

STALINIST POLICE MURDER GEORGIANS

'THEY THREW THEMSELVES ON OUR PEOPLE LIKE BEASTS'

THE most brutal operation by the Soviet security forces for 25 years last week butchered to death up to 30 people in Tbilisi, the capital of Soviet Georgia.

Hundreds of others were injured. These were no ordinary killings. No firearms were used. Those killed were done to death by troops wielding clubs and shovels.

'They threw themselves on our people like beasts, and our people couldn't do anything' said Ms Leda Qarchvadze, quoting her brother-in-law Mr Syad Gamsachurdia, a member of the Helsinki watch committee, an independent civil rights watch group in Tbilisi.

This is the worst act of repression since a workers' demonstration was gunned down in the city of Novocheerkassk in 1962.

The action of the security forces in the Georgian capital was a direct response to a strike wave that shut down 30 factories and the public transport system.

Immediately following the action of the security forces the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet yesterday issued new measures to punish anti-state activities. The measure, to come into force immediately says:

'Public insults or the discrediting of the USSR supreme bodies of state power and government shall be punishable by imprisonment for a term of up to three years or a fine of up to 2,000 roubles (£2,000).'

Unrest

The latest unrest started with demonstrations last week by Abkhazis, a small ethnic minority in Georgia. This minority are demanding secession - from Georgia, not the Soviet Union and republic status.

The Georgian Stalinists whipped up feeling against these demands, but what started as resistance to the demands of the Abkhazis was

BY GEOFF PILLING

rapidly transformed into demands for Georgian independence.

These actions expose those who have peddled illusions in the so-called 'liberalisation' of the Stalinist bureaucracy under Gorbachev.

Under pressure from the Soviet working class, and in a desperate attempt to deal with the mounting economic crisis of the Soviet Union, the Stalinist bureaucracy has been forced to grant certain concessions to sections of the working class.

Spots

But it has not changed its spots.

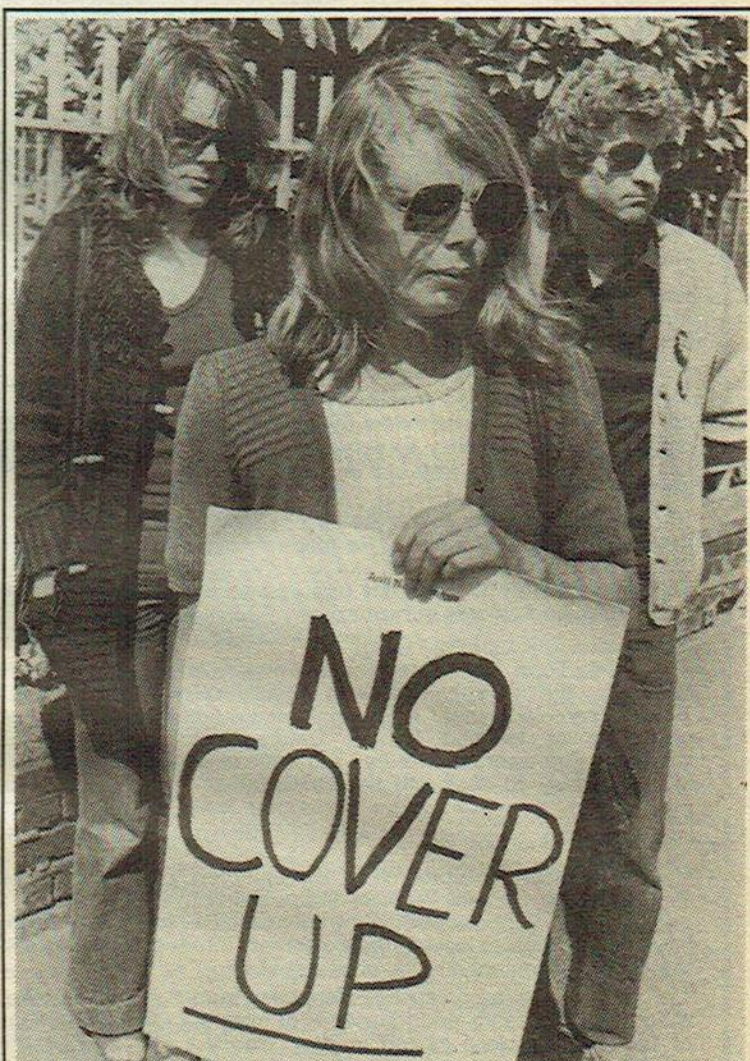
Internationally it forms alliances with imperialism to defeat a rising tide of struggle in the international working class - in the Middle East, southern Africa and elsewhere.

At home the bureaucracy is using whatever brutal measures it requires to cling on to its power and its privileges. It will not peacefully give way under pressure and protest.

It will have to be overthrown in a political revolution that will restore power to the working class from a parasitic bureaucracy that usurped that power in the degeneration of the Russian Revolution in the 1920s.

The brutal attitude of Stalin towards the Georgians was one of the first issues that in the period immediately before Lenin's death brought him and Trotsky together in a common struggle against the emerging bureaucracy forming around Stalin.

That the question of Georgian nationalism is again becoming a powerful force reveals the depth of the historical crisis facing Gorbachev and the whole of the Stalinist bureaucracy.



Celia Stubbs campaigns to uncover the truth about Blair Peach

CELIA Stubbs, a close friend and partner of Blair Peach spoke to Workers Press about the tenth anniversary memorial march for Blair Peach, murdered by the police in Southhall 1979, to be held on 23 April.

'This march is not just a memorial to Blair. The good thing about the regular meetings that we have had to organise the march is that so many groups have united, and we have had so few victories that it is important to look at what has been achieved. I am glad that so many dif-

ferent campaigns, black groups, Irish groups are involved, because we believe in self-determination for all, and it must be a united struggle.

Blair was killed by a show of force by the police who had a chance to practise what they had learned in Northern Ireland, that is why it is important that these struggles come together in this march. The march isn't just a once-off - there is afterwards too.

• see listings for details of the march Page 2.

Workers Press

Dockers must prepare for strike!

THE National Dock Labour Scheme was one of the reforms the British working class won in struggle during the period of the post-1945 Labour Government.

Introduced in 1947, it partially ended a situation which had existed in the docks for a century, where dockers stood outside the gates in 'cages' and had to fight each other for 'tallies' that gave them work for the day.

The Dock Labour Scheme made sure that no matter what the amount of daily trade at the docks, workers were guaranteed a minimum payment if they were available for work.

At the time of its introduction many dockers thought that they and their sons would have jobs for life.

The Thatcher government is now determined to abolish this protection for the 9,500 dockers in the 'scheme' ports. The protection has already disappeared in the 40 non-scheme ports where 4,000 dockers handle about 25 per cent of Britain's trade.

Thatcher's onslaught on the National Dock Labour Scheme is part of her unremitting efforts to break the organisations of the working class.

What has been the reaction of the Labour leaders? Ron Todd, leader of the transport union, has caved in to the Tories before a shot has been fired.

Last week he opposed the call from his union's docks committee for a ballot for strike action. Pleading that the union faced grave legal implications if the strike went ahead, Todd called for negotiations on the Scheme, knowing full well that the employers have no intention of entering into any talks, as they made clear the very day Todd made his proposal.

As Todd knows, the port employers have been screaming for the scrapping of the Scheme for years. If the Tory bill becomes law the employers will set out to impose the casual hiring and firing system that existed in the last century.

As 'The Independent' said last week:

'It is understood that the "scheme" ports will be "picked off" one by one, with employers trying to force through changes at docks where the union is weakest. A confidential scheme to indemnify companies who put their heads above the parapet will probably be arranged.'

Fully aware that this is the case, Labour leader Neil Kinnock refused to back the dockers. He made it clear that if returned to office, the Labour Party will not commit itself to restoring the Scheme, and that he was not opposed to the 40 year scheme being 'up-dated', that is scrapped.

While Todd, Kinnock and company were busy betraying their members, the Tory cabinet was equally busy. The 'Financial Times' revealed that a special strike-breaking committee consisting of Norman Fowler, Employment Secretary, Paul Channon, Transport Secretary, and several senior ministers will meet regularly to deal with the strike threat and keep cargoes moving.

Whatever the outcome of the emergency meeting of the Transport and General Workers Union called to consider Todd's treachery one thing is clear: 'left' trade union leaders such as Todd have no intention of leading their members into a struggle against the Tory government and the capitalist state.

This is the lesson such leaders drew from the miners' strike, which saw thousands and thousands of miners and other sections of the working class locked in daily bloody battle against the capitalist state.

'Never again' was the strangled response of Todd and company.

But far from going away, the struggles that the miners went through set the pattern for the future.

Every major strike now involves a direct struggle against the government, armed with its battery of legislation, including that of 1982 which made 'political' strikes illegal.

It is the prospect of a fight against such legislation that sends shivers up and down the spines of every reformist and Stalinist.

We urge the Union executive and the Docks Committee to reject Todd's line of capitulation, prepare for an all-out strike, and campaign throughout the working class movement in support of such action.

Whatever the dockers decide in the immediate future, the working class urgently needs a revolutionary leadership willing and prepared to mobilise it against the capitalist state. This is the only way in which its gains from the past can now be defended.

WORKERS PRESS FIGHTING FUND

APRIL £7,500

In so far: £1,296.33

AT the beginning of World War II, political prisoners in one of Stalin's camps were moved out, lined up, and murdered by a certain Vasilyev and his assistants. The prisoners were smashed over the head with specially made clubs with iron plating on the end. Their murderers even laid bets on who could smash a skull with one blow and who needed more than one.

Vasilyev later became a colonel of state security under Stalin.

This sordid story was told more than 40 years later by Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko in his book 'The Time of Stalin - Portrait of a Tyranny'.

This week in Georgia, USSR, Stalinist-Vasilyev's heirs murdered 30 people. Some were beaten to death with clubs and shovels, others died of asphyxiation and a woman of 70 died of shock. At least 140 people are seriously ill in hospital.

But the Stalinists' days are numbered. They cannot keep this quiet for 40 years. Millions of people are rising up against them in the USSR and Eastern Europe. Workers Press demands, with them, an accounting for these murders.

What has this to do with our fund?

We need the resources for Workers Press as part of the Preparatory Committee for the Rebuilding of the Fourth International, founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition against Stalinism.

We urgently need to raise the outstanding balance of £6,204 by the end of the month.

Dot Gibson

Send donations to: Workers Press Fighting Fund
PO Box 735, London, SW9 7QS

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 21 April

WRP LONDON LECTURE

Room 9 Friends Meeting House

'Marxism', a series of lectures by Cyril Smith (WRP Central Committee).

No. 3 'How is communism to be achieved?'

Saturday 22 April

NON-STOP PICKET 3RD ANNIVERSARY RALLY

outside the South African Embassy, Trafalgar Square, London

2 p.m. - 6 p.m.

Sunday 23 April

BLAIR PEACH MEMORIAL MARCH

1 p.m. Assemble at: Southall Park, Uxbridge Road, Southall

March to rally at Fenner Brockway Centre, South Road

Monday 1 May

MAY DAY DEMONSTRATIONS

Saturday-Sunday 10-11 June

THIRD SOCIALIST CONFERENCE, SHEFFIELD

Saturday 17 June

NUM CENTENARY GALA, YORKSHIRE

Saturday 24 June

WORKERS PRESS MINERS' STRIKE 5TH ANNIVERSARY EVENT

Durham University Lecture Theatre, Old Elvet, Durham

WORKERS REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

Please send me information about the
Workers Revolutionary Party

Name.....date.....

Address.....

Trade union.....Age (if under 21).....

Send to:

Secretary to the Central Committee,
PO Box 735, London SW9 7QS

Maxwell does Shamir's bidding

BY CHARLIE POTTINS

BRITISH press baron Robert Maxwell faces a row in Israel over his plans to take over the liberal English-language daily 'Jerusalem Post'.

Staff alarmed by Maxwell's support for the Shamir government's attacks on press freedom say his bid must be regarded as 'unfriendly and hostile'.

'Mirror' boss Maxwell suddenly emerged on the Israeli scene last month, taking part in a 'Jewish solidarity' conference called by Shamir to boost his regime, and widely boycotted by Jewish Diaspora leaders.

At this gathering the Israeli prime minister 'accused some newspapers of 'helping the Arabs', and denied press reports that he'd suppressed intelligence reports favouring talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Maxwell promptly got on to the Tel Aviv evening paper 'Ma'ariv' - in which he had recently acquired a 25 per cent holding - and told the editors to 'be a little more careful in future before publishing that kind of rubbish.'

State

In fact, the papers' story was accurate.

After last November's Palestine National Council meeting, Israeli military intelligence estimated the PLO's wish for collaboration for a state in part of Palestine was genuine, and advised that if Israel wanted a political settlement it would have no alternative but to talk with the PLO.

Shamir has reportedly started a purge in the intelligence service. He is worried the press leaks could undermine his mission to Washington this month.

While the Palestinian press in the occupied territories suffers military censorship and detentions of journalists, the laws of capitalism are hitting Israel's 'free' press.

The 'Post', usually close to the Labour Party, is up for grabs because recession-hit Koor Industries (partly owned by the Histadrut, Zionist labour organisation) wants to sell up its 55 per cent.

Even if it evades Maxwell's takeover bid, it won't be out of the woods.

Arich Genger, a millionaire friend of extreme right-wing ex-General Ariel Sharon has also put in a £2.8 million bid.

University teachers cease to be gentlefolk

BY PAUL HENDERSON

THE strongest ever industrial action undertaken by the Association of University Teachers, involving a total boycott on any work connected with the setting or marking of examination papers, has resulted in a ludicrous pay offer from their employers.

Members of the union are balloting on whether to accept no increase for 1988, and six per cent for the current year.

The 'point of no return' is approaching rapidly, with many examination papers not set or printed, and the examinations in most universities to be sat at the

end of May.

The strong response to the call for industrial action has taken union leaders, employers, and the government by surprise.

Pay has become a peg on which many teachers can hang general feelings of resentment. There have been years of underfunding, the rapidly growing pressure of business interests determining the futures of research and teaching projects, and the emergence of a small army of teachers and researchers on short term contracts.

High on the list of grievances has been the threat made to tenure under the terms of the Baker Act.

Tenure is the right of university teachers to lecture and research on 'unpopular' topics without fear

that this will endanger their jobs.

It was a right fought for when universities were establishing their independence from the church, and, under the new Act, it is abolished for all new staff, and staff who in any way change their contracts (for example, by being promoted).

So far, universities have got rid of unwanted staff by discreet arm twisting, often with the help of the union, combined with 'golden handshakes'.

Apparently dissatisfied with the pace of change, the University of Hull has jumped the gun and made a staff member in the Department of Philosophy redundant against his wishes.

The unwillingness of the AUT to treat the case of Edgar Page, the redundant philosopher, as a national issue (they say that under the terms of the union laws, each university is a separate employer) has angered many university teachers, and has given the battle on pay - which is being treated as a national issue - a greater intensity.

Whatever happens with the current ballot, the AUT has begun to look more like a union and less like an association of professional gentlefolk.

This change is not before time, as a new 'breed' of administrator has been fed into the system from the top down. These new managers have all the sensitivity and vision of the average crocodile.

Combined with this, a Tory 'think-tank' on education recently floated the idea of completely privatising the whole university system. There is no doubt that the education system as a whole is in crisis, and the university system is part of that crisis.

Greenwich opposition to police brutality

BY ALAN CLARK

MEMBERS of Greenwich Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) picketed outside the CO-OP building in Woolwich, S.E. London, on Saturday April 8th. in protest at self-appointed 'black leaders' having talks with the 'Police Consultative Group' (PCG) inside.

In a leaflet handed out to passers-by, they said that despite the appalling record of brutality and harassment and lack of commitment to welfare of black

people in Greenwich, the police had the audacity to organise a conference on racial harassment.

Over the last two years 375 racial incidents have been reported to Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks (GACARA), and in most of those cases Woolwich police have done nothing.

They also say that many black organisations deplore the Police Consultative Group as nothing more than a group of informers and they want no collaboration with it until it is accountable to the ratepayers.



Four hundred workers at TCL Dagenham have voted to continue their pay strike into its sixth week. The workforce, seen above entering their strike meeting, are demanding a £15 increase at the plant where the maximum hourly rate is £2.65 per hour.

CHARTISM

The revolution the British w

'Without Chartism, however, there would have been no Paris Commune. Without both of these there would have been no October Revolution' (Leon Trotsky 'Revolution Betrayed' 1936).

1989 is the 150th anniversary of the meeting of the People's Convention and the founding of the Chartist movement.

Chartism was the first great mass mobilisation of the working class for political and revolutionary action.

It was the first attempt to create a truly independent party of the working class, and included many who believed that the only way to a just society lay through a general strike and insurrectionary action.

In its latter stages the movement involved a decisive turn of an important vanguard section to internationalism, to socialism and to Marxism.

In social and economic terms Chartism was a product of the industrial revolution, the great productive leap forward that brought a modern capitalist class and an advanced working class into existence, and into conflict.

Resting on a vastly extended and ruthless drive for surplus value, capitalism induced the crisis and ruin of many of the old handicraft trades while at the same time imposing a vicious super-exploitation on its new minions - when they were not unemployed and starving, for trade depressions were already a regular feature of the system.

A great rearguard action had been fought in terms of rick-burning, machine breaking and armed struggle by those dispossessed or having their livelihoods destroyed: the Swing and Luddite rioters.

Realising that political action was needed, workers who were already organising in trades unions allied themselves with the beleaguered handicraft workers, the radical middle class and the liberal bourgeoisie to challenge the dominance in parliament of the Tory landowners.

The workers did all that was asked of them by the new middle class and industrialists, only to be cruelly betrayed at the last. The 1832 Reform Act certainly widened the franchise, but included a property qualification that ensured the continued exclusion of the working class.

Hateful

The Whig government then launched a savage onslaught on the trade unions - the Tolpuddle Martyrs were just some of the victims - and imposed the hateful new Poor Law which forced paupers and the unemployed into the workhouse where they were treated as criminals.

This treachery delivered a sharp lesson to the working class, showing the need for its own wholly independent movement. Chartism was the product of that betrayal.

A meeting of London workers subsequently resolved:

'In 1832 the working class, by their moral and physical organisation, beat the Tories for the sake of the Whigs. By the same means they can beat both Whigs and Tories for the sake of themselves'.

In June 1836 the London Working Men's Association (LWMA) was set up by activists

BY BERNARD FRANKS

already to the fore in a score of other campaigns, for example the battle for the radical cheap press, the short-time movement (for reduced hours of work in factories), opposition to the Truck system (i.e. payment in kind instead of cash), and the massive Anti-Poor Law Campaign.

Its leaders included Cornish cabinet-maker William Lovett, Shoemaker Francis Place, journalist and lawyer Bronterre O'Brien and ex-MP Fergus O'Connor.

Initially the LWMA allowed only wage-earners to have full membership and to hold office, warning that in the past 'the masses in their political organisations were taught to look up to great men rather than great principles'.

However, realising that to ban members of the radical middle class would preclude some of the most dedicated fighters in the workers' cause, it allowed those in as honorary members.

Links

A body dominated by skilled artisans, the LWMA took on an educative role and sought links with similar working men's groups in America, Belgium, Canada and Poland while dispatching 'missionaries' to other parts of Britain.

Concerned at the rapidly growing middle class domination of the LWMA and its concentration on the problems of the privileged London artisans, Harney, O'Brien and O'Connor formed the East London Democratic Association in 1837.

Their intention was to appeal to the

depressed trades, especially the Spitalfield's weavers, and to disseminate revolutionary works such as those of Thomas Paine.

A few months earlier, a meeting of the LWMA and six radical MPs had concluded that it was impossible to defeat the onslaughts on the working class by any other than political means. Seeing Parliament as the sole key to power, they resolved to fight for a programme which would impose the stamp of the majority on that body, and lead to the achievement of a just society.

Their People's Charter consisted of six points:

- The vote for all men of 21 and over
- Equal size electoral districts
- Annual Parliaments
- Payment for Members of Parliament
- A secret ballot
- No property qualifications for voters

The vehicle for winning the acceptance of this programme would be a great petition which the MPs would hardly dare ignore because it would have more signatures than there were voters. Huge rallies and signing sessions were held in Scotland and the North following the launching meeting on 6 August 1838 at Birmingham.

The vast assemblies of 100,000 to 200,000 people surpassed even the great Anti-Poor Law rallies of the previous year and culminated in the mammoth Kersal Meet (Manchester) meeting of 4 September 1838. Banners included the slogans 'For children and wife we'll war to the knife', 'Bread and revolution', and 'Tyrants believe and tremble'.

At this, it was decided to send delegates to a National Convention which would organise to fight for acceptance of the Charter. They met on 4 February 1839 at the British Hotel, Cockspur Street, London. Immediately funda-



ary heritage of orking class



mental differences were revealed between the 53 delegates present.

There were representatives of the artisans and radicals of the LWMA and the midlands groups who thought that moral right would win the day under the pressure of the majority. They need only work towards the successful petitioning of Parliament for the Charter to be won.

Others, however, said they must look to the possibility that the Charter would be rejected. Other forms of struggle must be readied to force their rulers to its acceptance, if necessary, through insurrection.

After all, said the latter (mainly northern men who on their speaking tours of Yorkshire and Lancashire had seen pikes forged, fire-arms collected and armed men drilling by torchlight), they chose the title 'National Convention' precisely because of its significance in the French Revolution as the name of a new democratic body elected without property qualifications, and imposed by revolution.

The petitioners held the majority, but from this point the lines were clearly drawn between the Moral Force Chartists led by Lovett and Place and the Physical Force men under O'Connor, Harney and O'Brien.

Significantly it was Fergus O'Connor who owned and edited the great Chartist newspaper the Northern Star.

When the Convention reconvened at Birmingham to finalise the presentation of the Charter and petitions (of 1,280,000 signatures) to Parliament it was met by hundreds of police drafted in from London.

A pitch battle ensued and hundreds of arrests were made over several days.

A nationwide repression of the movement followed, and leaders, including Lovett, were jailed for up to a year.

Even so the momentum could not be stopped and the petition was presented to Parliament while the Charter was moved - in the form of a Bill - by the sympathetic radical MPs.

The belief that the combination of Tory landlords and Whig bourgeois would move aside under peaceful pressure was quickly shattered. The Bill was defeated by 235 votes to 45.

This immediately strengthened the position of the Physical Force Chartists. A series of strikes, demonstrations and riots occurred across the North. But without the leadership and preparation they urged, the movement petered out.

Then in November 1839, 3,000 armed Monmouthshire miners and ironworkers led by the ex-mayor John Frost marched on Newport to effect the release from prison of the Chartist orator Henry Vincent.

Troops were hurried to the town and deployed in the Wetgate hotel from where they poured their murderous fire into the demonstrators.

In the subsequent battle 24 were shot dead and a further 40 injured. Arrests followed and 21 were charged with high treason.

Frost was sentenced to death, subsequently committed to lifetime transportation.

Arrests of other Chartists followed and the entire movement was seriously set back.

The lesson learned from this blow was that a permanent organisation should be established which would survive the loss of individual leaders. In July 1840 the National Charter Association (NCA) was founded. By April 1842 it claimed 401 'localities' and a total of 50,000 members.

One important result of this was that a conference of 80 trades delegates held at Corporation Hall, Manchester (a meeting considered as a forerunner of the TUC) took a historic decision to endorse the Charter, declaring that none should return to work until it was won.

Now there arose the so-called 'Plug riots', not riots at all, but the practice by strikers of marching from town to town - especially across Cheshire and Yorkshire - rallying local workers to the cause and stopping all factory production by pulling out the plugs of their steam engine boilers.

All collapsed in confusion when O'Connor, the great leading figure of the movement, panicked at the enormity of what had been set in motion and called the whole thing off. This time 1,500 arrests followed and 79 transportations in the subsequent wave of repression.

Trade revived shortly after and the movement split into a variety of sections: religious, temperance, Owenite socialist, and trade union - the latter strongly allied with the Miners' Federation set up in 1841.

Lovett turned to education as an answer, believing that Britain's rulers would be willing to give educated men the vote.

O'Connor, always hostile to socialism, founded a National Land Company to provide smallholdings for workers, thereby taking them off the labour market and setting those left at a premium.

Others looked to participation in the growing local government movement as a road to power.

George Harney and Ernest Jones, meanwhile, turned to Marxism and Internationalism, linking with a number of European political refugees and others living in London, including Marx and Engels.

A last revival of the Chartist movement came at the time of the great revolutionary upheavals occurring on mainland Europe during 1847-48.

Yet another petition was put together of 5 million signatures, with an even stronger input by the Irish community in Britain (they had played a prominent part throughout). So that 'The Times' concluded that: 'The true character of the present movement is a ramification of the Irish Conspiracy'.

A great demonstration to Parliament was

planned, marching from Kennington Common. But when their leaders heard that the authorities had massed 150,000 police, troops and special constables recruited from the middle class, they called it off and took the petitions by cab.

The outcome was the same as on the previous occasions. The mass movement declined but the development in the remaining organisation is important.

Harney and Jones now won the leadership of the NCA and transformed it into a socialist party, calling for nationalisation of the land, mines and fisheries and demanding state support of the destitute.

They also published the Communist Manifesto for the first time in English, translated by Helen MacFarlane, and advanced a plan for the formation of a new party combining the NCA, the Co-op societies and the remaining Owenites.

O'Brien, meanwhile, had forged links with continental revolutionaries through the Society of Fraternal Democrats launched in 1845. It was O'Brien who had translated into English Buongrotti's story of the Babeuf insurrection which had occurred in the latter stages of the French Revolution.

With the development of British capitalism into a new stage of production and expansion of Empire, the ruling class were able to cede most of the Chartist's demands as reforms, made to a class that had proved its ability to rise in revolution.

The Chartist Movement died out, with one last powerful flicker of the flame: O'Connor's funeral in 1852, attended by 50,000 mourners.

Chartism, 'The first broad, truly mass and politically organised proletarian revolutionary movement' (Lenin), sought to extend democratic forms then achieve new democratic ends by violent revolutionary means - i.e. in the same way that the British bourgeoisie led by Cromwell had arrived at parliamentary democracy in its modern form.

The Chartists provided a vital revolutionary, political and theoretical heritage for the British working class, for they never ceased to discuss, read about and write of the past great movements in British and European history and philosophy.

This legacy was hurriedly renounced by the ruling bureaucrats of the subsequent New Model Unions, and substituted with reformist schemes and organisational power by those leading the mass unions of the twentieth century. Such systems prove totally bankrupt in the period of capitalism's final decline and decay. Only by returning to its Chartist birthright, allied to the Marxist legacy and the battle fought by Leon Trotsky against Stalin's monstrous betrayal of revolutionary internationalism will the British working class retake the road to proletarian power along which their predecessors so steadfastly set out 150 years ago.

Letter to Kosovo (Yugoslavian) miners from Durham Mechanics

National Union of Mineworkers
Durham Colliery
Mechanics Association
Group No.1 Area
Murton Mechanics

Chairman: M. Rooney
Secretary: D. Temple,
2 East View,
Sherburn Hill,
Durham, DH6 1PL
Treasurer: S. Vardy
22.3.1989

Dear Comrades and Brothers,
This branch of the National
Union of Mineworkers wishes
to express its solidarity with
you in your struggle.

We were deeply moved to
learn of your 'sit down hunger
strike'.

While we are not familiar
with all the issues involved,
we know from our bitter expe-

rience that wherever the mi-
ners fight for their rights they
are confronted with the vio-
lence of the state.

In our year-long battle against
the British capitalist state in
1984-85 we learned many
lessons, the most important
being that the working class is
an international class. Without
the help we received from
workers in other countries we
would have starved.

It is in recognition of this
debt which we owe that we
offer you our solidarity and
enquire in what way we can be
of assistance to you.

*Yours
Fraternally
David Temple*

Delegates at the 'European Open Trotskyist Conference' in Italy, held on 17-19 March signed the following statement:

'We condemn the slander
campaign by D.North and the
'International Committee of
the Fourth International'
against Cliff Slaughter of the
Workers Revolutionary Party
and his son Patrick Slaughter.

Following his conviction in
a trial of football fans under
the reactionary conspiracy
laws, Patrick Slaughter was
witchhunted by North and his
followers as 'a fascist' (al-
though his only statement in
court was a rejection of
racialism and fascism): North
and company witchhunted
Cliff slaughter (who has been
active in the Labour movement
for 40 years) as a 'defender of
fascists'.

The slander methods of
North against Cliff and Patrick
Slaughter - like his slanders

against Mark Curtis - have no
place in the workers move-
ment.

International Trotskyist Com-
mittee
Moreno Pasquinalo (GOR,
Italy)

E. Franconelli (Fronte Rosso,
Italy)

John McKee (Movement for a
Revolutionary Communist
International)

G.Mallet, Pouvoir Ouvriere
(MRCI French section)

Freedom Socialist Party, US
Radical Women (US)

E. Samarakoddy (Revolutio-
nary Workers Party Sri Lanka)
Dita Wilhelmi (for Leninist
Trotskyist Tendency, Germany
and Belgium)

Walter Dahl (League for a
Revolutionary Party- US)

Karl Fishbach (IKL Austria)
Chris Bailey

S.Pirani (Preparatory Commit-
tee for an International Con-
ference of Trotskyists)

AS I SEE IT BY TOM OWEN

North West

THE bleakest train-ride that I
can recommend is between
Manchester and Blackburn. The
20-mile or so journey takes just
over one hour in the mis-named
British Rail 'Sprinter'.

You therefore have plenty of
time to contemplate a land-
scape, bleak, not in the sense of
high moorland, meseta or
desert, but as an unremitting
reminder of capitalist devas-
tation, plunder and decay. The
eight-mile stretch between Sal-
ford and Mosesgate (Bolton) is a
poisoned lunar-landscape.

There seem to be lakes of
chemical waste and semi-
solidified artificial swamps.

On the horizon are the gaunt
ruins of spinning mills and the
occasional isolated church stee-
ple, pointing accusingly at a red

sky.
The science fiction quality of
the panorama is perfected by
the mountainous scrap-yards of
twisted steel and the detritus of
consumer commodities, cars,
washing-machines, fridges piled
on top of each other.

As you move into the 'West
Pennine' valleys the landscape
ironically becomes more human
because the uncultivated moor-
land becomes visible.

The small redundant weaving
towns, their stone terraces
crowded into the damp valleys
have a different air of decay. The
same 'cash-built' industrial units
of the Thatcherite 'recovery' are
in evidence here, just as they
are in the filthy wastelands of
Salford.

The environment of the valley
towns seems more manageable,
easier to restore.

For example, BBC North
West T.V. showed how a group
of enthusiasts in Rossendale had
cleaned up the rivers, restored
the old footpaths and were busily
restoring old cotton mills into
'heritage' museums or even
yuppie dwellings.

One 'green' spokesperson
said that the aim was not just to

restore nature after the ravages
of King Cotton, but to make the
place attractive for 'new
industrial investment'.

This small scale do-it-your-
self environmental marketing
was picked up by the BBC. Hot
on the foot of 'Comic Relief' we
now have a new kind of
community involvement by the
Company in the 'clean up the
North West' campaign.

The moral behind the
campaign is still the same old
'litter lout' hectoring we used to
get at school.

The massive ecological crisis
of the North West is seen to be
purely a result of the behaviour
of its mainly working class
inhabitants. The same scale of
carnage is also present in the
population, and the same petty
moralizing is offered as a
solution.

The Lancashire Evening
Telegraph (28 March 1989)
revealed in its main front page
article 'Lancashire has the worst
health record in the country with
hundreds of cruel deaths which
could be prevented'.

The region's medical officer,
Dr Stephen Horsley, is quoted to
say in a new report 'We have the

worst health anywhere in Eng-
land'.

The four major causes of
death in the region, this very
detailed report shows, are 'heart
diseases, lung cancer, childhood
accidents and poisonings, and
road accidents'.

Historically this report is one
in a long line of such investiga-
tions from the cradle of industrial
capitalism.

Indeed Engels drew from the
data of similar reports in Man-
chester and Sheffield to write his
'Conditions of the English
Working Class, 1844'.

What is interesting is the res-
ponse of the regional medical
officer and the health agencies.
Dr Horsley proclaims 'there is no
easy answer, and Big Brother is
not going to help us. The only
people who can put this right is
the population itself'.

By 'Big Brother' I assume he
means a properly financed
health service equipped with the
best preventative and educa-
tional services.

What is being offered is a
'health crusade' a quasi-religious
campaign to warn people of their
contemporary sins - fish and
chips, fags, ale and bad driving.

OPPOSE AEU/EETPU MERGER

BY ALAN JAMES

THE two most reactionary union leaderships in Britain in the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) and the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union (EETPU) have come to an agreement on a merger.

Until January this year, the scrapping over who got what plum job had delayed agreement.

A leaked document containing a ten point proposal for amalgamation sets out the structure and timing of implementation for a totally intergrated union within six years of vesting day.

If this happens it will create an ultra-right-wing union with approximately 1,165,000 million members.

This would be a significant development for the Thatcher government and employers in breaking the back of any remaining resistance inside the Trades Union Congress against treading the corporatist road demanded in the interests of British capital.

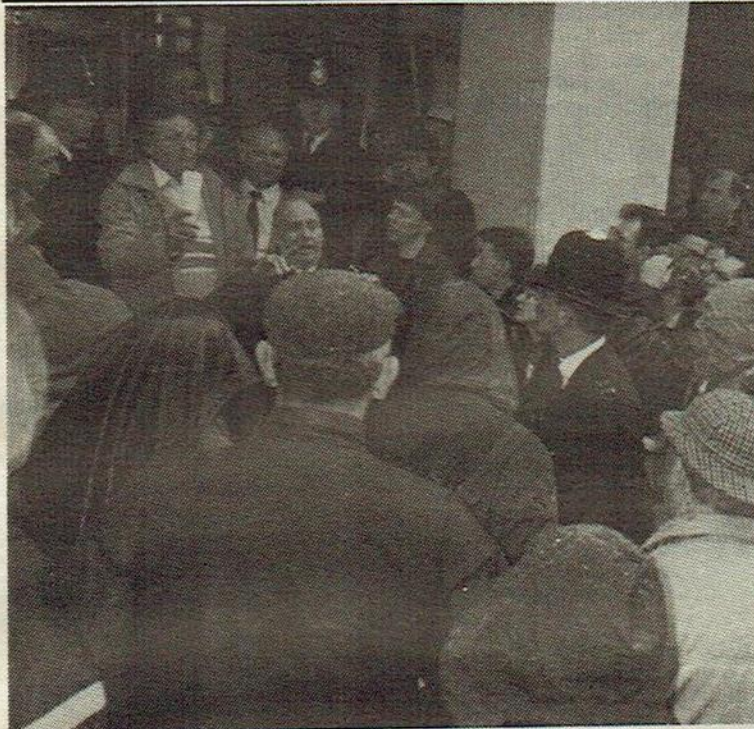
The single-union no-strike agreement which gives a fully flexible, interchangeable, mobile, and docile workforce, is essential to maintain competitiveness in a period of crisis in world commodity production.

The smashing of the trade unions as organisations of the working class goes together with a barrage of attacks on democratic rights. The anti-trade union legislation meets with no resistance from the trade union bureaucracy which in periods of capitalist crisis gives even more slavish support to the national ruling class whether it be in a trade or a military war.

State

The AEU/EETPU amalgamation is part of a movement to tie workers to the state through their trade unions. Although the AEU leadership under Jordan and Laird have control of the rank and file national committee which decides policy of the union, they are hampered by a structure based on branches and district committees which have a large degree of autonomy, and the democratic election of all full time officials.

The ten points adopted by a



Angry engineers lobbying their leaders at Engineering Employers HQ London for a 35 hour week with no strings on 12 April.

majority of the AEU executive are in complete opposition to the decision taken by the national committee, the policy deciding body, last year.

This was to amalgamate only on the basis of the present democratic structure of maintaining the final appeals court, district, divisional, national and rules revision committees, and the regular election of full time officials.

Since September 1988 when an national Engineering Gazette (broad left) rally voted to oppose amalgamation with the EETPU two national meetings have taken place.

Neither of them took up the call for a national campaign against the right wing over amalgamation, mainly on the insistence of Stalinist Jimmie Airly and his supporters who want to wait until an agreement is struck and has been balloted on, before taking any action.

A call for a national

campaign has been made by the Birmingham Engineering Gazette group, who have called for a lobby of the national committee on 17 April, which all members should attend.

The weakness of this campaign is that the majority of the Birmingham Group, who are supporters of the Socialist Workers Party, see the question of amalgamation as a single issue, and refuse to take up the question of leadership in the Engineering Gazette against Airlie and his like.

They voted down a motion put at a conference held in Birmingham in January this year for the removal of Airlie as chair of the broad left.

The Workers Revolutionary Party, as part of the Preparatory Committee for the rebuilding of the Fourth International rejects both the conscious betrayal of the Stalinists and the rank-and-file spontaneity of the revisionists.

We oppose the amalgamation because it will tie AEU members to the employers and the Thatcher government through the business-union philosophy of the EETPU.

The EETPU is essentially a corporatist union. We set out to smash this reactionary organisation by supporting the new Electrical, Industry and Plumbing union, in recruiting all existing members of the EETPU and fighting for its isolation and exclusion from the trade union and labour movement.

The work of Trotskyists in the unions is to raise the consciousness of workers, to recognise that only the fight for socialism through the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism on a world scale can answer the oppression and exploitation of the masses.

This cannot be achieved spontaneously, but only through consciously and patiently building a revolutionary tendency within the trade unions. Only in this way can the exposure of the trade union and labour bureaucracy as agents of capitalism and their expulsion from the workers movement be carried out.

This is inseparable from the fight against Stalinism which is responsible for the continuing authority of the trade union bureaucracy.

Task

We must complete the task that Trotsky began with the founding of the Fourth International, the restoration of Bolshevism and the defeat of Stalinism and reformism. The social revolution in the West, the political revolution in the East.

- Oppose amalgamation with the EETPU!
- Lobby the AEU national committee on 17 April (from 8.30 am outside the Winter Gardens Eastbourne).
- Demand a national anti-amalgamation campaign which challenges the right wing!
- Remove those leaders of the Engineering Gazette (broad left) like Airlie who refuse to lead such a campaign!
- Build revolutionary leadership in the trade unions!

South African mother stronger by struggle

BY BRONWEN HANDYSIDE

WORKERS Press spoke to Andrina Forbes, mother of Ashley Forbes, one of 14 young black South Africans, members of the African National Congress, convicted of 'terrorism' by the South African state. Ashley, who is 24 got 15 years, two got 14 years, one got 12 years, two got 10 years, four got 2 years, and four got five-year suspended sentences.

Ashley's wife Yasmina was also detained and persecuted by the state, and Ashley Kriel, member of the same Umkhonto We Sizwe cell, is dead - shot in the back by the security police. Together they make up the Capetown 16.

'This is not just the story of Ashley but of all the Capetown 16.

'One morning at three a.m. I saw some flashlights outside. I looked out and saw police with dogs and guns and a whole fleet of police vans.

'Ashley grabbed his jeans and ran out the back door, over the rooftops and gates and he was gone.

'Then the house was full of policemen. In one room granny was dying, but they lifted up the blanket to see if she had a bomb or limpet mine on her stomach.

'When they were leaving, an armed policeman said, if we see any sign of Ashley we will shoot him. I knew that if Ashley came, he would challenge them and be shot.

'But the community opens all its doors to children on the run, and I knew he would be in safe hands. The police left, but a lieutenant came for six months and asked every day whether Ashley had returned.

'After, we heard that Ashley had been picked up, and was being held under the section 29. This is the most horrific, bestial and cruel section to be held under. It is used for interrogation and torture. It means no visits from family, clergy, doctors, lawyers or friends, the victims are entirely at the mercy of the interrogators and torturers.

'One morning I received an anonymous phone call - to this day I don't know who phoned - and I have never tried to find out, because I know that person would lose their job.

'The call was to say that Ashley had been tortured to the point that he had landed in hospital. He had refused to give information and he had been tortured beyond his limits.

'I rushed to the hospital and was taken to a ward which had a curtained off section in one corner. Standing in front was a police guard with a gun, and a security guard.

'The policeman at first refused to let me see my son, but the hospital matron intervened and phoned police headquarters. The policeman took out a walkie-talkie and confirmed it.

'Then he said 'You may see Ashley, but you are not allowed to go to his bed, or make a sign, or to speak, to call his name or touch him.

'The security guard opened the curtain, and I saw a form under blanket and I knew it was Ashley, because a mother knows her child no matter under what circumstances. I saw his legs were shackled to the bedpost.

'Next morning I went to the Supreme Court and requested to see him. After six weeks I got a letter saying I could visit. On the day I was met by a colonel and two security guards and we drove in a police van to Caledon Square, which is a prison in Capetown.

'We waited five minutes then a car entered the gates, four police jumped out, and Ashley followed. As he stepped out of the car I saw him looking from the ground up at the walls. He surveyed the whole courtyard. I found out later he was looking to see if it was another place of torture.

'The most remarkable aspect of the visit is that Ashley did not once look towards the van I was in, although he was only three steps away. Although we had been apart for 18 months, not once did he look towards the van.

'I realised I had heard no sounds, and also that the windows of the van were tinted. It was one-way glass. I could see him, but he could not see me.

'I was frantic over this bizarre visit. I immediately applied to the Supreme Court for another.

'After a week approximately, I got another letter saying that the visit was granted, as usual the colonel and two security guards came with me.

'We went up in a lift and along a passage, and stopped at a white door. The colonel said - 'You are going to see Ashley, but you are not allowed to break down or cause a scene, because we do not want to upset the prisoner.

'The door opened and I saw Ashley - he was a slight figure between six big security police. Although they were burly and strong it was Ashley who dominated the scene. Like all his comrades he would always stand up and come back resilient, live, brave, totally committed - designed for freedom.

'The apartheid system has affected many a family, caused great hardship and changed their lives. It has affected me all my life. My mother and father married before the Morality act, which said that black and white could not live to-

gether. My white father was forced to leave my mother, who was black.

'One of the circumstances that most affected Ashley, was the forced removal of my mother and her sister, both in their 80s, from District 6 where they had lived all their lives.

'They came to live with us. Within six weeks Auntie Kitty died - it was too much for her being uprooted from the community and all her friends.

'Ashley saw her die. That was partly why he decided to turn to the armed struggle.

'One of the questions the security guards asked when they came to the house looking for Ashley was: 'Is granny dead yet?' because they knew that her death would be one thing to bring him back.

'On the morning after she died, we were all upset and dressed in mourning. The police burst in, and searched the house for Ashley.

'When he was on the run, and granny was dying she used to ask me 'When is the boy coming from

school?'. But he didn't see her before she died. I told him later, and tears stood in his eyes. He was very fond of granny.

'Ashley carried out his first offence when he was in standard four and he wrote political slogans on the school wall. When we went to see him in the court then, he was in shackles. He was twelve years old.

'The Capetown 16 stood up for their beliefs and ideals and for the liberation of their people. They are not terrorists but freedom fighters.

'They should not be put in jail, their talents and energies should be used for the good and benefit of all communities.

'In South Africa, the people know that freedom is in the air because they are united. There is great unity amongst blacks, coloureds and Asians.'

Andrina Forbes will be in London, and available to speak at meetings on the Capetown 16 campaign until the end of May. Contact her by writing to: 11 Shackleton Road, Southall, Middlesex, UB12JA.

Workers Press

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