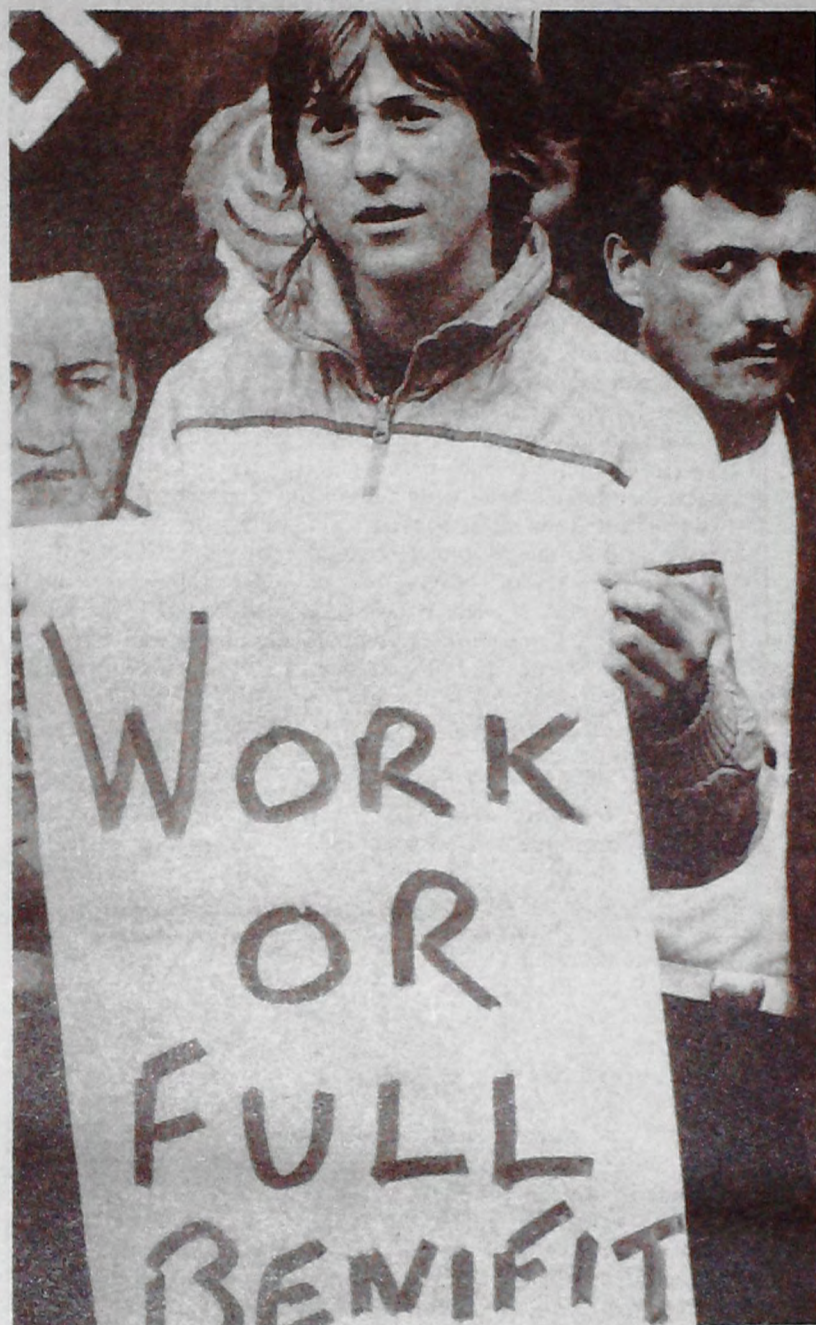


# FIGHT FOR WORK NOT KINNOCK



OCTOBER 4 will be the day when 30 unemployed workers set off from Jarrow on their month long march. In all of the 23 towns and cities they pass through they will be joined by two more marchers and when they reach London on November 2 they will undoubtedly be greeted by a demonstration of huge proportions.

According to the publicity material sent to trades councils and other labour movement bodies, the aim of Jarrow 86 will be to use the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Jarrow Crusade to "actively campaign for the unemployed of the 1980s."

Unfortunately this does not seem to include building an unemployed workers' organisation. No, the organisers of Jarrow 86 are quite clear that their march will be a pre-election stunt to boost the standing of Kinnock and Labour.

The only hope offered to the unemployed by Jarrow 86 and its "high profile touring theatre show", *Brookside* script writer and all, is to trust in the 'next Labour government'.

They do have at least the virtue of being honest about this. "Jarrow 86 will provide a massive public platform for the presentation of Labour Party policy", "demonstrate only Labour has the will to solve the twin evils of mass unemployment and social deprivation" and "make a major contribution to the election of a Labour government."

The timing of the march is also very much tied to improving the electoral chances of the Labourites. "Jarrow 86 happens less than a year before a general election", it will pass through "a number of key marginals", it will coincide with the "Tory Party conference".

Kinnock, as we all know, has promised that within two years of a Labour government being elected there will be one million new jobs. This will of course leave the little matter of around three million still unemployed — even if Kinnock ever managed to deliver his promise. But can he even do this?

If he does it can only be because British capitalists find it profitable. After all Kinnock makes no pretence of ushering in the socialist millennium. He is out to manage capitalism — just as all previous Labour governments have. And

today that capitalist system is rotten and crisis ridden. As to Labourite integrity, even when they say they are going to introduce socialist measures, the truth is that the very nature of the system and the Labour Party itself means that such talk is nothing more than talk.

Labour is not a revolutionary party but as much part of capitalism as unemployment. It is tied and ties workers to the system. This is proved by every Labour government there has ever been and by the simple fact that Labour is committed to the capitalist state. Where we fight to smash the capitalist state, Labour looks to this instrument of capitalist rule as the instrument through which to enact all its measures. This dooms even the most militant of left Labourite anti-capitalist rhetoric to impotently blow itself out within the safe confines of the House of Commons.

Given that Labour is now firmly in the hands of the openly pro-capitalist right, why should Labour's recipe for getting Britain back to work be any more successful than that promised by the Tories in the 1979 election? Remember, similar policies to those proposed by Kinnock and Hattersley were tried by the last Labour government back in the 1970s. What happened? Unemployment doubled.

So there is no reason to believe that if Kinnock was sitting pretty in No.10 things would really improve for the unemployed. Labour is committed to managing the capitalist system. All Labour's promises to the unemployed rest on its ability to restore the profitability and competitiveness of British capitalism. And in the real world this can only be done by forcing down real wages and reversing Britain's decline as an imperialist power.

The fact is that British imperialism is inexorably on the decline. More than that, world capitalism is heading for a new general crisis. And if truth be told all the fancy schemes Labour has announced about a massive increase in public spending to boost the domestic economy would be unceremoniously junked with the first run on the pound or stock market downturn.

Those who insist that "Labour

has the will to solve the twin evils of mass unemployment and social deprivation", that all we have to do is to vote Labour at the next general election, are simply perpetrating a cruel con trick on the unemployed. Capitalism produces unemployment it is part of its very nature to have a reserve army of labour. And yet Labour does not even now talk of ending capitalism. Indeed Labour objectively seeks to perpetuate the capitalist system — and that means, whether it likes it or not, perpetuating unemployment.

That is why we say: Fight for work, not Kinnock. The unemployed have no interest in being used as cannon fodder for the 'next Labour government'.

And what do the organisers of Jarrow 86 propose the unemployed do if Labour does not win the next general election? Should they simply endure another four or five years of poverty and degradation until another general election is called? We get no answer.

The whole of working class history proves that nothing has been gained by way of improved living standards, liberties and democratic rights, without persistent organisation and struggle. The ruling class, even with their servants in the leadership of the Labour Party in office, have not given concessions to the subject class out of goodheartedness or human consideration. Right down the ages all rights have had to be wrung from the ruling class by the organised strength and action of the workers. Every item of boasted legislation, the NHS, education, the vote, unemployment benefit — has been preceded by intense and protracted agitation.

When unemployment reaches dimensions such as we have witnessed in this country since the late 1970s and increases from year to year, despite fiddling the figures, YTS and cheap labour schemes, the organisation of the unemployed becomes an imperative necessity.

Of course the task of organising the unemployed is not a simple one. They are atomised, often dispirited and most of those under 25 (who make up around 50% of the unemployed) have little or no experience of working class or any disciplined organisation.

While no one should doubt the

sincerity of the 1986 Jarrow marchers, all workers, above all the marchers themselves, should question the sincerity of the organisers. They will encourage anti-Tory slogans (banned on the People's March for Jobs) but will they allow democratic control of the march by the marchers, let alone calls for the unemployed to organise against capitalism? Of course not. They want a tug at the heart strings march for the benefit of the middle class charity mongers and thus promote Kinnock's image as a caring politician.

So should we simply ignore Jarrow 86? Some trades councils and union branches have adopted this attitude. Many an honest rank and file Labourite cannot stomach the sheer cynicism of using the unemployed. They quite rightly smell the slick PR rats of Walworth Road behind the whole jamboree. Nonetheless we think militants should use Jarrow 86. We should not boycott it but intervene in it. Because of this we will be initiating and supporting the Unemployed Workers' Charter. It will expose the opportunism of the TUC and Labour Party sponsors of Jarrow 86. But more importantly it aims to set up Unemployed Workers' Charter groups in each and every one of the 23 towns and cities the march passes through.

The ideal model for organising the unemployed must be the communist led National Unemployed Workers' Movement which between 1922 and 1936 organised six hugely successful Hunger Marches and rallied up to 100,000 to join its

ranks. We certainly must reject the begging bowl tradition of the Jarrow Crusade. It was overtly against the NUWM. Whereas the Hunger Marches had a militant character, the 1936 Crusade was, just like Jarrow 86, eminently respectable.

By setting up local groups of the UWC the first foundations can be laid for a NUWM type organisation. Such a body would seek to mobilise the mass of unemployed workers alongside all workers in struggle. Organised the unemployed could prove to be a tremendous ally to those like the Wapping printers, the Silentnight strikers and those fighting for workers' sanctions against apartheid.

A new NUWM would fight for: work at trade union rates or full maintenance; the ending of all unnecessary overtime work with no loss of pay; the abolition of the YTS — real training at trade union rates; the representation of unemployed workers' groups on trades councils.

A new NUWM, like the original, would have to be run by the unemployed themselves and its officers must be elected and recallable. The unemployed have had enough of non-political tea and sympathy labour movement unemployment centres run by government paid appointees. The unemployed will organise themselves. In this way they can gain self-respect and become strong. In this way they secure what they and their families need — not what the system can afford.

Jack Conrad



## BREAKING SECTARIANISM

THE CRISIS of British imperialism in the Six Counties means the oppressed are not prepared to be ruled in the old way and the rulers cannot rule in the old way. Part of this is the turmoil that has affected the forces of loyalism. Paisley and his followers have been out on the streets, Protestant workers in Shorts have struck in order to be allowed to intimidate their Catholic 'brothers' and a new wave of loyalist sectarian violence has been unleashed.

Against the tide of sectarianism some 2,000 DHSS workers took a stand in August against death threats against their Catholic brothers and sisters and staged a token walkout. This is something we unhesitatingly welcome although it was of a very limited nature and will no doubt prove of no lasting significance.

Yet falsely using the DHSS protests as evidence of the dawning of a new age of working class anti-sectarian unity, certain elements in the workers' movement in Britain and Ireland, attacked the republican movement as being the reason why such unity is never proved sustainable.

Writing in the *Morning Star*, comrade Jimmy Stewart, general secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland, even branded the IRA as "objectively united" with the UFF "in their sectarian attacks on workers and their families." Against the 'irrational' violence of both sides comrade Stewart is joined by every opportunist from the SWP to Neil Kinnock in preaching salvation through the promised land of unity around trade union issues.

Indeed the call for Irish workers to forget the reality of a profound revolutionary situation in the Six Counties comes from all opportunists. They want things to get back to 'normal' and that means the Irish dropping the armed struggle and becoming good trade unionists like their British counterparts. Not surprisingly these types refuse to see any fundamental difference between IRA or INLA violence and the violence of the UFF or UVF. In fact every excuse is used to attack the liberation forces.

The *Morning Star* even reports the IRA having issued "death threats to ordinary working people". What is the truth? Well in its campaign against the forces of British imperialism the IRA has, it is true, threatened those who directly aid the occupation forces. But this is perfectly understandable and must be defended. This is not sectarianism, it is revolutionary violence.

The IRA campaign is directed against British imperialism and its minions. UFF violence is directed against ordinary Catholics. It is sectarian, pro-imperialist and fascist.

Our task is not to wring our hands in anguish at the 'uncivilised' behaviour of the IRA but to take sides by promoting solidarity work in Britain.

So what about workers' unity? Catholic workers tend to be anti-sectarian just like South African blacks tend to be anti-racist, they are revolutionary just like South African blacks and they, like their black brothers and sisters in South Africa, support the armed struggle of revolutionary nationalism. This is all to the good.

Workers unity must be considered in the concrete. We are for workers' unity around the struggle for democracy and socialism not an acceptance of the status quo. Who would suggest in the name of workers' unity South African black workers end the armed struggle and join with whites in white dominated unions?

Protestant workers owe their material privileges over Catholics, not to Thatcher and the Tories, but to the British sponsored Six Counties state. That is why those who are serious about winning workers' unity in the Six Counties must stand for the end of the British presence and the smashing of the sectarian state, it is the material foundation of the sectarian division of the working class just as the apartheid state is the source of the racial division of the working class in South Africa.

The Editor

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## LETTERS

### Questions, questions

I have been reading once again, on this 50th anniversary, about the Moscow trials. What I would like to see, if possible, is a series of articles about these trials and also about the role of Stalin and the Soviet Union generally. Do we need the continuation and completion of the original revolution? Why have we got different levels of development in the various 'socialist' states? Compare the differences between GDR and Poland, Rumania and Hungary, etc. Why, with international cooperation and assistance are they so different? Is everyone subservient to the Soviet Union? Why is nationality so important, is this social chauvinism? What is Trotskyism? Are the theories of Trotsky so wrong? Is not Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet Union and Stalin correct?

Going back to Eastern Europe, my wife and I were in Poland in 1978 and although we were in Zakopane, a holiday resort, we saw begging in the street, little strips of land with hand ploughs, one or two sheep etc, which did not give us a good impression of 'socialism'. These are the types of problems that I would like to see dealt with.

Best wishes  
Alan Tong  
Sussex

### Kitson

I wrote to our Regional Tass EC member and quoted (without naming the source) what you printed in issue No. 35 about David Kitson, ie this question of the Tass scholarship. On the information from your paper, I stated that I felt that Tass were using "political blackmail" against David.

The reply I received was not very satisfactory, in my opinion, so I wrote again making various criticisms and once again stated that I felt it was political blackmail. I am awaiting a reply. However, in the meantime I have been in contact with one of my Tass comrades and have had an explanation of the problem.

Not knowing the actual differences that David has with the ANC or how far he is committed to City of London AA, I cannot assess or "take sides" over these political issues. However, on the question of the scholarship, this was initially for three years, to be reviewed annually and this year is the third year. It was decided by the EC that it would not be renewed. Knowing David's financial position, an offer was made to David to enable him to continue his studies.

I feel it is a very good financial arrangement. So far David has failed to respond, he has not replied. It would appear that the ball is in his court. I also understand that he has been suspended by the ANC. Apparently, there were differences over nominations for the EC of the AA Movement and he went against ANC decisions and allowed himself to be nominated. David has apparently used his position at Ruskin on the scholarship issue, as a base for opposition to the Tass EC. He has only succeeded in one division. A full report of all the problems around the issue was made to Tass Regional Conference in April and endorsed by the conference with only one division opposed. It was also reestablished that Tass give 100% support to the ANC as the only real representative of the South African people. As you are aware, a trade union in these circumstances cannot give 100% support to a specific political party.

In the circumstances, I feel it is wrong for you to comment on this issue until you have all the facts; and

also on this question of finance for the scholarship, it would appear you have only half the story. I had intended originally to send you copies of all the correspondence as I felt an injustice had been perpetrated. Indeed I had felt there was some form of political blackmail. As this is not correct, I feel to send these copies would be inappropriate. I do not feel the role of *The Leninist* is to get involved in inner-union squabbles.

MS Steele  
Chelmsford,  
Essex

### David Sherriff replies:

Comrade Steele considers we should not get involved in "inner-union squabbles". We on the other hand think it the duty of communists to comment, to intervene and to take sides in all areas of society. In this we follow the positions of Lenin and the Bolsheviks. How else can a vanguard be trained? Or are we supposed to follow the lead of Ken Gill and the Tass EC?

### Chernobyl

We all know accidents happen, maybe through neglect or otherwise. Two years after I was born, an accident at the Senghenydd Colliery Nr. Caerphilly, killed 439 men and boys, in a gas explosion. I do not think this kind of explosion would happen today. I can quite understand after the Chernobyl accident that people are worried, but what we should worry about is the making and testing of nuclear weapons, to be used, not only on earth but in space. I believe that those people who are leading the struggle against nuclear power plants, are either blindly being misled, or they are deliberately dividing the struggle away from the really dangerous menace of nuclear weapons and war.

Let us face reality, and make a few comparisons: the yield of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima was equal to a thousand tons of TNT. Today one bomb warhead is equal to one million tons of TNT. Only one of these bombs detonated over Cardiff city, would wipe it out completely from the face of the earth, and would start fires as far away as 30 to 40 miles. This is the damage of only one bomb. The United States have 30,000 such bombs. Surely, this is the madness we must all stop, before it is too late. We must not be diverted from the vital need to eliminate all nuclear weapons. Stop the manufacture and testing. ... NOW ... Before we are all wiped off the face of the earth.

Yours sincerely,  
Tom Hopkins  
Caerphilly

### Workers' sanctions

I think I had better clear up some confusion on your part as far as the issue of organising workers' sanctions amongst telecommunications workers is concerned: telephonists belong to UCW (not the NCU, which used to be called the Post Office Engineers' Union). We also have UCW members amongst our own clerical staff, who deal with pay, sick absence, etc, but are not concerned with telephone billing. These workers are indeed in a different union (I am not even sure which one, as several unions have members in British Telecom).

The question of not handling the billing of directly dialled calls to South Africa is more complicated than you might think, as at present individual calls are not accounted separately but are registered on your bills as "metered units". There are plans to list individual calls made on future bills, but this would be done

by computer (as billing is at present).

To repeat my previous statement, I really do think that the only effective way to cut telephone traffic with South Africa is by physically disconnecting the lines — easy enough to do, I should imagine, but also just as easy to connect.

I should now like to touch upon another aspect of the whole problem.

During the 'Hands Off Russia' campaign, the aim was to cut off supplies to the imperialists and counterrevolutionaries, not of course the Soviet government. If it were possible to cut all links with South Africa — transport, mail, as well as telecommunications — this would affect both the ruling class and the revolutionary forces, because of its arbitrary nature.

...I need to be persuaded that a 'blockade' that affects both ruling class and revolutionaries is the best aid we can give. If this blockade was 100% effective, the South African ruling class would no longer obtain the supplies it needed, but neither would our comrades. In fact, we would have no way of knowing whether a revolution had taken place.

In actual fact, past experience has shown that the ruling class would find it much easier to circumvent any obstacles than would our comrades.

I personally believe that specific actions such as those by Southampton dockers, aimed in a conscious, partisan way, are the kind we should support.

This is not to say that actions such as cutting off telephone lines would serve no purpose: I think that they would have a certain propaganda value, as well as helping to raise the consciousness of the workers involved.

Reg Mikes  
London

### No nationalism

Al Donaldson says, in *The Leninist* No. 38 that an independent Scotland would not be ruled by the British Conservative Party. No, it would be ruled by tartan Tories in the SNP, pink Tories in the Labour Party or yellow Tories in the Alliance. As well as Scottish workers belonging to the Scottish nation they, like the Welsh, English and other nationalities in Britain are also part of an evolving British nation. Jack Conrad is right, if Scottish workers were to be won over to nationalism the struggle against capitalism would be weakened. Scottish workers have played an outstanding role in the working class movement in Britain. We must of course defend the right of nations to self determination.

Workers must therefore fight for the right of the Scottish or Welsh people to separate from Britain if they so wish. But this does not mean we advocate the use of this right to form a patchwork of nation states in Britain as Donaldson suggests let alone across the world as he implies. We favour the coming together of nations. Nation states are increasingly a block to the further development of the world economy. Yours fraternally  
Bob Jones  
Cardiff

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed names and addresses, and certain details.

WRITE TO:  
The Editor  
BCM Box 928  
LONDON  
WC1N 3XX

*Leninists have always supported the Afghan revolution and we have always demanded the real truth about Amin.*



Mohammed Arif

## AFGHANISTAN: ADVANCING ON ALL FRONTS

THE Afghan revolution is successfully advancing on all fronts. Militarily the counterrevolutionaries are in retreat, economically the country is beginning to drag itself out of backwardness and politically there are signs of an honest reassessment of the past. In *The Leninist* No.37, we reported on a *Morning Star* Readers and Supporters group in Brent (not Harrow, as we wrote at the time), where comrade Mohammed Arif, Secretary of the Afghanistan Friendship Society shocked many of the assembled CCGers and pleased us when he stated that "In my view, Amin was not a CIA agent". After all, we have stood alone in the Communist Party in defending comrade Amin against the slanders in such Soviet pamphlets as *The Truth About Afghanistan*. For example in the first edition of this pamphlet it quotes Vladimir Nakaryakov, APN correspondent, recalling how he "remembered Babrak Karmal ... saying at his first press conference that Amin had even surpassed the Nazis in brutality." (pp 127-8)

In our interview with comrade Arif we ask him about the socio-economic progress since the revolution, the present balance of forces in Afghanistan and of course the question of Hafizullah Amin, who played the leading role in making the revolution which brought Afghanistan into the 20th century.

**The Leninist:** Could you give us an idea of the changes in the lives of ordinary Afghan women brought about by the 1978 revolution?

Mohammed Arif: Women had hardly moved towards liberation in a thousand years in Afghanistan. The illiteracy rate amongst women was 98%; their position was no better than that of chattel. After the revolution, women were given the same rights as men. Women are now working in factories; there are women in the Party's politbureau, Dr Ratabzad for example; the Afghan Women's Organisation is playing a very active role in the life of the country and now has a membership of 35,000 women.

Women are also performing military functions: there is a women's militia which is actively defending the revolution. Women are now playing a major role in the revolutionary process.

The government is doing everything in its power to eliminate illiteracy among women. There are special classes for women up and down the country and thousands of women have gone through the literacy courses, so women are increasingly involved in every aspect of life. From the moment you get to the checkout in Kabul airport, to the time you get to your hotel, you find women working in every sphere of life.

The most revolutionary thing our government did was to liberate the women. The counterrevolutionaries imprison women behind veils. A lot of women are teachers in our country and the counterrevolutionaries, when they blow up or destroy schools, shoot all the

teachers. They regard it as a sin for women to be able to read!

**The Leninist:** Tell us a little about the recent Loya Jirgah (grand assembly) involving tribal leaders from Pakistan's Free Tribes Zone.

Mohammed Arif: I was in fact present in that assembly. It was a fantastic experience. There were two thousand delegates, representing 2½ million from 35 tribes. These tribes live in the Pushtun part of Pakistan. They hold semi-autonomous positions. They have held this position since 1919, when the British were there. When Pakistan came into existence it adhered to that treaty. So the tribes have a semi-autonomous position, they were allowed to keep their guns and so on.

These tribes sent delegates to Kabul. 2,000 delegates attended that grand assembly. There they declared:

First — total support for the Afghan revolution.

Second — They agreed to provide a militia of 30,000 men which will prevent the infiltration of the counterrevolutionaries into Afghanistan. The counterrevolutionaries leave from their areas to enter Afghanistan.

Thirdly — and most significant in many ways, they spoke about the unity of all Pushtun people. In Afghanistan, Pushtun people are in the majority, as they are in the border area and in Pakistan. The Pushtun were split up by the British and so since the revolution in Afghanistan, the Pushtun have looked to Kabul.

**The Leninist:** There have been reports that the government in Kabul only controls some 35% of the countryside outside the towns. What truth is there in this?

Mohammed Arif: The countryside is very mountainous and has many deserts. Anyone there can claim they "control" the area. What matters are the populated areas. In a desert, anyone can wander around and claim they "control" it. It doesn't really matter. What matters is the fact that the government controls all the populated areas, all the agricultural land, all the industry and the people themselves. The counterrevolutionaries can claim anything they like.

The counterrevolutionaries have been losing the war. They were having recruitment problems. They had to double the wages of their fighters. They've lost contacts with the local population. To make up for these recruitment problems and the other setbacks of the counterrevolutionaries, the Western powers have supplied them with more sophisticated equipment. Afghanistan is still a very poor country and it would be interesting for your readers to know that the total assistance supplied by the Western countries to the counterrevolutionaries is in fact greater than the national output of Afghanistan.

On the military front, our army has been built up to a formidable force. The counterrevolutionaries are fragmented, demoralised, they have no plan for social reform and are only being sustained with the

help of the United States. They are Afghan contras. They cannot win: the future is rosy for Afghanistan!

**The Leninist:** What about the social front?

Mohammed Arif: On the social front 350,000 families have been given land; 1½ million people have gone through the literacy programmes, debt owed by roughly 10 million people in the country has been abolished. Minorities are protected; they have their own newspapers in their own languages.

**The Leninist:** And the economic front?

Mohammed Arif: On the economic front; both industrial and agricultural production has increased and surpassed that of 1978. Agricultural production is up 9.1%, industrial production by 10.1%. Gross Domestic Product is now greater in real terms than 1978 by roughly 11%. Inflation has been kept down. This is very encouraging, especially when one remembers that all the aid, the credit from the Western world has been cancelled; money which was committed from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, West Germany, Iran, Saudi Arabia. All have cancelled their aid. That has been made up by assistance from the Soviet Union. One hundred projects have been completed with the help of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.

**The Leninist:** In the recent Brent *Morning Star* Readers and Supporters Group meeting, you shocked many in the audience with your comments on comrade Hafizullah Amin. Could you clarify your view? Was Amin a CIA agent? Mohammed Arif: I have no evidence to substantiate that. Whether he was a CIA agent or not, I don't know. But there was evidence in the later period, just before he was overthrown, that he did make contact with Pakistani rulers. It is quite possible he was fighting for survival. There was an uprising all over the country, the revolution was in serious difficulties. A lot of people didn't understand what he was trying to do.

Amin was a very important member of the Revolutionary Committee. He was a member of the Politbureau. He held many important posts. But whether he was a CIA agent from the beginning or not, I have no evidence either way. Anyway, in Afghanistan it is not important now. The people are not really discussing whether Amin was right or wrong; they have more pressing problems at the moment. In Afghanistan now the mood is to defeat the counterrevolutionaries. The Afghan revolution is going to have a phenomenal effect on the whole region.

This is what the Western powers are afraid of. They are afraid that the revolutionary ideas of Afghanistan will spread.

Perhaps those who parroted Karmal's slanders against Amin that there was "indisputable documented evidence, including Amin's personal records" which showed him an "agent of imperialism and the CIA" might now like to admit they were wrong?

October 4 will be the 50th anniversary of the historic Battle of Cable Street. Fighting against massed police the people of London's East End, under the leadership of communists like Phil Piratin, stopped the Mosleyite fascists marching. Fifty years ago the targets of the fascists were the Jews. Then there was an effective Communist Party, not adverse to employing working class violence against fascist and policeman alike. Today communist organisation in the area is almost non-existent: Tower Hamlets only has one CPGB branch and the CCG is little better. The fascists now target the large bengali community. Today they do it with virtual immunity. Cable Street itself has seen pitched battles every weekend since January as police block and barricade the street and the surrounding area to ensure Rupert Murdoch's papers get distributed. The police are the only ones who seriously prepare to use violence — unlike the 1930s. Tower Hamlets Trades Council, the local Labour Party, Bengali and black groups, along with the Communist Party have formed a Cable Street Anniversary Steering Committee to organise a march (assemble 12 noon, October 4 St Mary's Churchyard opp. Aldgate East tube and festival. Speakers include David Kitson, Jeremy Corbyn, Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Dennis Skinner and Phil Piratin. Perhaps they should also form a multi-racial Workers' Defence Corp to defend working class organisations and the Bengali community from fascist attack. Surely that would be the best way to commemorate the Battle of Cable Street wouldn't it.

Readers of *The Leninist* will surely remember reports of the Scottish AAM secretary and leading supporter of *Straight Left*, comrade Brian Filling, joining in an anti-boycott appeal to save the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh. This was just after Nigeria and Ghana initiated the boycott and before the two white South African athletes due to compete as part of the English team were dropped. The Scottish TUC even illogically argued for all Commonwealth countries to attend as a "political gesture of solidarity against Mrs Thatcher's position". Perhaps the STUC would support Scottish industrialists busting Thatcher's 'limited measures' against apartheid on the same grounds. Now the Scottish AAM vice-chair, comrade John McKinnon, another leading supporter of *Straight Left*, is desperately trying to justify this call to scab. Apparently it was because "Scotland did not elect Thatcher and the people of Scotland were against apartheid". When did Scotland declare UDI, John? This is narrow nationalism as well as scabbery.

Followers of the *Morning Star* and *Straight Left* on Camden Trades Council who cowardly voted against sponsoring the Guildford 4 Campaign because they had "insufficient information" and the TUC "did not support it" might like to watch the *Channel Four* programme scheduled for November 16 on the framing of the Guildford 4. They might also like to note that five Liberal MPs have a little more sense of basic justice. They agreed to submit an early day motion calling on the Home Secretary to find a mechanism by which the convictions can be reviewed. A national demonstration backing the Guildford 4 is to be held in early 1987. Will you be there comrades?



## Record breaking

Our Summer Offensive has nearly ended. We do not yet have exact figures but what is clear is that we have raised far more money, from far more comrades, than ever before. Our comrades have sold possessions, scrimped and saved to meet, and in most cases exceed, their target of giving three weeks income to our paper. This is the spirit that will reforge our Party, it is the spirit of revolutionary self-sacrifice. This is only possible because our comrades are convinced by our Leninist politics. Our readers have also started to respond to our call to take bulk orders, we have also seen an increase in donations to our £600 monthly fighting fund. In mid September it stood at £309 you have now raised this to £697 — a magnificent effort. But let's do even better in October.

SEPTEMBER 15 saw the trade ministers of many of the countries of the world begin their meeting in Punta del Este, Uruguay, under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Their meeting marks yet another attempt to stave off the growing protectionism in world agriculture and trade and the growing contradictions between the advanced and medium developed capitalist countries and between the advanced capitalist countries themselves.

GATT is a very significant body. Set up in 1947, it forms, alongside the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, an integral part of the institutional expression of the restructuring of the capitalist world economy that took place after World War II under the hegemony of US imperialism.

The result of two imperialist world wars was to leave the US in a position of overwhelming dominance within the imperialist camp. Whereas these imperialist conflicts had been sparked by hunger for territorial aggrandisement, for the redivision of the colonial world between the major powers, the final outcome was that the US, originally not involved in these disputes, emerged with such economic and military superiority compared with the European imperialists and Japan and that it had no need of colonies as such: the sole criterion of interest to Washington as far as the colonial and semi-colonial world was concerned was access to markets and freedom of entry for its capital exports.

Rather than seek to take over existing colonial empires formally, the US was intent rather on securing an orderly 'decolonisation' whereby power would be transferred to reliable strata from the colonial territory itself, who would be content to preside over the old imperialist exploitation and domination in return for a national anthem, a new flag, and a seat at the United Nations.

Whereas the Versailles Treaty has been concerned with preventing the resurgence of German imperialism, the US found itself not at all troubled with the danger of its imperialist rivals rising up to snatch away its supreme position; on the contrary, the decimation of the economies of Europe during the war provided the US with a first class opportunity to export capital profitably, and to dress it up as assisting the recovery of war-torn Europe to boot. Not reparations and retributions, but the establishment of a climate favourable to the export of capital and freedom of trade, were on the agenda after World War II.

### GATT's role

Within the framework set up after the war, the specific role of GATT was to bring about the dismantling of discriminatory trade restrictions and to reduce the level of barriers to trade, with the ultimate goal of establishing a world of free trade. The rules are set out in 38 articles, the central principle being that of non-discrimination: that trade concessions agreed bilaterally should be extended to all GATT member countries on a most favoured nation basis.

GATT has never covered all the nations in the world (socialist China has successfully applied to join only this year, while the USSR is still outside, and its recent application is deemed unlikely to succeed), nor has it covered all areas of trade. For example, the Multi-Fibre Arrangement, covering textiles and clothing, while existing under the wing of GATT as a body, runs counter to the basic principles according to which GATT is supposed to function. In addition, GATT has from the start included escape clauses designed to give the system the flexibility to absorb temporary disruptions without necessitating drastic actions.

Over the years GATT has had some degree of success in fulfilling its ascribed role. There have been seven rounds of negotiations under the auspices of GATT so far, and these have resulted in reducing the average level of import tariffs of the advanced capitalist countries to 4-8% from about 40%.

The imperialist countries have been able to come to agreement through negotiation, either within GATT or outside it, without resorting to armed conflict amongst themselves. But the world free of trade restrictions never developed. If GATT can be said to have been successful, it is only in the relative sense of having established the tendency towards free trade. Fudging the issue has been a critical component of GATT, as with any talking shop. If an issue proved too difficult to settle amicably, if vested economic interests were too powerful, the long postwar boom provided sufficient lee-way for shoving it to one side. Why squabble when there are so many other areas to exploit profitably?

The international institutional framework as a whole, of which GATT is but a component,

certainly has presided over a period of unprecedented economic expansion and dynamism, but as the world economy entered the 1970s, this expansion and dynamism began to wane. The internal contradictions of this phase of capitalist development inevitably led to a rise in the organic composition of capital and forced down the rate, not the mass, of profit. The institutions which had fulfilled adequately their ascribed roles to a greater or lesser extent during the years of the long boom, began to move into crisis themselves.

We have detailed elsewhere the way in which the Bretton Woods system ran aground, so we will not repeat ourselves here except to note that the decline of US imperialism and the rise of Japanese and Federal German imperialism, accompanied by the uneven economic fortunes of the other imperialist nations, combined to make the fixed-but-adjustable exchange rate system based on the dollar unworkable.

The point is that such institutions can help the smooth running of the world economy, can provide a framework for the pacific settling of disputes and redress imbalances only so long as the requisite material conditions are present. GATT is no exception.

### Growing contradictions

Solving trade disputes through negotiation can, of course, work during a boom. In a boom, the question of shares in the expanding market can be settled relatively amicably. In times of stagnation and approaching crisis, such matters become of life and death importance. If a fundamental challenge to economic interests is involved, and if the relative strength of the combatants is even, no amount of negotiation is going to make them agree. Put another way, the majority of trade questions could be resolved with relative ease as they arose within the general framework of trade liberalisation only so long as all sides, or rather all the imperialist nations, stood to benefit from such liberalisation.

The pattern as far as trade issues are concerned could hardly be clearer. The *Financial Times* editorial of August 4 1986 estimates that there are currently some 120 discriminating arrangements which were negotiated outside GATT and are inconsistent with it. The vast majority of these have been introduced in the 1970s and 1980s. The simple fact of the matter is that the principles of non-discrimination and liberalisation are no longer appropriate to the needs of the major imperialist powers. As the impending crisis bites, and as the law of combined and uneven development alters the balance between imperialist powers, the protectionist pressures grow stronger, and in proportion the effectiveness of negotiations declines.

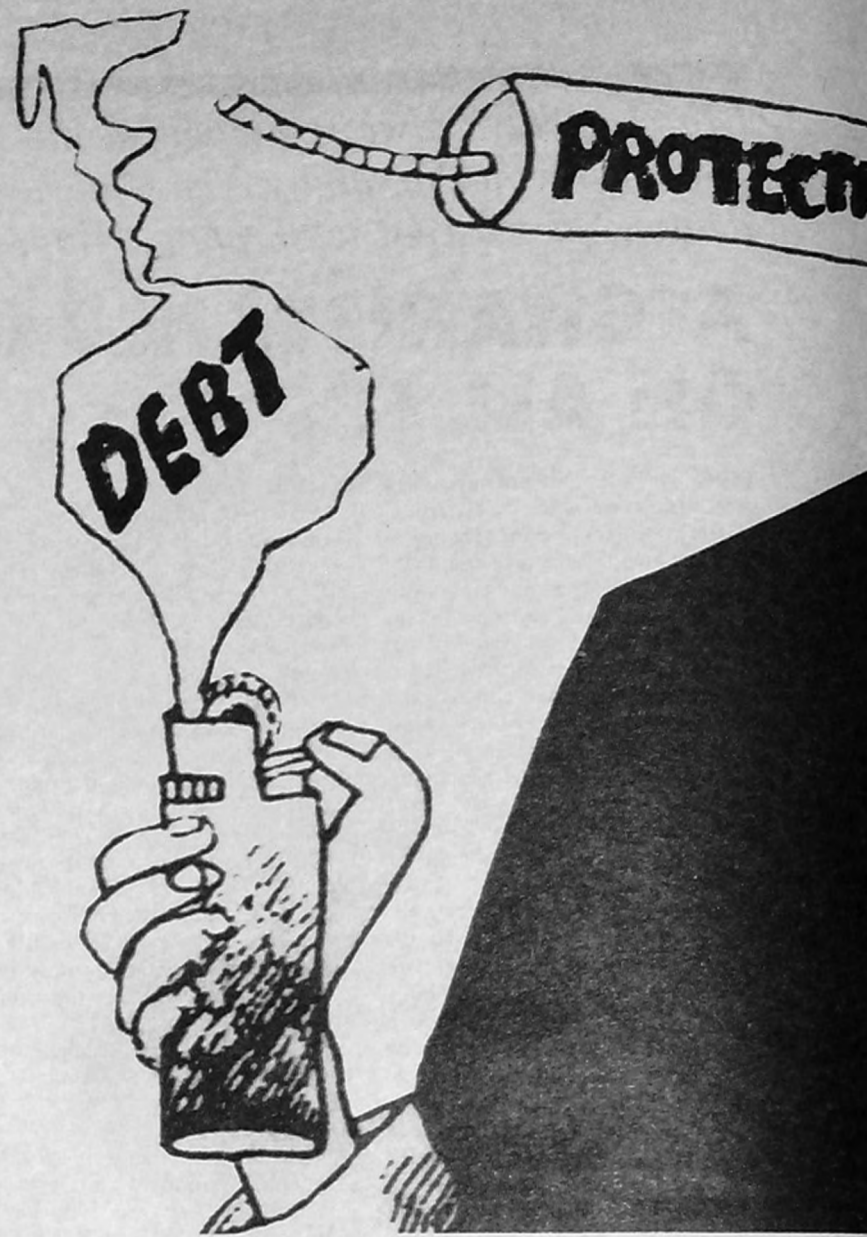
The previous series of GATT negotiations, known as the Tokyo Round, ended in 1979 after six years of talks. It managed to achieve the reduction of industrial tariffs in the imperialist countries by nearly a third on average, along with special arrangements covering a variety of products. "Even as the ink was drying on these agreements, however", wrote Christian Tyler in the *Financial Times* (June 23 1986), "governments were finding ways round their GATT obligations." In other words, the agreements reached have been ignored as soon as they impinge on material interests.

The current round of talks is seen in many imperialist circles as of decisive importance for the future of the GATT system as a whole. The *Financial Times* editorial referred to above came with the title "GATT system in peril", bemoaning the drift towards bilateral agreements and discriminatory trade controls "designed to defer the pain of adjustment," and warning that "if each country approaches the talks with the aim of gaining advantages for its strong industries and protecting its weak ones, there is no prospect of success."

Since no capitalist government could enter seriously into binding talks on any other basis, we can conclude that no meaningful agreement is likely to emerge. And if no agreement is reached, warns Clayton Yeutter, the US trade representative, "we're going to have sheer chaos out there." Hugh Corbett, director of the London-based Trade Policy Research Group has said that he thinks "the system really cannot carry on very much longer with the various GATT rules, never mind the general principles, being regularly broken or misinterpreted."

### Invisible protection

A tariff is a kind of tax levied on the value of imports. Non-tariff protection in the main takes the form of monitoring of prices and volumes by official committees, which then set quotas or put pressure on countries to set 'voluntary' limits to their exports. In addition, there is what



is called 'black' protection which means the practice of setting rules which appear neutral, but which in reality serve to prevent or limit imports.

These include pollution controls to exclude certain types of car, seasonal tariffs on fruits and vegetables which ripen early, and changing safety tests without notifying foreign producers. Import quotas, the restriction of the volume of imports of a certain good from a certain source, include some rather unexpected items; for example the UK has controls on the importation of Christmas Cards from the USSR. All in all, the World Bank has estimated that some 27% of the imports of 16 developed capitalist countries are subject to such import restrictions.

The talks in Punta del Este are fraught with potential stumbling blocks. Issues divide the participants along different lines, and no nation is unequivocally for free trade, none unequivocally against it. All express agreement in general, all see the need for special arrangements when it comes to certain sectors. British imperialism's open advocacy of free trade does not prevent it erecting barriers against some 22% of its imports. One can pick out three main controversies which the new GATT round will either have to confront or brush under the carpet: textiles and clothing, agriculture, and trade in services.

### Textiles and clothing

Textiles and clothing are covered by a separate agreement negotiated under the wing of GATT, but in contradiction to GATT's principles, the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA). MFA was first introduced in 1974, and the third extension of the arrangement was agreed on the morning of Friday 1 August, some eleven hours after the final deadline. The MFA allocates export quotas to countries, which then allocate them to manufacturers.

In many ways the MFA can be seen as a weathervane for trade negotiations in general. When introduced, MFA 1 would, it was hoped, allow medium developed country producers to increase their exports to the imperialist countries by 6% per year. Subsequent extensions, MFA 2 in 1978, MFA 3 in 1982 and now MFA 4, have "tightened the screw", to use the phrase of *Financial Times* Textiles Correspondent, Anthony Moreton (August 6 1986) on such producers as South Korea, Hong Kong and Brazil, to the point where the commitment to the growth target has been virtually abandoned.

Before the MFA extension talks, such

# GATT CAPITAL CONTRA DEE

producers had hoped to see the dismantling of MFA and the subsumption of textiles under GATT, an aspiration shared by GATT director-general Arthur Dunkel. Alternatively, it had been argued that textiles should be dropped from the MFA, which should concentrate on clothing alone.

The argument ran as follows: there has



# GATT IMPERIALISM'S PROTECTIONS OPEN

developed a division of labour whereby producers such as South Korea, the Philippines and China, concentrate on cheap fibres suitable for manufacturing cheap clothes, while Western producers, unable to compete in these areas, have specialised in sophisticated fibres suitable for expensive clothes and new areas such as the defence and construction industries.

the medium-developed capitalist countries, representing the further development of the productive forces against the vested interests of declining US imperialism. Japan is as yet not strong enough to challenge the US outright, and when it does it will not rely on debating chambers such as Gatt, but its stance at the MFA talks was a clear sign of what the future holds.

## Agriculture

The question of trade in agriculture has long been a tricky area for Gatt. Gatt article IX requires any country which needs to take measures other than tariffs to sustain its domestic agricultural price support mechanism, to undertake to restrict farm output and commit itself to maintaining a minimum access to its market for foreign produce. To put it mildly, this article has been interpreted very loosely. In 1955, the US sought a waiver from Gatt rules for agriculture when it became clear that US farm legislation was in contradiction with Article XI.

The European Community in 1958 introduced a variable levy on imports which brings the price of the cheapest imports available up to the minimum price for EEC producers, a measure which also contradicts Article XI, as it precludes the necessity of limiting domestic farm output.

The result has been that mounting production has outstripped domestic demand, and this has in turn led to the introduction of export subsidies so that surpluses could be dumped on the world market. The Reagan administration, despite rhetoric, has initiated what it originally called 'Bicep' (Bonus Incentive Commodity Export Programme) whereby agricultural exporters would be given 'bonuses' of commodities from Government stocks to offer to potential foreign buyers as an added incentive. (Bicep is now called Export Enhancement Programme), along with a new Food Security Act, which involved cutting the market price of US grain and making record deficiency payments to farmers.

These measures, however, have not sufficed, and the Reagan administration has still found it necessary to boost sales of cheap grain to the USSR, which had been partially suspended by Carter after the USSR intervened in Afghanistan. Subsidised grain sales to China and the USSR caused friction between the US and its allies Argentina and Thailand, both major grain exporters.

Reagan, his subjective intentions notwithstanding, found himself trapped between alienating allies, and upsetting the powerful domestic farming lobby. The economic cost of the administration's farm support policies bit hard and added to Reagan's headaches.

The EEC's Common Agricultural Policy has played its part in building up vast surplus stocks of agricultural commodities, and the EEC has been obstructing moves to include agricultural trade on the agenda for the Punta del Este talks. US trade representative Clayton Yeutter predicated a rugged 'debate' in Uruguay on the issue.

The US has adopted a strong position in its rhetoric. It has repeatedly said that it will only take part in the new Gatt round if the talks aim at restoring sense to agricultural trade, and has claimed that its aggressive agricultural policies are designed to force the hand of other countries. One can be forgiven for doubting that the US desire to be rid of the "economic insanity" (Yeutter's words) of the farm trading system, which involves such a heavy burden on the US budget, will be translated into decisive action just yet.

Such action would involve confrontation with farming interests. Here Leninists would intervene to turn farmers' discontent against banking capital, the real landowners and the real beneficiaries of the farm support policies. (The nature of the US labour movement and the centrism of the leadership of the CPUSA make it more likely that such discontent will be channelled into an AES-like reactionary call for extending protectionism and aggressive export support policies).

## Services

The third major area of contention is that of trade in services. Bringing trade in services under Gatt is a sensitive issue, to say the least. The US, the EEC and Japan, who between them accounted for 74% of world exports of services in 1984, are pushing for the extension of Gatt rules to include services, which, they say, would encourage such trade, which in turn could provide a fillip to world trade, just as previous rounds of tariff cuts on industrial goods in the past decade have done.

They argue further that many services are

inseparable from manufactures, and that the service content is increasingly valuable. Opposition comes largely from medium-developed capitalist countries such as Brazil. Trade in services amounts to some \$400 billion or a quarter of all trade. The sensitivity of the issue arises not so much from the size of services trade, as from its nature.

Most services are delivered on the spot, and so freedom of trade implies freedom to set up shop in the country concerned. Trade becomes inseparable from investment. The opposition comes most strongly from those countries which are developing their own nascent finance capitals, though. Medium-developed capitalist countries stand to lose the most from the proposed liberalisation which would limit their room for manoeuvre; under the present conditions their share of services trade is rising. The share of the US, Japan and the EEC, including Britain, was 81% in 1974, 7% higher than the latest figure (1984). Other issues which are tacked together with this are those of intellectual property rights and trade-related investment.

The FT's Trade Editor, Christian Taylor, argued (July 5 1986) that what is likely to emerge is a "negotiate now, give later" deal, whereby both sides will agree to a first stage of a search for appropriate rules, involving the cataloguing of all barriers to trade in services and their division into those which affect trade and those which do not.

Only after this would discussions move on to consider which existing barriers were legitimate. Finally, only after all this has been decided, would markets begin to open. He notes that the weakest form this might take, a "General Understanding on Trade in Services" rather than formal rules, is already being referred to by name by commentators.

## Conclusion

Gatt as a body is notable for its total lack of "even the modest powers of compliance of most international organisations and depends to an unusual degree on the voluntary co-operation of members for the observance of rules" (*Financial Times* August 4 1986). As such it can only reflect what lies outside itself; it can under favourable conditions provide a forum in which action can be co-ordinated, a 'parliament' where the real power lies elsewhere, but when, as now, the material basis for a voluntary consensus is lacking, it can do little but procrastinate.

Unity in the capitalist world requires hegemony, hegemony in turn requires overwhelming economic and military superiority. The US had both in 1947 when Gatt was founded: it no longer has the former.

Rather than act as a transmission belt for US interests, Gatt now represents a powerless body and a stage for empty negotiations. There has been much talk, but none of the fundamental problems will be solved. Gatt is toothless as far as the US's imperialist rivals are concerned. As with the Tokyo round, decisions are binding only so long as they suit the signatories.

When push comes to shove, Gatt slips out of government consciousness. A body which cannot even agree on a common agenda as little as three weeks before it meets is of course unlikely to be able to enforce any hard and fast decisions affecting the future of world trade. But the fundamental point is that so long as the credit system continues to be stretched, so long as the general crisis can be put off a little longer, as it still can, then there will still be a material basis for what little remains of the economic consensus of the years of US hegemony. Soon even this facade of co-operation will disintegrate.

In the meantime, the debates inside and outside of Gatt will be but dress rehearsals for the real conflict, the arenas in which alliances are explored. Already we see Japan and the EEC move into increasingly antagonistic contradiction with the US. Yet at this present juncture the US is able to orchestrate a united imperialist anti-Soviet wardrive. But what will emerge when the general crisis breaks, no one can say with any degree of certainty. Certainly no other imperialist nation possesses the power to take on the role played by the US in the post-war period, and so growing fluidity and uncertainty in ruling circles about what path to take.

They are, each one of them, torn between the past and the future, between hard-headedness facing up to the end of an era and the adoption of policies in accordance with the new reality, or turning away myopically from all that this implies. Our task is not to wait to see what imperialism does. No, our task as communists must be to bury the imperialist beast before it drags us into another world war.

Brian Curran



■ The Gerry Healy school of falsification continues to turn out well qualified young students. The Young Socialist newspaper, organ of the youth group of the Trot Workers Revolutionary Party, founded and led by the colourful Gerry recently carried a portrait of Leon Trotsky on its front page, beneath the banner 'Leon Trotsky: Leader of the Russian Revolution.' What about Lenin? And didn't Trotsky only join the Bolsheviks in 1917? Are we quibbling over details?

■ And speaking of founder-leaders, the mild mannered David Reed of the Revolutionary Communist Group has put pen to paper in Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!, in order to rubbish the South African Communist Party and their view of the nature of the coming revolution in South Africa. As one might expect from an erstwhile Trotskyite, Reed's article would smack of anti-Sovietism in its tone. No. But the problem is — the RCG have slandered others as "racists" in the past for criticising liberation movements. The SACP is obviously an important part of the liberation movement. So is David Reed a racist? Of course not. But then let's face it RCG, you had a silly position in the first place.

■ When will the 'Marxism' be dropped from 'Today'? Well the new look Marxism Today has even less to do with Marxism than even the old look Marxism Today. It aims to become "popular and populist" says new advertising manager Malcolm Clark. "We'd love a big bank to advertise with us" he told Campaign the advertising industry's journal. "The left in Britain has gone soft" he says. Well the leadership of our Party has certainly gone "soft" judging by the liberal pap found between the covers of Marxism (sic) Today. To prove it the 'new look' Marxism Today carries an interview with David Steel.

■ Obviously the populist model for Marxism Today is the Communist Party in Italy. Last month saw its Fesa dell'Unita in Milan. It starred Guido Carli, ex-governor of the Bank of Italy, Giovanni Spadolini, leader the Republican Party, Nerio Nesi, chair of Italy's biggest banking monopoly — Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, TV magnate Silvio Berlusconi and our very own Tory voting Rod Stewart. The Festival of (class) Unity cost £6 million, was sponsored by some of Italy's leading companies and made a healthy profit.

## MINERS

*After being defeated in the Great Strike miners have found that moderation does not pay. They are now beginning to fight back. Of course some areas are more advanced than others, development is uneven — so how to build unity around militancy, how to win where last time we lost?*

# Overcoming the defeat

A WEEK AFTER taking over from Ian MacGregor, Robert Haslam agreed to award NUM members the 5.9% pay increase already given to the scab UDM. He also indicated British Coal will take a more liberal attitude towards miners sacked during the Great Strike — except those sacked for 'serious offences'. In South Wales this has not proved enough to end the ban on coal production during overtime. Indeed it has now, at last, called for the ban to be extended onto a nationwide basis. Durham, Yorkshire, Northumberland and North Derbyshire have balloted on imposing an overtime ban. After all, the pay increase is not to be backdated to November, meaning the men will have worked for 10 months at the old rates, a loss on average of around £500 per head; and Haslam's review of victimised men will only effect 40 out of at least 500 who are still demanding justice and the right to work.

Militancy and a fighting spirit in the NUM is beginning to creep back. Des Dutfield, the new erstwhile 'left' president of the South Wales Area was apparently surprised by the ready response that the men gave to the call for calling an overtime ban, an action which has cost British Coal over £1 million. Yet throughout Britain militant action is beginning to assert itself. Here are a few examples: there's a militant fight developing in the Durham Panel around the fights at the Seaham and Vane Tempest pits; Frickley walked out when that scum, British Coal's Ken Moses, visited the pit; Hatfield Main struck on August 26 for the sacked men and we are receiving reports from area after area of miners getting bolshie with the management and their hard regime in the pits. Above all there is a growing anger at the way British Coal is trying to ignore the union.

Of course Haslam is determined to head off the new wave of militancy — to do this he is offering sops on pay and victimised men; and some area leaders are just itching to get back to 'normal'.

Because of this the leadership in places like South Wales is determined to keep their action limited. They were long opposed to calls to spread the overtime ban to other areas. Figures in the NUM like Dutfield tut-tutted Scargill's call for industrial action at the NUM's Annual Conference in Tenby. They simply want to bury the militant traditions of the Great Strike, dovetail the struggles of miners into that eminently respectable 'crusade' to get Neil Kinnock into Number 10 and resurrect the *Plan for Coal*.

### Plan for defeat

This approach is fatal. Kinnock has

said if unions complained about the reactionary anti-working class actions of 'the next Labour government' he would tell them "Tough, it's a nasty world" and "I never led you to expect anything different." True. So those expecting justice for the victimised men or decent pay for miners from scab Kinnock have no excuse. More than that the fight for a new *Plan for Coal* can only set one area against another and play into the hands of Haslam.

Our insistence that the miners should break from the pro-Labourite political approach of their leadership enshrined in the class collaborationist *Plan for Coal* during the Great Strike did not win us easy friends. The *Plan for Coal* explicitly tied the livelihoods of the miners to the solvency and 'health' of 'their' industry; it made the profit levels being achieved by 'their' industry the concern of those workers.

As the strike unfolded, the miners were thus embroiled in timewasting and misleading arguments about capitalist accounting and definitions of 'uneconomic' when they should have been going all out for victory. In our view, what prevented them from striking out hard to win was the disabling and crippling political disease that produced the poisonous *Plan for Coal* in the first place; sectionalism.

Often, militants would say to us: "Yes, you're right. But let's win the strike first and then start worrying about 'details' like the *Plan for Coal*."

Of course, on one level, such an approach was understandable. Miners and their supporters were up to their necks in organising for victory: thus they often tended to regard political moot points as a 'luxury' or the hobby horses of self-obsessed political sects. However, it has become abundantly clear since the Great Strike ended in defeat that the revolutionary politics that *The Leninist* was advocating were not a 'luxury': they were an absolute necessity for a miners' victory.

### Kent

We established contacts and a working relationship with miners in the Kent coalfield during the dispute and have consequently been able to monitor the impact of the defeat on this traditionally militant and communist-led area.

Miners in Kent at the moment are very demoralised. They have been bullied and cowed by the management — first they take a pit into the review procedure, they threaten it with closure, then reprieve it at the last moment. The motive behind all this elaborate toing and froing is clear: British



Haslam — provokes miners on pay and the sacked and jailed

Coal are looking to wring as much profit out of the Kent coalfield as possible before decimating the pits in the area. To do this they need a 'humbled' and spiritless workforce and they are trying to strengthen these feelings of doom and gloom by creating as much uncertainty and doubt in the minds of the miners about the future of their jobs as possible.

The Kent union has tried to organise a stand. Betteshanger pit is now gripped by an overtime ban. But unfortunately the union is entangled in a joint 'Kent *Plan for Coal*' agreement with British Coal which stops it from leading a militant fightback. Middleton, the British Coal local boss, recognises the collaboration document between management and the unions as the miners' weak point:

"The future lies in your hands", he says. "The six point survival plan agreed between management and unions is the key to the coalfield's future. I believe management are playing their part. It is up to the men at the pits to ensure the rest of the bargain is kept."

Of course the management are "playing their part"; their "part" consists of trying to screw as much profit as they possibly can out of the miners — sacrificing their conditions and health and safety standards along the way. But the union, on their side, have actually agreed to the grotesque idea that "their part" consists of helping the management to keep up profits. No wonder, despite the Betteshanger overtime ban, despair and a scramble to get out of the industry is beginning to spread amongst the Kent men!

The general meeting in Kent saw three hundred Kent miners debating the future of Tilmanstone colliery, which is under threat. Neil Harrop, an NUM branch committee member in Tilmanstone and one of the area's leading rank and file militants, received a good reception from the men, but nevertheless they chose to reject his calls for militant action to save the pit. Neil, however, still feels the meeting had its good points:

"Although the men didn't vote for action, it was a good meeting in many ways: it cleared the air really well."

In fact, the majority of the men present voted to adjourn the meeting until October 7, when the results of the next monthly review with British Coal are known. British Coal have made a naked threat to the men's jobs. Neil Harrop again:

"If production hasn't reached its targets by October 7, then the management are saying there is no

future in the Tilmanstone pit.

"The branch put forward in essence a 'holding' resolution: 'The union maintains its position on closures and redundancies until the October 7 meeting', that kind of thing, you know. The men didn't want to vote to close the pit, or vote against the union resolution. So they voted to adjourn the meeting. It was basically a 'wait and see on October 7' position."

"People are still prepared to stand by the union. The ones who are the strongest are the ones who've got the most to lose, but nobody wants to vote to close the pit. So maybe there's some hope there; something to start a fightback on. But the mood amongst the men at the moment certainly isn't to fight. In fact, you had men openly saying 'It's falling in around us and we want out...'"

"I tried to put the battle in Kent into a national context and mention action that miners in other areas were taking and the possibility of linking any fightback in Kent with them. That didn't go down well; men just said, 'But we're here, Neil ...'"

"Nevertheless, it was a good meeting. It cleared the air and now at least there is a stand-off period during which work can be done."

### Fightback

So we can see from Neil's report of this meeting that the men in Kent are essentially in a passive, wait and see mood. But Neil's point about miners' action in other areas is the central question.

The only real way forward for miners in Kent to protect their livelihoods is to build towards national action up to and including a strike. Many miners according to Neil are looking for a way out of the industry; they've had a gut full of the management's regime after the defeat of the Great Strike and just do not think it is worthwhile fighting anymore. This mood is understandable, but wrong.

The offensive of the bosses' in the mining industry is not a result of their particular perverse psychology. It is part of a broader offensive on the part of the ruling class to force down the living standards and roll back rights of the working class as a whole. The significance of the miners' strike was therefore that the Tories and their class had to remove the 'bottleneck' of the miners, traditionally one of the most militant and 'hardest' sections of the British working class, before they could really roll their sleeves up and start tearing into the rights and pay of the employed working class as a whole. So, if those Kent miners who are leaving the industry are looking for a little bit of peace, they will look in vain. Other workers in other industries are going to face exactly the same sort of onslaught that the miners have suffered.

There is nowhere to run and hide: the only choice for workers is to stand and fight or eat dirt! And for Kent miners, that should be no choice at all.

● Fight for an effective national overtime ban against pit closures, for the unconditional reinstatement of all victimised men, miners out of jail and for the full backdated pay award owed to all miners. Fight for a united working class offensive.

● The rank and file must build solid organisational links between areas. Don't leave it to the leaderships to isolate militant action in each area or pit.

● Build towards national strike action. But this time, not for what 'our' industry can afford to pay: It is not our industry, and it won't be until workers run society itself. Fight for what miners and their families need to live decent and full lives, not what the bosses can 'afford' to pay.

Ian Mahoney

# REVIEWS



## THEATRE

### Bloody South Atlantic blues

*Sink the Belgrano* Steven Berkoff (director)

STEVEN BERKOFF'S new play, *Sink the Belgrano*, opened at the Half Moon Theatre on September 2, 1986: perhaps three years too late.

The wave of chauvinism that surrounded the Falklands/Malvinas war has now largely died away. The Falklands factor has more or less been effectively buried and Thatcher's Tories are approaching the same troughs of unpopularity that they were bumping along the bottom of before they had a war presented to them on a plate in order to bump up the ratings.

Thus whatever the playwright's

subjective intentions, inevitably, the play dovetails in behind the Labour Party's drive to get into Number 10. But remember their role in the Malvinas conflict? Irrelevant at best, chauvinistic and irrelevant at worst. The programme of the play contains some quotes from the rat bag, Michael Foot, lest we forget his ignominious role in the imperialist slaughter.

"We must uphold the rights of our country throughout the world, and the claim of our country to be the defender of people's freedom throughout the world, particularly those who look to us for special protection, as do the people in the Falkland Islands..."

Good old Britain! Weren't we wonderful to travel to Africa and Asia and Latin America all those years ago, and all just to 'defend' these peoples' 'freedom'. Three cheers for Britain, everybody! That said, this production really is excellent. The talented group of actors rip into their parts with obvious relish and there are some really very funny moments in the action. The stage is cleverly divided into three 'estates'; the rulers grouped around an ornate desk, the proles off the right chauvinistically bawling and frothing around a beer table heavy with pints of lager and the *Sun*, and centrally dominating the front of the stage, the simple outline of a submarine. The least successful feature of the staging I felt was the large projector screen at the back of the action, which alternated between throwing out images of war, statistics and quotes from *Hansard* and thus was never really integrated in a full sense into the action, although even with this

there were some beautiful touches, as when Thatcher's face is projected onto the screen benevolently (and seemingly half contemptuously) beaming down on the drunken band of working class jingoites after some particularly ugly display of pro-imperialism.

Barry Stanton, Bill Stewart, Maggie Steed (Pimp, Nit and Maggot Scratcher respectively) play the ruling class triumvirate that run and elongate the war. The hypocrisy of the government's arguments are bitingly parodied in the deliberations of these three. The simple rhyming doggerel that plays a large part in the speech of the characters is a particularly effective form to bring out the glaring contradictions and crudities in the words of our rulers. Indeed, the language of the play itself has a sort of Shakespearean fruitiness that really brings vitality and life to the characters, which is not to say Berkoff plays for cheap laughs by slipping in the occasional "fuck". The language is real and everyday; the situation is obviously not, but the contradiction between the two helps the audience remember that this all happened.

The play does manage to avoid a pitfall that would have been easy for it to fall into: that of presenting the working class protagonists simply as crude ape-like Genghis Khans with the union jack in one hand and the Sammy Fox 'Goose Green' pop-up calendar in the other. When the proles of the action (Tam Dean Burn, George Dillon, Eugene Lipinski, Terence McGinty and Edward Tudor Pole) are put in uniform and transported to the submarine, we do get a rather more



Scratcher: where will she strike next?

realistic view of the working class in war, particularly in the sailors' letters to sweethearts and family: "I'm scared", "We're not really going to kill anyone".

There are political weaknesses of course. The Argentinian's reasons for launching the war for example, are put down to settling an "old score" and to impatience with waiting for UN resolutions to be implemented. There is no sense of the fact that Argentina's regime was not simply some sort of unfortunate, oppressed South American state fighting for liberation. It was a fascist regime, which also had reactionary motives for pursuing the war.

Despite these flaws however, *Sink the Belgrano* is an excellent parody of the establishment's lies and sabre-rattling over this war in particular;

the growing militarisation of British political life in general and the ease with which a chauvinistic hysteria can grip an imperialist nation. The closing moments, after Maggot has ordered and sinking of the *Belgrano* despite the fact it is well outside the Exclusion Zone and actually sailing away from the British task force, are chilling. The barbarity of our ruling class, a class dripping in blood from head to toe, and their determination to clutch tight to their decadent and despicable rule is starkly typified by the last line of the play from Maggot Scratcher. After sending 368 young Argentinian men to the ice-cold horror of the South Atlantic and their deaths, she firmly tells the audience: "I would do it again."

And she will too, unless we stop her.

Ian Mahoney



## FILM

### The real Rosa

*Rosa Luxemburg*, Margarethe Von Trotta (director).

VON TROTTA'S fine film portrait of the outstanding revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg has been based largely on her voluminous private

correspondence rather than her political works. The resulting portrait of this extraordinary woman therefore, despite the outstanding quality of the film in many senses, is flawed.

One of the major political weaknesses that has been pointed out by other reviewers, is that Luxemburg, the irreconcilable revolutionist and advocate of the violent overthrow of the ruling class is described in the film's subtitles as a "pacifist". One quote from the woman herself should be enough to lay to rest that particular distortion:

"Violence is and remains the last resort even for the working class, the supreme law of the class struggle, always present, sometimes in a latent, sometimes in an active form. And when we try to revolutionise minds by parliamentary and other activity, it is so that, when finally needed the revolution may move not only the mind but also the hand."

However, if Von Trotta is weak on capturing the essence of Rosa's

politics, she is highly successful in giving us a sensitive and often moving insight into the inner life of this woman obsessed by the idea of revolution. Thus the scenes in Von Trotta's film where Luxemburg is shown as a private individual, driven and often unhappy, are ones which give the film its real strength. Thus in the images of Luxemburg tending her miniature garden in prison, lonely and talking to her only companion, her cat on Christmas eve, painfully reconciling herself to childlessness for her revolutionary activity, we get a human impression of the revolutionary as a woman, not simply as a polemical machine. In this the film has considerable merit and even beauty.

The only thing that mars it, as you might guess beforehand, the prejudices of the film maker. Von Trotta's radical petty bourgeois generation in Federal Germany has 'matured' into a morose and deeply pessimistic lot. Concomitant with

this has been their even deeper retreat into despairing individualism. They feel themselves trapped and overawed by the big forces that move the world: The USA, the USSR, the international bourgeoisie... the working class? All are viewed with mistrust as potential destroyers of 'individual' liberty by the Von Trottas of the world. Thus they adopt an uneasy and hopeless third campism, and the third camp is ego:

"I am still fond of the idea of human, democratic socialism but I know it is a utopia. When I see the power games of the big nations and the possibilities they have to destroy the world, I feel I would be very illusionist to think that we might still have a chance."

Thus in the film, the idea of collective discipline, of revolutionary organisation, is seen as a violation of individual personality. Von Trotta's film is a fine attempt to understand and portray an outstanding revolutionary, but is



Luxemburg: no pacifist

flawed by the fact that while as a woman Von Trotta can empathise with Luxemburg, she is incapable of understanding the central motive force of the woman's life — revolution. Nevertheless, a very fine film, some quite brilliant acting and intelligent direction — see it.

Alan Prichard



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THE TORIES are divided over Thatcher's uncompromising stance on South Africa, so is the ruling class in general. So what should workers do? For us it means now is the time to act decisively. It means organising working class action not passing yet another motion 'urging the government' to do this, that or the other as the TUC did. Above all it means working towards the conditions for a general strike to force the government to impose comprehensive sanctions against South Africa. We interviewed two leading militants about the level of, and prospects for anti-apartheid action.

*Dave Douglas, Yorkshire NUM Executive Committee*

At colliery level there's been a number of boycotts of canteens that have had South African fruit or other produce on sale. As far as I know, this has now all been withdrawn. More importantly, we've had a resolution from Hatfield Main colliery to the Area Council which calls for the organisation of pickets of the Trent wharves where South African coal is coming into Britain.

We're hoping the Yorkshire Area can coordinate action with the rail unions, so we're already trying to organise some sort of picket of those wharves, even if on a token, minimalist basis.



Dave Douglas: picketing

It is a bit ridiculous that we have shop assistants and people like this outside shops in Doncaster telling people not to buy South African fruit and at the same time there's hundreds of thousands of tonnes of South African coal coming into the Trent wharf just along the valley.

This picketing has nothing to do with jingoism, or import controls: we're making it quite clear that this action is in solidarity with the South African NUM.

It's strictly in solidarity with the South African NUM, to whom we owe a debt. Our resolution actually mentioned the fact that we owe a debt to the South African miners for the support they gave to us during our strike: they sent us money even though they haven't got two pennies to scratch their arses with. It was incredible: they gave us practically a quarter of all their funds! It is very, very important that we demonstrate our solidarity with them. I'm totally against import controls, that is not the reason we are doing this.

As far as initiating action on workers' sanctions is concerned, we have provided facilities for any groups of workers that want to meet together. For example, we are fighting hard to get a delegation of Ford's workers to the conference, then we want them to link up with others; also we have reps from Rail Against Apartheid, which is the best organised anti-apartheid group within the unions. Andy Lavender of the Portsmouth Nupe anti-apartheid strikers will be there and obviously, that will be the type of thing he in particular will be picking

up on. These are the sorts of activities we are going to be encouraging people to think about.

We see the role of the conference as having an impact on the delegates there, and then them going away to campaign in their local workplaces rather than setting up an independent structure. If we can take the experience of this conference and spread it through the structures of the AAM, I think that would be a healthy thing. I think this is the first time that something along these lines has been tried by a number of small local AAM groups, and if it's successful, the more the better.

I think the idea of forcing the TUC to call a protest general strike in order to avoid a sectional approach to workers' sanctions and to maximise their effect against the government is a good one. Speaking as a union official everything depends how much discipline you've got amongst your own in the workplace.

We've just had a day of action on August 23, a 24 hour strike in support of our sacked men. We had a 100% strike supported by Nacods, Apex, Cosa, all sections of other pit unions, including also the plant workers, the contractors, even people who weren't in unions, everybody recognised our picket line.

Of course, you could call a 24 hour strike and things like that, depending on the mood and the trouble you've had in your own workplace. We've just had my pit on strike for three days. If it hadn't been for that, I think we could have agendaed a strike in support of the South African miners and workers. I think we could have pulled that off.

With education, a special mass meeting, maybe a weekend school, agitation, particularly in pit villages where you've got everybody together, and you could perhaps bring South African workers in and introduce them in the pubs and clubs and 'personalise' it in that way, I'm sure that is possible. It definitely can be done.

### Organising workers action

Rank and file workers have not been organised by their leaderships to black apartheid goods even though they voted so overwhelmingly at the TUC to condemn apartheid. So what can supporters of the South African revolution do to overcome the isolation of the advanced workers who are taking a stand against apartheid and see to it that their lead is taken up by other workers? One way that seems to us to offer a first step is the initiative of the AAM in East London in organising a local labour movement conference in November. We spoke to Phil Waterhouse of Hackney AAM who is helping to organise the conference and asked him how he saw its aims:

*Phil Waterhouse, Hackney AAM*

One of the main purposes of the conference is to underline the role that the trade unions can play: that's very important. Any strategy to implement sanctions, to force the government of the day to implement them, whatever the particular political complexion of the government, is going to need the organised weight of the labour movement behind it.

The first part of the one day conference will have an educational flavour, but we also saw that it was necessary for the delegates to go away at the end of the day with a whole load of campaigning material in order to set up an independent momentum

We can't wait for Willis to make up his mind. We must act now.



# ANTI-APARTHEID ACTION

outside of the structures of the AAM, in the workplaces.

*Bob Rayner, Harwich NUS Branch Secretary*

You must remember all NUS port committees particularly in ferry ports and major ports around the country, have over many years been very vigilant in looking out for Namibian and South African goods.

In these ports we don't get South African produce coming through. In the past they've tried to get through radio-active materials and furs. We have had a very good record in preventing containers with apartheid goods coming through, even to the

extent that some 18 months ago, one of the main shippers who was bringing it into this area had to divert his goods.

Management's response has been pretty low-key. I think they're hoping it will just all go away. It hasn't been a carbon copy of what happened in Ireland with the Dunnes Store strikers, for instance. Basically it has been a 'back-off' situation.

One of the T&G branches and the NUR, plus their shop stewards have been following the instructions of their unions and have been quite vigilant in enforcing the ban.

I would like to see the prevarication and the doubts of some unions in regard to the issue of South Africa ended. Some unions say: 'Well, we've

got to think about our members' jobs before taking action.' Unfortunately, even some shop stewards committees take the same line. There has got to be a firm stand taken.

Any job losses that may happen as a result of this type of action can be nothing in comparison to the type of oppression being meted out to trade unionists and others in South Africa at the moment. I would say the TUC needs to come out with a hard, positive line and instruct unions involved in firms like Plessey's, who are openly breaking arms embargoes, to take a stand.

It has been done. There are some brave workers who have risked their jobs; Dunnes is still the best example of that type of bravery and I would like to see more workers follow their lead.

## Model Resolution

1. This branch of the ... totally condemns the apartheid regime in South Africa and supports the democratic struggle of the African National Congress. Furthermore we express our total opposition to the British government's connivance with the apartheid regime. Through the organisation of physical solidarity with the struggle of our class brothers and sisters in South Africa we could do more than aid their revolution; we could also dramatically shift the balance of class forces away from the bosses in this country and give the advantage and initiative to our class. All it requires is a little imagination, a little initiative and a lot of hard work.
2. Thus, this branch resolves that it will:
  - i) Adopt and promote the cause of a trade unionist from our sister trade union who has been detained in South

- ii) Fight for a regular monthly levy from the members of this branch to be sent to the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu).
- iii) Demand that the Executive of this union issues an immediate call to its members to sever all links between Britain and apartheid and to support unconditionally workers taking blacking action.
- iv) Affiliate to the nearest and most appropriate local branch of the AAM. Organise a workplace speaking tour for representatives of Sactu to help the campaign for worker's sanctions.
- v) The Executive of this union should demand the TUC organise a protest general strike unless the government imposes comprehensive, mandatory sanctions, implementation of which should be

supervised by elected and recallable workers' representatives.

- vi) Publicise, forge links with, and learn from, workers who are carrying out blacking action against apartheid.
- vii) Fight for propaganda to all local workplaces using leaflets, papers, pamphlets, speakers tours from the AAM and the South African Congress of Trade Unions etc, to encourage all workers to take action against apartheid.
- viii) Fight for local Action Committees based on elected and recallable delegates from trade union branches, unemployed workers' group, trade councils, shop stewards committees and all working class organisations in order to unleash working class action against apartheid. Support all local labour movement conferences as spring-boards to Action Committees.