't live without some of these things, but as they belong to me, you will have to buy them from me: my price for these blocks is — one pound each."

As the working classes could not eat, drink or wear the useless money, they were compelled to agree to the kind Capitalist's terms. They each bought back and at once consumed one third of the produce of their labour. The capitalist consumed twice as much as many of them.

The process was repeated several times: then the capitalist, just after having sold a pound's worth of necessities to each of his workers, suddenly took their tools — the Machinery of Production — away from them and informed them that as, owing to Over-Production, all his storehouses were glutted, he had decided to close down the works.

Then the unemployed began to abuse the kind-hearted Capitalist, demanding that he should give them some of the necessities of life that he had piled up in his warehouses. But the kind-hearted Capitalist told them not to be insolent, and said that if they were not careful he would have their faces battered in for them

by the police."

The basic element in the abolition of this exploitation — the public ownership of the means of production — is clearly indicated. The flaw — and it is hardly surprising for its time — is that the achievement of socialism is seen almost entirely in terms of votes and Parliament.

"*The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*" frequently shows the socialist Owen almost losing hope. And it wouldn't be an accurate account of the life of a socialist if it didn't. But what way to renew hope? The light at the end of the book is Owen's discovery that one of his workmates, who has been keeping quiet up to then, is in fact privately wealthy and a socialist. "In the Spring I intend to fit out a Socialist Van, and then I shall come back here. We'll have some of the best speakers in the movement; we'll hold meetings every night..."

The book lacks the concept of an organised working-class revolutionary party, which could link the efforts of isolated socialists like Owen with a coherent strategy for struggle in elections, in industry, and in other aspects of society. Lacking this concept, it has a tinge of despair.

But it is a marvellous book to read. Interspersed with the acutely realistic portrayal of the workers are savagely funny caricatures of the ruling class, and passages of glorious fantasy, as live today as when they were written.



Nazis clear the Krakow ghetto



Schindler profiteer and hero

# The lowest humanity can sink



Matt Cooper  
reviews  
*Schindler's List*

Directed by  
Steven Spielberg

STEVEN Spielberg is the director of a series of highly popular family adventure films: *ET*, the Indiana Jones films, recently *Jurassic Park*.

His new film, *Schindler's List*, deals — you might think incongruously — with a weighty and terrible subject, the Nazi extermination of the Jews. Based on Thomas Kenneally's powerful prize winning novel *Schindler's Ark*, it tells the true story of a war profiteer, Oskar Schindler, and his struggle first against himself and then against the Nazi state during the Second World War. Initially their callous exploiter, he ends up saving the Jewish slave labourers in his factory from death.

Spielberg's previous ventures into "serious" films — *The Colour Purple* and *Empire of the Sun* — have only been partially successful. But fears that Spielberg would turn this story

into something that leaves the sickly sweet taste of another *ET* in the mouth prove unfounded. *Schindler's List* is highly successful.

We follow the life of the philandering Schindler (Liam Neeson) after his arrival in German occupied Poland.

He possess nothing but his membership of the Nazi Party, enough money to ingratiate himself with the local military hierarchy, and the skills of a conman.

Schindler borrows money from Jews forced into economic inactivity by the Nazis and buys an enamelware factory. He is a great success.

Using Jewish slave labour, he starts to make huge amounts of money. Cynically, he comments: 'there was something lacking in all my previous business ventures which stopped them being successful — war!'

Spielberg shows Schindler as an innocent child playing a game he does not at first understand. Self-interest teaches him: as the war goes on Schindler is increasingly forced to protect his most vital asset from the Nazis — his workforce.

His Jewish accountant, Iszak Stern, played by Ben Kingsley, maintains a critical distance from Schindler through most of the film, always sus-

pecting his motives. Schindler is at first an enigma: when he saves Stern from a concentration camp bound train, has he saved Stern the man, or Stern the accountant who runs his factory and maintains his profits?

Pitted against Schindler is the local concentration camp commandant, Amon Goeth, played by Ralph Fiennes. Fiennes, dehumanised by circumstances, gives us a three dimensional picture of evil.

Schindler tells Stern that in different circumstances he would find in Goeth some good. Stern retorts that all that he can see is a man who enjoys killing. Schindler's attempts to attenuate Goeth's cruelty prove Stern right.

As the war continues and the Final Solution becomes a bureaucratic priority for the Nazis, Schindler is forced to make a choice between his wealth and the life of his workers. He chooses to save the workers, relocating them in a specially built munitions factory in Czechoslovakia. He then squanders the remainder of his fortune making sure that the factory contributes nothing to Germany's war effort.

The film starkly depicts the effect of the Holocaust on ordinary people's lives. From the forcing of the Jews

into the Krakow Ghetto, to the liquidation of the Ghetto and an uncertain life in concentration camps, the film communicates the reality of sickening fear and, finally, grim death, with great force.

Spielberg uses stark black and white film to create a dispassionate and almost documentary feel, and this heightens the impact of the film. It takes the film way beyond trite sentimentality.

Nor do we see a series of linked characters which would have merely created a pastiche of "human interest stories"; this is a tragedy not of individuals but of an entire people.

The film is unrelenting and forceful in its imagery: death becomes common-place; hope can be nothing more than a denial of facts which stare you in the face; the future is a black pit as dark as the depths to which humanity is capable of sinking.

What Spielberg creates is a picture nearly as harrowing and sincere in its effect as *Shoa*, the twelve hour documentary on the Holocaust. And

because of its strong story, *Schindler's List* will unlike *Shoa* reach a mass audience.

Although the acting is masterful, if there is any criticism to be made of the film it is of the characters the actors are given to portray. The Schindler in Kenneally's book is an enigma, but here he is an overgrown child, naive about the evil that is all around him and strangely innocent even of the risks he is taking. Here we find echoes of Spielberg's adventure romp past.

The Nazis are the stock in trade of the film industry, evil personified, even if, as with Goeth, they are splendidly acted. This creates a set of unambiguous characters that seem a little inadequate to a film as good as this. Perhaps though this is inevitable in a portrayal of the Holocaust: strong morally ambiguous characters would force the film far beyond both Hollywood and bourgeois conventions.

*Schindler's List* is a timely reminder of what fascism is, and of what man can do to man.

## How the USA created Hitler's theory for genocide



Geoff Ward  
reviews  
*Secret History*

Channel 4  
Thursday 17 February 9.30

ONE WAY of judging a society's claim to be democratic is by looking at how the most vulnerable and weak are treated.

Last week's documentary *Secret History* told the shocking story of the Lynchburg Colony, an asylum in Virginia, USA.

This institution, along with others, was involved in a mass sterilisation programme. Between 1905 and 1972 the right to have children was taken away from over 70,000 people, mainly poor working class white.

Early this century a fashionable theory gripped scientists, social reformers, writers and state officials — eugenics, the study of how human population might be "improved" by the application of genetics.

Supporters of eugenics feared that the human race was gradually being enfeebled by the low birth-rate among the middle classes ('good breeding stock') relative to the working class.

They believed that characteristics like intelligence were hereditary, just like certain diseases.

Long before Hitler came to power in Germany — putting this theory to service in order to justify a mass extermination programme — American states were shutting people up in places like Lynchburg. It started with people who had hereditary disabilities, and later came to include, after a Supreme Court ruling, people considered to be 'feeble-minded' and 'socially inadequate'.

In the test case of 'Buck versus Bell', three generations of the Buck girls were branded as 'feebleminded'.

Fantastically, this included a six month old baby said to be 'peculiar'. Processed in kangaroo courts these people were denied rights enjoyed by other citizens, and many were later employed as virtual slave

labour on farms.

Their only real 'crime' was to be born into poverty and be poorly fed, housed and educated. The state wanted to save millions on welfare and prisons by stopping the "poor white trash" of America from breeding.

No compensation was paid to the victims, and no money found to pay for operations to reverse the sterilisations.

In a strange twist, one of the pioneers of this inhuman social engineering project, Harry H Laughlin, succumbed to epilepsy in later life and was sacked from his post. His victims could be forgiven for asking "How come he wasn't sterilised?"

**Next week's Socialist  
Organiser will carry  
an obituary of the  
film-maker and artist  
Derek Jarman.**



Auschwitz may look like a prison, but in reality it was a factory of human destruction.

### A Letter to Mother (a fragment)

Monika Dombke born 1920

Electric wires, high and double  
Won't let you Mom — you won't see  
your daughter  
So don't believe those censored letters  
of mine  
cause truth is different; but don't cry,  
Mom.

And if you would like to seek out your  
child's trace  
Don't ask anyone, don't knock any  
where:

Look for the ashes in the fields of  
Auschwitz  
It will be there. But don't cry — enough  
of bitterness here.

And if you would like to discover your  
child's trace  
Look for the ashes in the fields of  
Birkenau  
They'll be there — so look for the ashes  
In the fields of Auschwitz, in the woods  
of Birkenau,  
Mom, look for the ashes — I'll be  
there!

Birkenau 1943  
Translated by Jaroslaw Brzezinski

## Alliance for WORKERS' LIBERTY Meetings

### NORTHAMPTON

Saturday 5 March

"Ireland in crisis — what should socialist say?"

12.30, Vocal Club, Bailey Street

### LONDON

Saturday 26 February

"What will socialism be like?"

Dayschool, 12.00 - 5.00. For details phone 071-639 7965

Wednesday 9 March

"Socialism and democracy — Parliament and direct action."

Former Labour leader Michael Foot debates SO editor John O'Mahony  
7.30 Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn.

### MERSEYSIDE

Wednesday 2 March

"The rise of Euro-racism"

Speaker Gail Cameron  
6.00 Edge Hill College



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Bristol Marxist Forum Conference  
Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 March.  
For more information phone 0272-423435

# IN DEPTH

## Who was Jesus Christ? Redemption in the here and now



By Rob Dawber

**L**AST WEEK it was shown that the Gospels can be dated by events in the history of Palestine, in this case the war with Rome of 66-70AD. Further illustration of this is a long passage describing the travail and misery of the war with Rome ending in defeat, famine, refugees, Messiahs setting up and being beaten down, and the Roman Eagles storming and destroying the Temple — "the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not". This is mixed in with the hope is victory against Rome and the reading of signs such as earthquakes (that of AD60 which collapsed Laodicea in Asia Minor, or 63 in Pompeii — not the final one of 79) as divine intervention on the side of the Jews. It is broadly the same in Mark (13:2-8, 14, 17-20, 24-26, 28-31) and Matthew (24:2-8, 15-16, 19-22, 29-30, 32-35). Luke (21:6-11, 21, 23, 25-27, 29-33) differs in some details, dating his document as compiled latest of the three.

"There shall not be left here Stone on stone, Which shall not be thrown down..." and they asked him privately, "Tell us, when these things shall be? And what shall be the sign of thy

coming,

And of the end of the age?" And Jesus answering said to them, "Take heed that none lead you astray.

Many shall come in my name, Saying, "I am the Christ"; And shall lead many astray. And you shall hear of wars and rumours of wars:

See that you are not troubled: For it must needs come to pass; But the end is not yet.

For nation shall rise against nation, And kingdom against kingdom: there shall be famines and earthquakes in places;

But all these things are the beginning of travail. . .

But when you see the abomination of desolation

Standing where he ought not (Let him that reads understand) then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains. . .

But woe to them that are with child And to them that give suck in those days!

And pray that your flight be not in the winter, nor on a sabbath

For then shall be great tribulation, Such as has not been from the beginning of the world

Until now, nor ever shall be.

And except those days had been shortened,

No flesh would have been saved: But for the elect's sake

Those days shall be shortened... But immediately after the tribulation of those days,

The sun shall be darkened, And the moon shall not give her light,

And the stars shall fall from heaven,

And the power of the heavens shall be shaken.

...And they shall see the Son of Man Coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory...

Now from the fig tree learn her parable:

When her branch is now become tender and puts forth leaves,

You know that the summer is nigh; Even so also, when you see all these things,

Know that he is nigh at the doors. Verily I say unto you,

This generation shall not pass away, Until all these things are accomplished.

Heaven and earth shall pass away: But my words shall not pass away."

That this was not spoken by Jesus is betrayed by the phrase in brackets (Let him that reads understand). The slight differences in the text between Matthew, Mark and Luke allow some dating to take place as to the relative order in which these were compiled.

In the above Mark says that the "abomination" stands "where he ought not" — presumably around Jerusalem. But Matthew places the "abomination" "in the holy place". The Roman Eagles have now invaded the Temple.

According to the quote the fall of Jerusalem is to be followed "immediately" (Matthew) or "in those days" (Mark) by the signs which herald the coming of the Son of Man. But Luke is writing much later when it has become clear that no such coming has happened. He rewrites the whole passage and says that Jerusalem will be "trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" — a much longer interval.

Likewise with the phrase "the beginning of travail", the war of AD66-70, which Matthew and Mark predict as the birth pangs of a new world. By the time of Luke writing this was patently not true. He cuts it out.

It is worth noting however that the final prediction that "this generation shall not pass away, until all these things are accomplished" remains in all three. Clearly the authors could get away with some changes but no doubt some phrases had too much of a hold. The same is true of Matthew (16:28) Mark (9:1) and Luke (9:27): "There are some of them that stand here,

Who shall in no wise taste of death, Till they see the Son of Man Coming in his Kingdom."

There was clearly a powerful belief at large that 'redemption', being 'saved', seeing 'justice' done and so on was not something for the distant future or another world, but something that the audience to whom these words were addressed fully expected and hoped to be done in the here and now.

For the moment, though, we should note that the fact that words would be put into the mouth of someone who lived and died some 40 years previously does imply strongly that that person existed. It doesn't mean that the records we have are true ones.

Apart from the Synoptic Gospels there remains the Gospel of John. This stands apart in being both more theological than the others and having a different story content which it can be shown is in many ways more reliable than the other.

Next week: when did the Gospels become the Gospel truth?

## Agitate, educate, organise!

From page 11

**I**TS SHIBBOLETH of promoting "militancy" has led it to back Saddam Hussein in gas-bomb attacks on Israel, to play at British chauvinism on the EC, and to raise slogans devoid of Marxist analysis or coherence on Ireland: Normally it does not allow any discussion, and it never allows free discussion. To dissent seriously is to be expelled from the organisation that publishes the paper.

All this is a description of a closed-in organisation, not of a living newspaper. *Socialist Worker* is not the bearer of a coherent world outlook; it is not a tool for honest analysis; it could not survive free discussion. Its attitude to its readers is cynically manipulative and is not, though it serves other goals, qualitatively different from the attitude of the *Sun* to its own readers.

Our best conception of the paper we are trying to produce was expressed well by Antonio Gramsci:

"A Communist cultural review should aim to become, in miniature, complete in itself, and, even though it may be unable to satisfy all the intellectual needs of the nucleus of men who read and support it, who live a part of their

lives around it, and who impart to it some of their own life, it must strive to be the kind of journal in which everyone will find things that interest and move him, that will lighten the daily burden of work, economic struggle and political discussion.

"At the least, the journal should encourage the complete development of one's mental capacities for a higher and fuller life, richer in harmony and in ideological aims, and should be a stimulus for the development of one's own personality. Why cannot we ourselves, with our modest forces, begin the work of the education system, the education system for the future among the youth, who support us and look to us with so much faith and expectation? Because the socialist education system when it emerges will of necessity emerge as a complete system whose goal it will be to embrace quickly all branches of human knowledge. This will be a practical necessity and an intellectual requirement.

"Are there not already workers to whom the class struggle has given a new sense of dignity and liberty who — when they hear the poets' songs and the names of

artists and thinkers — ask bitterly: "why haven't we, too, been taught these things?"

"In this field too, the bourgeois regime is on the verge of bankruptcy. From its hands, calloused from their sole work of accumulating private wealth, the torch of science and the sacred lamp of life have fallen. Ours is the task of taking them up, ours the task of

making them glow with new life."

We are, we believe, the bearers of a socialist culture and of a Marxist outlook on the world, and therefore we believe that our paper, like our work in general, is of great importance for the future of the labour movement.

In the period ahead we will continue to develop *Socialist Organiser*. Help us.

## AWL expels student union president

**T**OM ROBIN, President of Northumbria University Students' Union, has been expelled from the Alliance for Workers' Liberty.

Tom was elected president on a platform of fighting for students' rights and against attacks on students and education.

Recently he opposed action argued for by other members of the Alliance. Comrades at Northumbria University argued for action to occupy against the

Tories' attacks on grants. Tom argued against such action at a Union General Meeting and then opposed it as democratic policy of the union.

The AWL, unlike some groups on the left, has thorough procedures that guarantee every opportunity for any comrade involved in such a dispute to defend themselves.

Tom was not prepared to defend his actions in front of his comrades and is therefore expelled.

## INDUSTRIAL

## Colleges vote for extended action

## All out to stay out on 1 March

## COLLEGE STRIKES

By a Southwark college NATFHE member

CITY OF BATH college became the focus for the growing confrontation between college lecturers (organised in NATFHE) and their bosses (the CEF) last week.

There are now at least twenty other FE colleges in dispute over the attempts to impose new contracts.

As the Times commented "Both

sides are now watching closely the developments of the dispute."

There has never been a mass sacking of college lecturers. This is what Bath are threatening and this is what other colleges will try if the national leadership of NATFHE don't put themselves at the head of a national all-out strike in defence of the Silver Book agreement and against new contracts.

Many colleges aren't waiting for this. Tower Hamlets FE has joined Southwark College in voting for extended action.

As we go to press there are

reports of a decision by the Further Education Industrial Relations Committee to recommend that NATFHE members back local negotiation on new contracts.

That would be a disastrous course of action. It is one favoured by a section of the NATFHE leadership as an alternative to a serious defence of a national agreement backed-up by national strike action. It could only lead to a fragmented, limited response to the employers a drive on new contracts. Even strong branches would be isolat-

ed.

What we must do:

- Build and link-up the extended strike actions and call joint strike committees between colleges across towns and cities.

- Picket the next meeting of the NATFHE national executive and demand a defence of the national negotiations and their extension to part-timers.

- Colleges in the front line should call a national emergency conference in defence of maintaining the national Silver Book negotiations and all-out strike action.

## Strikes can beat Market Testing

WORKERS at the DSS in Peckham South London recently scored a small but significant victory in the fight against the Tories' Market Testing plans, which will cut jobs, pay and conditions as well as undermine union organisation. Management were forced to retreat from plans to "Market Test" the jobs of four cleaners after members of both NUCPS and CPSA voted unanimously for strike action in the cleaners' defence.

## TUC: new logo or new politics

By a delegate

TUC YOUTH Conference met in London last weekend (18-20 February).

Most young trade unionists would think this the ideal opportunity to discuss issues affecting young workers: fighting privatisation/Market Testing; the pay freeze; low pay; youth unemployment; and unionising part-time and casual workers.

However, as motions come directly from National Executive Committees and amendments were not allowed from Conference floor, there was little room for delegates to put forward constructive ideas on how young workers and the young unemployed can get involved and work in trade unions. Bland and meaningless motions meant there was little room for debate on how to organise against Tory attacks.

Instead the tone was set by TUC General Secretary John Monks who spoke on the relaunch of the TUC. "Comrade" Monks' analysis was pure genius! It went like this: the trade union movement is declining in membership and power due to the fact that "Since 1979 the TUC has not achieved much for workers in Britain." we need to make trade unions relevant for working people by turning the TUC into "a good campaigning organisation."

Don't get too excited! "Comrade" Monks has not come to the conclusion that we need a TUC which fights for its members, that organises national action to defend jobs, pay and conditions or that gives young people a reason to join and be active in

## Girobank strike: more pickets needed

## GIROBANK

By a NCU member

NCU MEMBERS in 'Girobank' took part in a one day strike on February 15th/16th.

The one day action is part of a schedule of actions (the next is in early March) to force

Girobank plc to concede a £450 flat rate pay increase. At the main Girobank offices in Bootle and Wigan the strike was solid.

At the sub-offices around the country (proportionally a much smaller group of workers) the response was variable.

Originally the pay offer was

recommended to be accepted by the NCU NEC. But the result of the ballot was a majority to reject and to take strike action!

The next one day strike action will see managers moving work around to try to beat the picketing and exploiting the weakest areas. More pickets are needed.

## IN BRIEF

Councils up and down the country are attacking firefighters' jobs. In Norfolk they want to sack 11, while Labour controlled Strathclyde have gone outside normal procedures and sacked one firefighter with 23 years service. Job cuts and station closures are also in the pipeline in Bedfordshire and Gloucestershire.

Local action is vital but national action is needed to stop weaker groups being picked-off.

The Piccadilly Four — Manchester guards sacked in August '92 as part of a

nationwide anti-union offensive by BR — have won the first stage of their industrial tribunal. It has been ruled that the strike in their defence was official. If this is upheld they should win their case. BR management are appealing, to the High Court if necessary, in an attempt to frustrate the four and stop them ever being reinstated. One of them is due to retire in a few months.

Traindrivers at Leeds have voted for an industrial action ballot by their union ASLEF against attempts by BR to hive-off the Inter-City service to a separate company as part of the drive to privatisation.

## DsHSS: union bashing

## CIVIL SERVICE

ROB Howard-Perkins is a CPSA rep in London in the Contributions Agency. Following allegations about facility time diary discrepancies management have stopped his facility time.

Rob has offered to explain and put right the facility time diary queries. Despite this, management have insisted on taking a hard line. Members in London regard this as an attack on the union aimed at getting rid of active union reps. Similar but unsuccessful attempts have been made to query the facility time

of Broad Left supporters in the Contributions Agency at Newcastle Central Office.

The Contributions Agency Committee is run by ex BL 84 right wingers. If Rob has done anything wrong they should be helping him to appeal to minimise the penalty. If he has not they should be defending him. Instead they have done nothing.

They have put politics before members and failed to help a rep under attack just because he is a fighter. Rob is facing discrimination. Send messages of support to City East TUS, 60 Commercial Road, London, E1 1CJ.

## On strike for union rights

## UNION RIGHTS

A GROUP of metalworkers at JS Chinn near Coventry are on indefinite strike in defence of their union.

Their steward John Watkins has been picked for redundancy in what is seen as a blatant anti-union move.

Support in the form of donations and boycott action will be central to winning this dispute.

Contact: JS Chinn picket line, Coventry Rd, Exhall near Bedworth West Midlands, or MSF 26 Coundon Rd., Coventry CU1 4AW.

Phone: 0203-22920 or 0203-220274

## Lecturers go Fordist

TWENTY YEARS ago most people had a fairly clear image of the 'typical' trade unionist: the hairy-arsed blue-collar white male worker.

Depending upon your point of view, he was a heroic class warrior or a stropky, lazy obstacle to industrial efficiency. Either way, the Fred Kite caricature is now long gone. Local government and the public sector have replaced old bastions like ship-building and mining as the most strongly unionised sectors. The 'typical' trade unionist (if there is such a thing) is now more likely to be white collar but not necessarily a white male.

Even so, it must be admitted that college lecturers do not exactly spring to mind as the vanguard of the organised working class. Indeed, many trade unionists have rather a low opinion of college lecturers and their union, NATFHE. This stems at least in part from experiences of courses in

colleges where the lecturers are almost invariably ill-prepared, late or simply don't turn up at all. Add to that the knowledge that they are paid £20 per hour plus, and the ridiculous posturing of NATFHE delegates to trades

councils (always calling for all-out action, general strikes, councils of action etc. etc.) and it is perhaps understandable that a lot of trade unionists don't take NATFHE very seriously — or even consider it a 'proper' union at all.

I should stress at this point that the above description is not my view of lecturers and is no fairer than the old Fred Kite caricature of the industrial trade unionist.

Anyway, the times they are a-chagin': college staff now face an all-out attack on their jobs and conditions from employers who have clearly learned a thing or two from the likes of Michael Edwardes and Rupert Murdoch. Since colleges were "incorporated" (i.e. taken out of local authority control and declared self-contained units) last April, the College Employers Forum (CEF) has been intent upon tearing up all existing agreements (notably the "Silver Book" conditions) and imposing new, "flexible" contracts. The CEF engineered a breakdown in national negotiations at the end of last year and the Department of Education stepped up the pressure by announcing a 2% "holdback" in college funds until the new contracts are agreed.

The new contracts involve an increase in the working week from 30 to 37 hours, the abolition of all weekly hours restrictions and the halving of holiday entitlement. All in all it represents a 30% increase in average workload with a proportionate level of redundancies as the inevitable result.

Staff who agree to sign the new contracts will receive £500 Judas money. Those who do not will be denied any pay increase this year and at least one college (City of Bath) has threatened 'refuseniks' with the sack. The NATFHE leadership, after much prevarication, has called a national one day strike for 1 March: local NATFHE branches intend to use this as the springboard for a series of further strikes building towards all-out action.

Conditions for college lecturers were never as cushy as they were made out to be and the legendary high pay was always based on hourly rates that didn't amount to very much for the large numbers of part-timers. Even so, to many workers it often seemed as though lecturers had things pretty easy. Now the harsh winds of competition and the project motive are blowing through Further Education, just as they have throughout the rest of the public sector. Lecturers are facing the same attacks as the rest of us and — increasingly — they are being driven to fight back with the traditional weapons of militant trade unionism.

Funny, isn't it, that in this age of supposed "Post-Fordism" when trends of the Marxism Today variety prattle on about the "end of the working class", more and more people find that their jobs have been "Fordised" and that they really are working class after all? I for one promise never again to sneer at NATFHE members — even at trades council meetings.

## INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

# SOCIALIST

# Workers' Liberty appeal

ORGANISER

**Labour ducks out with "free vote"**

# Human equality? Tories say: "no!"



Lesbian and gay people are right to be angry about last Monday's vote in the Commons

Garry Meyer reports

Last Monday (21 February) the House of Commons reduced the age of consent for male homosexual activity from 21 to 18. The vote was 427 against 162.

But, by 307 votes to 280, the Commons rejected a proposal that gay men should enjoy legal and civil equality with heterosexuals, for whom the sexual age of consent is 16.

By doing that, the House of Commons once again declared itself to be opposed to human equality.

It seems that some 30 Labour MPs voted against equality. The front bench said it was a "free vote." But equality is a political issue! Labour should insist on all MPs voting for equality.

Peter Tatchell, of the lesbian and gay activist group, Outrage commented: "This is a very sad day for democracy. MPs have decided that gays should remain second class citizens."

Tatchell went on to threaten that gay activist might now use "suffragette tactics."

Second class citizens, indeed. Tory opponents of the proposal to give gay men equality — moved by Tory ex-Minister Edwina Curry — explained themselves with arguments such as this: sixteen year old boys should be protected from older men.

If they should, should not 16 year old women be protected also?

There was a terrible reek of Tory hypocrisy in the Commons last Monday.

There is — in 1994! — still only one openly gay MP, in the House of Commons — Labour's Chris Smith. Yet the right wing Tory opponents of lowering the age limit almost certainly includes men who, in their capacity as everyday Tories, support policies which have created a large pool of homeless youths, and who, in their capacity as hypocritical closet homosexuals, sexually exploit — "rent boys" — male prostitutes, many of whom are recruited from the ranks of homeless youth.

The good news is that it is likely that the European Court of Human Rights will soon



The bigots and hypocrites of the Tory press reports

take the matter out of the control of the Commons and insist on heterosexual/homosexual equality at 16.

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THE Alliance for Workers' Liberty and our paper Socialist Organiser are appealing for donations.

Following the 23 February student demonstration opposing cuts in grants — centrally organised by AWL members — the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is organising a major drive amongst students.

NUS Executive member and AWL supporter Elaine Jones said, "After the demonstration we are now pushing for a shut down of education on 1 March. Our action will link in with a national NATFHE strike. It will allow us to make concrete links with education workers in struggle."

AWL student convenor, Jill Mountford, added: "Students are rightly angry. And the AWL will work with student activists on whatever common ground we can find. But one thing must be done now — we must convince the best, most active, most aware activists that they must join our organisation and make a long term commitment to fight for socialism."

"We are organising a series of campus AWL meetings to convince students of the need to fight.

"That takes money. Why not make a donation of the AWL, and help the voice of revolutionary socialism grow louder."

Send donations to the AWL to PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. Cheques to 'WL Publications'.

## A WORKERS' GUIDE TO IRELAND



This pamphlet is dedicated to all the victims of the Orange British Empire and the divided Irish bourgeoisie — Orange, Green, and Green-White and Orange alike — all the workers who have been killed in the Irish labour movement on both sides of the border, which must fight its way out of the blood-soaked mess capitalism has made of Ireland and build the only republic that is not a grim and cruel mockery of the long struggles of the Irish people for freedom — the workers' republic.

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