

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

Fight the Tories! Rebuild the left!



Back Benn and Heffer!

THE REAL HOPE FOR SOCIALISM

By Martin Thomas

"It's something very, very new. Nothing like it has been seen in over 30 years. In the anti-bureaucratic struggle in the Eastern bloc, now we have mobilisations in several different countries happening at the same time.

"There is a major revival of the struggle in Poland, the first stirrings of mass struggle in Czechoslovakia, big protests in the western Ukraine

(within the USSR), and unrest in several countries.

"For those who hope for a workers' anti-bureaucratic revolution in the Eastern bloc, it is the best turn of events that we could imagine".

That is the assessment of Zbigniew Kowalewski, a former leader of Solidarnosc's left wing now in exile in the West. As Socialist Organiser goes to press, the Polish state is trying to beat down the strike wave that started in a coal mine of southern Poland on 16th August. But the strikes are spreading rather than collapsing.

Coal mines, shipyards, steelworks, dockers, and public transport workers in Szczecin have struck. We do not know the full 22 demands of the initial sit-in strike at Manifest Lipcowy colliery. The main demands that have been taken up by the solidarity strikes are pay rises to compensate for the price rises under the Polish government's market-oriented economic reforms, and recognition of the workers' own trade union, Solidarnosc, which has been banned since 1981.

At one shipyard, the demands include cancellation of plans to build a nuclear power station in the area.

According to Zbigniew Kowalewski, "This is a continuation of the strike wave in April and May. It is the same strike wave reviving after a lull — but now the strikers are more experienced and better organised".

This time, unlike in April-May, the strikers have organised inter-enterprise joint strike committees — one in the Silesian coalfield, and one in Szczecin. In the great strike wave of 1980 such joint strike committees became almost workers' councils — the basis of an alternative, workers' government — and were the seedbed of Solidarnosc.

This time also, the national leadership of Solidarnosc is better prepared. Instead of being unsure and silent, as they were in April-May — Walesa spoke in support of the April-May strikes only as an individual, not officially on

POLISH WORKERS FIGHT FOR FREEDOM

Countdown to the Polish confrontation

- 1948: Poland becomes a fully 'Communist'-dominated state.
- 1956: Strikes and riots against the rising cost of living and Russian 'exploitation'. Reforms promised under new boss Gomulka.
- 1970: More strikes and riots following a sharp rise in food prices. Gomulka replaced by Edward Gierek.
- 1976: Another attempt to raise prices is stopped by strikes and rioting. Committee for Workers' Defence (KOR) formed to help those victimised after protests.
- 1976-80: 1,000 strikes occur. Illegal literature circulates widely.
- 1980, 1 July: Government announces price rises. Strikes spread across the country. Government offers big pay rises, but this only encourages more strikes. KOR active around these strikes.
- August: A KOR activist in the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk, Anna Walentynowicz, is sacked. On 14 August, the yard is occupied in protest. A strike committee is elected.
- 16 August: 22 striking workplaces form the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee, MKS.
- 17 September: 35 MKSs meet in Gdansk, and decide to form a national trade union called Solidarnosc.
- 10 November: The authorities recognise Solidarnosc as legal.
- 1981, 19 March: Solidarnosc activists in Bydgoszcz beaten by security police. Solidarnosc threatens a general strike.
- 27 March: Four-hour warning strike.
- April: General strike called off. Demobilisation follows. The regime is paralysed, but Solidarnosc fails to take the initiative.
- September-October: Solidarnosc congress meets and adopts the programme of a 'Self-Managing Republic'.
- 12-13 December: Martial law declared; Solidarnosc driven underground.



Strikers occupy the Gdansk shipyard

Turn to page 2

Death of a dictator

By Colin Foster

"The crowds thronging Islamabad could easily have been mistaken for people celebrating a holiday", reported the *Financial Times*.

The *Independent's* reporter, on the look-out for anyone in Pakistan saddened by President Zia's death, asked his taxi-driver. The driver replied tersely: "Martial law bastard. Democracy good".

For eleven years Zia ruled over a regime of brutal repression, unabashed exploitation, and vicious Islamic obscurantism. In a country where the average income per head is £4 a week, he spent 70 per cent of the state budget on paying international banks, on boosting Pakistan's big military machine, and on trying to develop nuclear weapons.

The United States and Saudi Arabia propped up Zia. Zia took power in 1977 through a military coup. In 1979 the USSR organised an equally brutal military coup in Kabul, invading Afghanistan. The US decided it should support the coup-maker in Islamabad as a buffer against the coup-maker in Moscow. Money and military aid has poured into Pakistan ever since.

Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf oil states, valued Pakistan as a source of low-paid, well-policed and devout Muslim workers. These oil states rely on immigrant labour to do most of their work. Palestinian or Egyptian workers might be unruly or independent-minded. General Zia would make sure his workers toed the line.

For many years, workers' remittances from the Middle East brought Pakistan more money than all its exports put together.

The end of Zia's rule was coming, air crash or no. Declining revenues have made the oil states cut back on construction projects and migrant labour. The prospect of a settlement in Afghanistan did not necessarily mean a halt to the flow of money into Pakistan — profiteers were looking forward to rich pickings from the international funds earmarked for the reconstruction of Afghanistan — but the presence of three million Afghan refugees in North-West

Pakistan, armed, unruly, their leaders flush with dollars and heavily involved in drug smuggling, has made Afghanistan's troubles more of a liability than an asset to Pakistan's government.

Elections were already scheduled for November. The government's disarray following Zia's death may have increased the chance of parties being allowed to contest these elections. Zia had said that the elections would be 'non-party'. However, three of Pakistan's four provincial governors have said publicly that martial law would be better than free elections. Zia's death probably also increases the risk of the election being cancelled.

If halfway free elections are held, Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party will win. Benazir Bhutto is the daughter of the man, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who led Pakistan in its only period ever of elected government, from 1971 to 1977.

Bhutto waged a vicious imperialistic war to try to stop Bangladesh from separating from Pakistan, and suppressed workers' strikes. He also nationalised all major industry and commerce, built new state enterprises, introduced some welfare measures, and legislated a limited land reform.

He talked, at least, about social justice, which is more than any of Pakistan's other rulers have ever done. That is why Benazir Bhutto would win any free elections.

Bhutto, however, is cynically trawling for support from the US and from Pakistan's other major political party, the far-right-wing Islamic Jamaat-i-Islami. Socialism? "What is the socialism of Gonzalez in Spain or for that matter Kinnock?", she replies. "It is all a matter of interpretation".

Certainly Bhutto could rule Pakistan in a way entirely suitable to the international banks and Pakistan's own capitalists. The question is whether she will get the chance.

Pakistan now has a sizeable, though ill-organised working class, a peasantry exploited by landlords and moneylenders, and three subject nationalities oppressed by the dominant Punjabis. As the military regime falls apart, it will take more than appeals to Islam to hold it together.



Dictator Zia

US Encouraging workers not to vote

By Edward Ellis

America is buzzing with speculation that Dan Quayle, George Bush's running mate for the Republican presidential campaign, was a Vietnam draft-dodger.

Indeed, he has just disappeared for two days of 'image-grooming' to recover lost ground. Meanwhile counter-accusations have been launched that Dukakis's Democratic running mate, Lloyd Bentsen, pulled strings to help his own son avoid the draft, and has used his influence to get another son out of financial difficulties.

With the political battle focused on such personal issues, and almost turned into a branch of showbiz, it may seem little wonder that America has such low voter turn-outs. The turnout for November's presidential election may be less than 50%, while 70 or 80% turn-outs are usual in Western Europe.

A new book, *Why Americans Don't Vote*, by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A Cloward, suggests that the system encourages parts of the population not to vote.

Registration to vote in the USA is a difficult to process, sometimes absurdly so. Drives to turn out the vote have to be privately sponsored. According to the authors, the poor are not supposed to vote in the eyes of the system, which considers only those who contribute financially to the state to be 'real' voters.

In the 1960s, for example, "Democratic and Republican mayors alike lobbied Congress for explicit prohibitions on voter-registration activities by anti-poverty agencies".

The authors' own Human SERVE (Service Employees' Registration and Voter Education), set up in 1983, established registration centres in poor areas but met fierce resistance at all levels, including from the Reagan administration.

The result: 76% of those making over \$50,000 a year vote, but only 43% of those on under \$5,000. Such differences between the voting rates of rich and poor do not exist in other Western countries.

Financial obstacles to involvement in US politics are revealed in another new book, *The Best Congress Money Can Buy*, by Philip Stern. He states that "the average United States senator must raise nearly \$10,000 a week every week during his or her entire six-year Senate term" in order to fight the next campaign.

The elections themselves, of course, like the coming presidential one, are fantastically hyped, and therefore astronomically expensive. No wonder Bush and Quayle, Dukakis and Bentsen, are all millionaires: no-one who is not a millionaire has much chance of becoming a major candidate for president.

American workers need their own party.

South Africa

Mandela release?

By Anne Mack

Speculation continues about the possible release of jailed African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela.

Mandela, who was 70 last month, has been in jail for the last quarter-century, and is ill with TB.

It is not clear what the South African government will do. On the one hand, releasing Mandela now might prevent a gigantic wave of protest in the townships when Mandela dies in jail.

It would make it easier for black conservatives like Gatscha Buthelezi to negotiate with the government. And Mandela may be less trouble to the South African government as a sick and old man outside jail than as a god-like symbolic figure in jail.

On the other hand, releasing Mandela now would give an important boost to the ANC and the whole liberation movement.

Many white racists would be disoriented, and the extreme right could make gains at the expense of the ruling National Party in this October's municipal elections.

WOMAN'S EYE

DHSS trap

By Lynn Ferguson

The DHSS has decided to condemn thousands of single mothers to a life on the dole.

Up to this April, single parents were allowed to earn £12 a week without losing any benefit. This £12 was what was left after childcare costs had been paid. £12 may not be much but at least the old rules meant that single mothers could escape the home and come out better off financially than they would otherwise have been.

But in April the new Social Security rules came in. Now single parents are permitted to earn £15 before they lose any benefit. But... childcare costs have to be met out of this £15. That effectively means that the DHSS allow the princely sum of £3 a week for childcare costs. On average, £3 will pay for a babysitter for 1½ hours.

The new rules not only make the 'poverty trap' more severe for single mothers. They condemn women to atrophy in the home — until the kids are grown up.

No justice for women

By Katherine O'Leary

The bewigged guardians of justice have done it again. Remember the case when a man was given a short sentence for sexually assaulting a little girl because the judge said she was 'sexually precocious'?

Remember the woman hitchhiker who was accused by a judge of 'contributory negligence' when she was raped by a motorist?

Two weeks ago a senior judge, Justice Rougier, jailed a rapist for the minimum sentence of one year. Justice Rougier justified the sentence by describing the case as 'exceptional'. What he meant by this was that the woman who had been raped had previously been a girlfriend of the rapist, Patrick Hall, and that she'd had a child by him.

The woman had suffered harassment and threats of rape by Hall for some time. She'd taken out an injunction against him. Then, one night, he waited outside her flat for her to come home, jumped her and raped her against a wall.

Justice Rougier's comments? 'I don't think it was as much of a shock for her as it might have been to many women'.

Well thanks. Now we know that as far as the likes of Rougier are concerned, if we're raped by a male acquaintance, ex-boyfriend, lover or husband, then really it doesn't amount to much. If you've slept with him before, it can't be that bad to do it again. Real rapes happen to young virgins, or respectable married women, in back alleys. Real rapists are psychopaths who lie in wait for the first woman who comes along.

Any unwanted sexual act forced on a woman is rape. It makes no difference if the rapist is a complete stranger or her husband. The emotional damage, the harm done to a woman's self-confidence and self-esteem are the same. It's about time those like 'Justice' Rougier learnt this. As it is, there's certainly no justice for women.

Poland

Polish workers fight for freedom

From front page

behalf of the Solidarnosc leadership — they have come out promptly with a declaration of support for the strikes.

The Polish government is taking a hard line. It started by giving the strikers an ultimatum to go back to work by the 19th or be sacked. On the 22nd the Interior Minister appeared on television in military uniform, declared there could be no question of "going back to the structures of the past", and announced that local authorities would be able to order curfews (which they have done today, 23rd August). The army would take responsibility for making sure that the most important sectors of the economy functioned, and the Minister warned of "the danger of bloodshed".

The same day riot police stormed bus and tram depots in Szczecin, arresting transport workers who had occupied them. Police surrounded coal mines and the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk.

The international situation, however, must give hope to Polish workers and pause to their rulers. While they step up repression, they have given themselves an escape-hatch by calling a special session of their parliament for next week.

In Czechoslovakia 10,000 people marched on 21st August to mark the 20th anniversary of the Russian invasion, demanding withdrawal of Soviet troops, free elections, democracy and human rights. Yugoslavia has had a wave of strikes.

Hungary now has a semi-tolerated independent trade union. Rumania had a major workers' revolt only months ago, and is now almost at war with its Hungarian minority. There is unrest in many of the subject nations of the USSR — the Ukraine, Armenia, Latvia.

Workers in the Eastern bloc are fighting back. That their struggles come at the same time in different countries multiplies their strength. We should make sure that British workers, too, add our strength to the international struggle. The workers of Britain, of Poland, and of the USSR have much more in common with each other than any of us have with our own rulers.



P R E S S
G A N G

Our sonofabitch

By Jim Denham

The dramatic demise of Pakistan's President Zia brought forth some strange contortions from the British press last week.

Noone wanted to come over as too upset about it. After all, there was no denying that (as the *Times* put it, in what must go down as a classic of understatement) "since coming to power, General Zia has carried out some harsh measures against his opponents".

The *Guardian*, which might be expected to wax a little more self-righteous about the nastier aspects of Zia's regime, described him as "controversial and unpopular", and noted his "Jesuitical approach to underlings".

At least the *Daily Mail* gave some space to those who feel a little more strongly about the late President's shortcomings on the human rights front. Iqbal Wahhad, editor of the *Asian Herald*, was quoted as saying, "his eleven years in power will be remembered as a regime of terror and instability... certainly a large part of the Pakistani community will greet the news of his death more in relief than sorrow". The Asian Lord Mayor of Bradford commented: "There won't be much mourning in Bradford".

The *Express*, however, knew better. "The Pakistani community in Britain was in mourning last night", it commented, with the kind of certainty that defies contradiction.

The *Telegraph* preferred to concentrate on more important aspects of the General's character — like his enthusiasm for the thwack of leather on willow. Imran Khan was "extremely impressed by the way he argued with me to come out of retirement to lead the Pakistan team in the West Indies. His arguments made it impossible to refuse him".

I understand that a lot of other people have found it quite difficult to refuse Zia over the years, but not usually because of his arguments.

The overall verdict was summed up by the *Mail's* Comment column: "there was more to his credit than the debit side of his rule". The *Express* put it more bluntly: "as the pre-Carter State Department was wont to say, 'he may have been a sonofabitch, but he was our sonofabitch'."

A star is born?

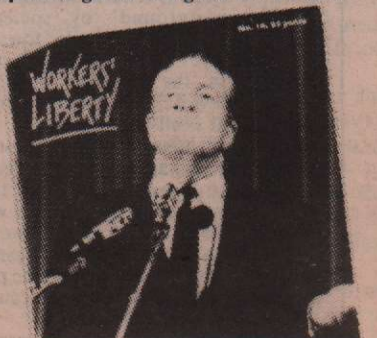
Readers of the *Sun* were last week privy to the most intimate secrets of that lovable cockney character Derek Jamieson.

And readers of the *Mirror* and the *Star* were not to be denied their own Jamieson revelations, as those papers responded with 'spoiler' stories — a technique that was perfected by Jamieson himself in his days at the *Express*, *Star* and *News of the World*.

Jamieson's rise from Fleet Street hack to media 'personality' has set a most dangerous precedent. I notice that *Sunday Mirror* editor James Pollard has begun to appear with alarming frequency on various TV game shows.

Press Gang's hot tip for the next editor to make it big on the game show/chat show circuit is the *News of the World's* Wendy Henry.

In fact Ms Henry would be well advised to get her face known on the box before the Digger finally loses patience with her increasingly embarrassing and expensive gaffes and gives her the sack.



95p plus 30p postage from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

The voice of Britain?

Eight young men in their teens torn apart, and 27 others maimed or crippled for life — a horrible business.

Cause indeed for emotion, for concern, for pity and for regret.

Even those who blew them up in Armagh will feel pity and perhaps regret when they think about the human beings they killed, as human beings and not as 'Crown Forces'.

It is occasion also for an attempt to understand, as the IRA wades in blood into a new military offensive, an offensive which probably reflects the partial eclipse of the politicians in the Republican movement, and may presage new splits. The IRA volunteers think that such slaughter serves a cause worth their own lives and other people's lives.

Reason, understanding, or anything other than the mindless howling of the jackal, is not what you get from the British popular press. They howl for blood and guts, and incite Mrs Thatcher to go for the IRA. What do they think she has been doing all these years?

When they are not drooling over the umpteenth royal baby, and doing it in the tone and manner appropriate to a music-hall impression of a belly-crawling, forelock-tugging cockney brought up in the

MIRROR COMMENT

Fight to the finish

THE IRA is at war with Britain. We must wage total war against it. We have to win for the people of Britain and of Ireland.

The British Army has been in Northern Ireland in support of the civil authorities since 1969. Yet the atrocities go on.

This weekend's murders are a final proof, as if proof was needed, that our lid gloves must come off.

Above: the *Mirror* joins the pack. Yet some on the left — Labour and Ireland magazine, for example — praise the *Mirror*, which has called for troops out sometimes, for its sensible line on Ireland!

EDITORIAL

shadow of the royal palace ('Ain't she a luvly sight, gov'nor?') — when they are not doing that, they howl for blood.

They howled in glee when the SAS shot three unarmed Republicans in Gibraltar. They applauded last year when the SAS

massacred eight IRA men in Armagh. The *Sun* gloated on its front page when a shipload of Argentinians went to the bottom of the sea in 1982.

This is not an expression of the horror all sorts of decent people will feel at the slaughter of British Army youth — it is an attempt to exploit that horror, crudify it, and render it into the language and emotions which used to be the stock-in-trade of the National Front and the far

right.

Think about the levels of howling chauvinism displayed in the popular British press over the last week. You would not have got that level of ignorant bigotry in the popular British press in the darkest days of World War 2.

Where Ireland is concerned, the voice of the popular press is a true voice of Britain — the historic voice of Britain. That voice, and the attitudes it represents, have played a major role in creating the terrible impasse in Northern Ireland today.

British liberals say they want a democratic solution which takes account of the legitimate concerns of all the people in Northern Ireland, including the Catholics who have been oppressed in the Six Counties state for many decades. In practice, however, it is the other voice which speaks on policy.

The brutal British-imposed 'solution' of 1920-22 was made by those who spoke in that voice. They cut Ireland apart. Supposedly protecting the British/Protestant minority, they created a second, artificial, Irish minority, the Northern Catholics, and imprisoned them in a Protestant state against their will.

That is the root of the IRA campaign. All the dead Catholics, Protestants and British soldiers of the last 20 years are the victims of that 'settlement'.

Despite the official denials, it seems there is a real chance that the Tories will reintroduce internment. If the British Government does that, then there will be many more victims of that 1920-22 partition settlement in the months ahead.

To solve the impasse, and to unite workers, a programme is needed that recognises the democratic rights of both Catholics and Protestants — a federal united Ireland with regional autonomy for the Protestants.

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GRAFFITI

Bupa-ising the police



Between 100,000 and 250,000 people work in the private security industry, according to a report in last Sunday's Observer (August 21). The growth of private security firms, many of them with no qualifications or experience, is causing some alarm.

The Post Office Investigations Department (POID) wants to establish a parallel security firm to hire out its services. According to its head, ex-Met police commander Mike Hoare, "We are trying to BUPA-ise the police".

The Observer notes the kind of problems that have arisen:

A newly-employed security guard disappeared with £30,000 in his first week at work.

A man with a long list of burglary, arson and violence convictions was employed as a guard on £150 a week after providing a false reference.

"Security" guards have been on the inside of many of the country's biggest crimes of recent years — like the £26 million Heathrow Brinks-Mat robbery in 1983.

Zia's jet

The Asian edition of The Economist has a picture of ex-President Zia ul-Haq on the front cover. Zia, of course, was blown up with 30 others last Wednesday in a Hercules

C-130 jet. On the back of The Economist is an advert for the Hercules C-130 which describes it as "a search plane that can stay up as long as it takes..."

Women in space

Women are not to be allowed to be astronauts — or at least not allowed in space for long periods. The theory is that the men astronauts would start fighting over them.

The possibilities are endless if you follow this logic. Why allow women to do anything in proximity to men?

The underlying assumption is that men have uncontrollable sexual urges fuelled by the sight of a girl's ankle. Women, on the other

hand, are just the passive objects of desire.

What obviously has not occurred to the men who

dreamed this rule up is that male astronauts might fight over each other!

'Respectable' racism

Racial discrimination by 'respectable' employers is on the increase, says the Commission for Racial Equality. Recent cases have been bought against British Airways and the BBC.

In Liverpool, a tribunal ruled against the Depart-

ment of Employment that it pay £3000 damages to Hirsch Sharma, saying: "as a result of unconscious racism, he was denied training, demoted, isolated, ignored, made idle and then put on probation".

It's a forgery!

I was very distressed by your decision to give over nearly half your centre pages to a forged letter, purportedly written by George Galloway, in SO 366.

It does not say much for your revolutionary alertness. Although the forgery contained some attention to detail, and thereby a certain plausibility, a mere five minutes' reflection would have sufficed to recognise it as a crude and unsophisticated hoax.

I will deal only with its most salient inaccuracies.

"I have consistently opposed the expulsion of Trotskyists from the Labour Party". That's funny. I certainly don't recall him opposing my expulsion, nor any of the more recent expulsions of *Militant* supporters from the Labour Party in Scotland.

"I will leave my comrades in the national liberation movements to evaluate my work in this field [of anti-imperialism]". Since when has the regime in Addis Ababa been a "national liberation movement"? Why not ask the Eritreans what they think of it?

"I am no longer a member of the LCC... I have no connection with 'the student democratic left'." George Galloway has certainly severed his connections with the LCC (and vice versa), perhaps because the member of Hillhead CLP being groomed to challenge him in the reselection contest is a member of the LCC.

Galloway seems now to have thrown in his lot with the LCC Mark Two, 'Scottish Labour Action', based on members and ex-members of student Labour Clubs whose politics are those of the

Democratic Left.

Any number of turns of phrase in the letter should also have alerted you to the fact that the letter was a forgery. It certainly lacked the literary merit of the forgery printed in the previous issue of SO, the style of which was more Galloway than the real thing.

Your best course of action would have been to pass this forgery on to the police. It was doubtless written on notepaper contained in George Galloway's briefcase, which was stolen earlier this year.

Surely SO would be better off refraining from manqué journalist scoops of dubious value and instead address itself to the political question of why on earth anyone would possibly bear such a grudge against comrade Galloway as to resort to fabricating letters by him?

Stan Crooke, Edinburgh

Moralism and alcohol

'Simon Pottinger opens a discussion' (SO 365). Yes, he does. I've certainly been moved to put pen to paper on the subject of alcohol.

Firstly, it seems rather odd that an article entitled 'Socialists and Alcohol' fails to mention the pay and conditions of workers in the brewing and licensing industries.

Simon's article begins with a denunciation of football hooliganism and yuppie violence, and rounds squarely on alcohol, giving the bottle all the blame. Oh yes? Do social deprivation, macho conditioning and fascist organisations have no role at all? Whilst they may use tanked-up young men as their cannon fodder, most orchestrators of football violence are smart, calculating, and stone-cold sober.

What I found most worrying, though, were some of Simon's policy suggestions.

- 'Linking the price of drink to the increase in earnings'. You cannot be serious! Isn't this a tax on working people's living standards?

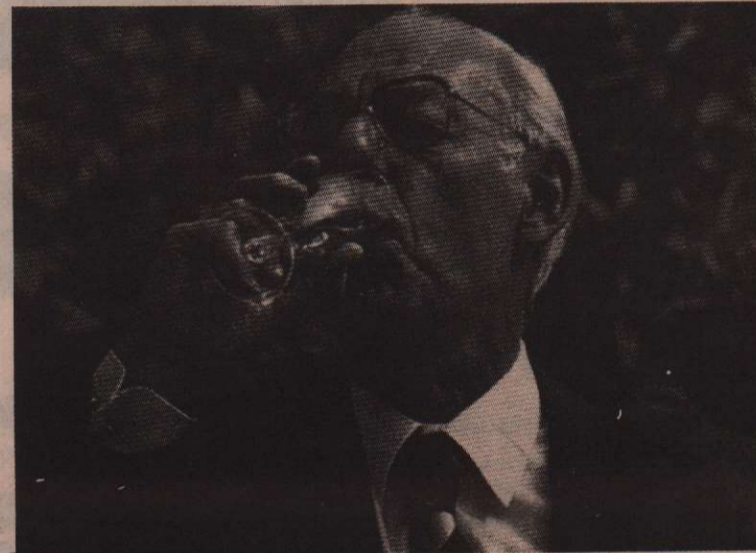
- 'Refusing to increase licensing hours'. The current afternoon shutdown is a hangover (sorry) from the First World War, when all-day opening was interrupted in order to get workers into the munitions factories.

Ironically enough, Simon misses out on the one good reason to have doubts about licensing law extensions — employers' exploitation of pub workers, most of whom are casual, part-time and non-unionised. It is not pub opening hours that make people drunk — after all, throw me out of the pub and I'll get to the off-licence, the supermarket, or my own private stash!

- 'Ban drink advertising'. Perhaps we should also consider banning washing powder adverts (they patronise women), MSC adverts (they promote slave labour), or even car adverts (people die on the roads, and exhaust fumes poison)? Anyway, TV would not be nearly so entertaining without those excellent Carling Black Label commercials.

- 'Introduce random breath testing'. What this means is giving the police the power to stop any motorist, whether or not they have genuine grounds for suspicion. Remembering that the first police harassment meted out to Manchester student Steven Shaw was framed-up motoring charges, the dangers of giving the police yet more powers become evident.

Some other points about alcohol abuse I think Simon overlooked: What about social conditioning and 'macho' stereotypes? Wouldn't drink-driving be reduced if public



transport were better? Why is non-alcoholic lager so horrible? (Probably because it's non-alcoholic!)

Raising the issues, education, health care, and counselling are much needed, but will alcohol abuse ever disappear while getting pissed is such an easy way of escaping the drudgery and oppressiveness

of life under capitalism?

It's high time that lefties took this issue seriously. But we should be caring and practical, not prosaic and moralistic. And we certainly shouldn't put all our faith in policy and legislation to cure the ills of alcohol abuse.

Mine's a pint of Beck's.

Janine Booth, Manchester.

Why a people's militia is best

Tony Dale (letters, SO 367) criticises the slogan of a people's militia as confused.

It is an old socialist slogan. The Marxist movement before 1914 demanded people's militias in place of standing armies. Following discussions with French comrades, Leon Trotsky took it up again in the Action Programme for France (1934). He repeated it in the Transitional Programme (1938):

"Substitution for the standing army of a people's militia, indissolubly linked up with factories, mines, farms, etc."

Trotsky and his comrades, in documents like the Transitional Programme, also called for workers' militias — but in a different context. They advocated workers' militias as the workers' response to organised violent strike-breaking and fascist gangs. They advocated people's militias as their alternative to the standing army.

Of course, Trotsky and the other Marxists of the first half of this century may have been wrong. But I think not.

In advanced capitalist countries where the wage-working class is the great majority of the population, a people's militia would be a workers' militia by sheer force of numbers. You might want to exclude a tiny minority of former exploiters and rulers from militia service, but to exclude small shopkeepers, professional people and so

would be stupid, unnecessarily alienating such people from socialism.

In an underdeveloped country where wage-workers are only a minority, it would be doubly necessary to organise a people's rather than just a workers' militia. We do not advocate military dictatorship by the working class over a peasant majority!

So people's militia is the fundamental slogan, workers' militia the subsidiary one. This issue is part of the general one of the socialist revolution being democratic, more democratic than Westminster flim-flam.

We raise the slogan of a workers' militia when it is directly and visibly an issue of strike-breaking or fascist attacks on workers' meetings, union and party offices and so on. We call for a people's militia as our democratic and socialist alternative to the military and paramilitary forces of the capitalist state.

This approach is doubly necessary after 60 years of Stalinism. Just the slogan "workers' militia" would convey to many people the prospect of being ruled over by a private army of the socialist and working-class parties.

Any slogan can be used in a reformist way, but I do not see why "people's militia" is worse on that score than "workers' militia".

Colin Foster, Peckham.

Who are the real perverts?

By Justin Soul

Last month a 72 year old Brighton pensioner collapsed and died in a public lavatory after being arrested by two plain-clothes police officers for an alleged act of 'gross indecency'.

The public lavatory was a meeting place for isolated gay men. Like other 'cottages' it was a point of contact for men who were unwilling or unable to frequent the commercial gay scene.

The public toilet provides a relatively hidden, if squalid, rendezvous for men forced 'underground' by society's bigoted and hostile attitude towards homosexuality. There are many such 'cottages' in the country, but you wouldn't know it if you strolled in for a casual pee. It is all very discreet.

The police, however, spend a lot of time acting as agents provocateurs, pretending to be gay, acting as if they want sex, and then arresting men who approach them. A barrister friend of mine working for the Crown Prosecution Service spends most of his time prosecuting gay men who have been caught 'at it' by plain-clothes police.

A conviction for 'gross indecency' will often lead to trouble at work. In July a campaign began in York to defend

Ray Moore, a training officer with Terry's Chocolates, who was sacked following a conviction for 'cottageing'.

Despite a "100%" work record, the management said he was now "unsuitable". His union shamefully backed the management's decision. His supporters rightly argue that:

"Gross indecency is a victimless offence between two consenting adults; there is no equivalent offence for straight people. No one has suffered as a result of Ray's action — except Ray himself, because of the narrow-minded prejudices of Terry's" — and of the law.

To make things worse for Ray, he faces six months without unemployment benefit because the Department of Employment says he contributed to his own dismissal!

The death of the Brighton pensioner and the sacking of Ray Moore are just two consequences of a vicious campaign by the police. Not content with prohibiting public displays of affection between consenting gay men (like kissing), they are now staking out public lavatories and infiltrating the gay scene as if we were a gang of armed bandits.

The cottageing activities are a direct result of society's attitude towards homosexuality, and society can't expect us to 'clean up our act' until it cleans up its own. As for the police, I am tempted to ask: Who are the real perverts?

Savage cuts in Brent

Despite the protests of over 500 Brent workers, disabled groups, pensioners and others, the Labour Council's leadership on Monday voted through a savage £16.2 million package of cuts.

Included in this programme of cuts are:

- the loss of 1 in 10 teaching posts in Brent's schools;
- the slashing of half the social services budget, which will mean cutting half of the Council's social workers;

By Tony Jain

•a further £7 increase in Council rents, the third such increase this year;

•cuts of up to 10% in the budgets of those voluntary groups still to be funded by the Council.

According to Brent NALGO, up to 5000 jobs will be lost.

Council Leader Dorman Long claimed at the end of the special Policy & Resources meeting, which voted through the cuts with only

one vote against, that the council had no alternative. If it didn't cut the budget would be unbalanced and almost certainly illegal.

This is simply not true. The alternative road Brent Labour Group could and should pursue, if it had the political courage, was laid out by the struggles of Liverpool and Lambeth Councils in 1986.

NALGO and NUPE members, local Labour Party members and trade unionists need to build resistance to any attempts by management to implement the cuts when and where they happen.

Defend Graham Durham

Right-wingers inside the ruling Brent Labour Group are threatening to remove the whip and report Cllr Graham Durham to Labour's National Constitutional Committee for alleged improper behaviour at a number of council meetings.

Durham's crime? He's one of the few left councillors to actively campaign against the Labour

leadership's cuts strategy including on occasions voting with the Tories and Liberals against cuts in social services.

All Labour and trade union activists in Brent Labour Party should defend Cllr Durham's right to campaign against the cuts and any attempts to witchhunt him from the Labour Party. Brent East GMC last week passed such a resolution. Other wards and GCs should follow this lead.

Illusions that led to tragedy

From 1945 to the mid-1970s local government grew fast.

By 1974-5 local government accounted for £1 out of every £6 spent in Britain, and the workforce had grown from 1.4 million to 2.5 million. In 1974-5 local government was reorganised. Authorities were made fewer and larger, and their bureaucracies were strengthened.

In 1975-6 the squeeze started. After the Labour government's talks with the International Monetary Fund, local government minister Tony Crosland declared: "The party's over". Labour councils embarked on their first round of cuts, or introduced big rate rises.

1978 saw the first 'new left' Labour councils, in Lambeth and Lothian. When the Tories were elected in 1979 and decided to cut the central government grant to local government by three per cent, the scene was set for confrontation.

In their drive to cut local government spending, jobs and services, the Tories faced a powerful enemy. There were 2.9 million council workers in 1979. In many inner-city areas the council was (and still is) the largest single employer. Millions of working-class people depend on, and value, council services.

A determined lead by Labour councillors could have mobilised this tremendous power against the Tories.

If Labour councils had refused to carry through any of the cuts that the Tories were decreeing, and instead had used the council chamber as a platform to rouse and organise

By Gerry Bates

the local working class into active opposition and defiance, then there was a good chance that they would have made Britain ungovernable. They could have inspired at least sections of the wider labour and trade union movement to follow Tony Benn's advice and break off all collaboration with the Tories.

If... But was it ever a possibility? Yes, it was possible.

In the 100-year record of Labour such defiance had been rare. The famous events in Poplar, where a Labour council went to jail to defend local people against a hostile government, took place as long ago as 1921. Clay Cross, in 1972, had defied Tory government orders to raise rents.

But something was new in 1981. The left — including some who called themselves revolutionary socialists — was strong in London, Lothian Region, in Scotland, and Sheffield City Council, were also left-wing. The left was, at least in name, a great local-government power in Britain.

The leaders of the local government left — Ted Knight in Lambeth, Ken Livingstone at the GLC, David Blunkett in Sheffield — promised, threatened and swore that they would resist the Tory government, using local government as a series of fortresses against it. They said they would use local government as a base from which to fight to bring that government down.

In fact, despite the promises and rhetoric, the local government left orientated not towards confrontation but sharply away from it. It opted for a policy of councils 'compensating' for Tory cuts by siphoning off additional income from their electorates through rate rises.

This was the opposite of a policy of mobilising the local people around the Labour councils to resist all cuts, whether of services or of disposable income.

The main leaders of the local government left had committed themselves to the rate-rise road in 1979. After that they went from one stop-gap to another until they collapsed.

It did not happen without internal differentiation and struggle. The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory — the main umbrella organisation of the broad Labour left, set up at a 200-strong conference in July 1978, and publishing *Socialist Organiser* from October 1978 — had a clear commitment to class-struggle politics. It explicitly opposed Labour in local government passing on central government cuts to working-class people in the form of rate rises. But immediately after the Tories



Demonstration against ratecapping

won the 1979 election, a whole range of people in the SCLV reneged on this 'no rate rise' pledge. At the *Socialist Organiser* London conference on local government in July 1979, a majority voted for a policy of rate rises, and, implicitly, for trying to avoid a confrontation with the government. This triggered a long-running dispute on orientation and policy which led to the hiving off from the SCLV and *Socialist Organiser* of London Labour Briefing, Ted Knight, Ken Livingstone, and others.

This was a very important discussion for the left. All the issues were stated, and class-struggle, mobilising policies were argued for, when there was still time for the majority of the local government left to orientate towards a fight with the Tories and away from the role that they have in fact played, that of local administrators of Tory policy.

Chris Knight of *Briefing* provided theoretical justification for the policy of ducking out in a polemic over the GLC's cheap fares climb-down in 1982.

"I accept", he wrote, "[that] the editorial [in *Briefing*] was not half hard enough on Ken Livingstone... [But] what I think you inadequately understand is that we are engaged in a struggle not just for propaganda

points, but for power.

It is the realities of power which are the problem, not 'incorrect ideas' in Ken Livingstone's (or anyone else's) head.

If we had full state power in our hand, we wouldn't have to make difficult choices between almost equally unsatisfactory alternatives... To the extent that we lack full power, however, things aren't so easy...

The only circumstances in which it would be right to disengage would be those in which we would have more power out of office than in...

It is obvious that the disengagement tactic presupposes a very high state of class consciousness in the population.

The moment of disengagement then becomes a signal for massive, near-insurrectionary upheavals... It would have been nice if that had been the case this spring in connection with the Fares Fair fight, but unfortunately it wasn't" (SO, 18.3.82).

In other words: so long as left councillors can do even marginally positive things in office (and that's practically always), that office gives them a bit of 'power' which should be cherished and preserved. You can confront the government — that is, run the risk of losing office

— only when the situation is ripe for a full revolutionary struggle for power.

The practical conclusion is much the same as the most ordinary municipal reformism: do the best you can within the system. The shortcomings of that reformism are acknowledged — but are attributed to "not 'incorrect ideas' in Ken Livingstone's head" but insufficient quantities of 'power'. The answer is not to dispute the "ideas in Ken Livingstone's head" but to get more power, i.e. in practice, more municipal offices for the left.

This rather humdrum policy is given a mystical revolutionary glow by being dubbed a 'struggle for power', to be followed at some future — always future — moment by the full revolutionary battle on the streets.

While *Briefing* rationalised the local government left's climbdown, the Socialist Workers' Party also helped to allow it to happen — by abstaining from the struggle in the existing mass political movement of the working class, the Labour Party.

The pamphlet *Illusions of Power* tells this story in detail. It allows us to understand how the tragedy in Brent today could come about, and how future tragedies could be avoided.

Socialist Organiser
SPECIAL ISSUE
40 PAGES 60p

Illusions of POWER

'Illusions of Power'. 60p, plus 20p postage, from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

THE BRUTAL HIS INTERNMENT

Internment would not be new in Northern Ireland.

The most famous period of internment was in 1971-5. But jailing without charge or trial had been used often, as part of routine repression against the Catholic minority, in the decades before then.

During the Second World War a Catholic MP, Cahar Healy, was interned. There was internment again in the 1950s, when the IRA launched a small campaign of attacks on border installations.

In the sixties, tensions seemed to be easing. Britain was on better terms with Dublin. There were sizeable joint protests by Protestant and Catholic workers against unemployment. Britain pushed the Protestant Unionist Party, which had ruled Northern Ireland almost as a one-party state for 40 years, into talking about reform.

It was the era of the black civil rights movement in the United States and the worldwide protests against US imperialism in Vietnam. The

By Martin Thomas

Northern Ireland Catholics decided that they, too, could have a civil rights movement.

At first some mainly-Protestant groups, like the Northern Ireland Labour Party and the Northern Ireland trade union leadership, backed the civil rights demands. But soon a Protestant backlash developed.

The Catholics demanded 'one man, one vote; one man, one house; one man, one job'. (The modern women's liberation movement had not yet hit Ireland and Britain).

There was gerrymandering which ensured that the City Council in Derry always remained Protestant despite a two-thirds Catholic majority in the city. Business people had a second vote. Most housing and most jobs were controlled by Protestant local authorities and employers, who discriminated against Catholics.

But the Protestant workers had only marginally better

housing and job prospects than the Catholics. To many the civil rights demands came across as: "That man, my house. That man, my job".

In the early stages of the movement, no-one talked much about a united Ireland. The issue was reform within Northern Ireland. But many Protestants still saw, behind the Catholic mobilisation, the spectre of their million-strong community being overwhelmed and oppressed by Ireland's 4½ million Catholics.

The Northern Ireland state was a sectarian Protestant state. It would not reform. Civil rights demonstrators were attacked both by the Protestant police and by freelance Protestant thugs.

By August 1969 Protestants were threatening pogroms against Catholics in Belfast. British troops went on the streets to control the situation.

Initially most Catholics

welcomed the troops. But, as the troops set about trying to stabilise the sectarian Northern Ireland state, they turned against the Catholics. Bitterness grew.

The IRA had been inactive since its Border Campaign in the 1950s. The Republican leaders had turned to campaigning on social issues — with a Moscow-line tinge — and, according to anecdote, lent out the IRA's arsenal to the Free Wales Army.

Walls in Belfast were daubed with the message "IRA — I Ran Away". Traditional Republican militarists and young enthusiasts split away from the Official Republicans to form a new Provisional IRA in December 1969/January 1970.

The Provisionals gained some support in 1970-1, but it was the introduction of internment — jail without charge or trial — in August 1971 that made them into a major force.

After August 1969, at first the British Army played it softly, and it looked as if the troubles might die down, leaving Britain free to remould Ireland from above.

But conflict simmered. By early 1971, Protestant workers at the Harland and Wolf shipyard were demanding internment.

In July 1971 the Official IRA shot three Protestants. The Army imposed a curfew on the Catholic Falls Road district of Belfast. CS gas was used against Catholic demonstrators. The Provisionals recruited more and more young people. Then internment was imposed on 9 August 1971.

Northern Ireland still had its own parliament and government then (they would be abolished in March 1972). The parliament and government were, as ever, dominated by the Unionist Party, but now the Unionist Party was in disarray. Leader after leader had been rejected as too liberal, too inclined to do the will of Westminster.

The prime minister now was Brian Faulkner. In 1974 he would be driven from high political office by a Protestant general strike because he was operating a 'power-sharing' regime with Catholic politicians. In 1971 he had got power as a hard-liner. He introduced internment.

It was not only unjust, but bungled. Hundreds and hundreds of Catholics — and only Catholics — who had nothing to do with the IRA were jailed. They included people like Michael Farrell, a socialist and leader of the student civil rights movement



British Army Snatch Squad
Democracy.

These socialists were far from being IRA sympathisers. They wanted Protestant-Catholic workers' unity; they were as hostile to the 'Green Tories' in the south as to the Orange Tories in the north. Yet they were jailed too.

Between 1971 and 1975, 1,981 people were rounded up and put in prison.

Barricades went up in Catholic areas. There were bloody battles between the British Army and the Republican movement.

On 30 January 1972 British soldiers shot dead 13 people on a peaceful civil rights demonstration in Derry; another died later. The incident became known as Bloody Sunday.

Barricades went up again. In March, Britain abolished Northern Ireland's Parliament and introduced direct rule from London. 200,000 Protestant workers struck in protest.



Bogside Barricades

STORY OF



The Northern Ireland state had broken down. It could not function as a political unit. Britain's Tory government — its links with the Northern Ireland Unionists now broken — looked for alternatives.

In May the Official IRA called a ceasefire, which was to prove permanent. In June there was a temporary Provisional IRA ceasefire. In July there were secret talks between the Provisionals and the British government. At that time the Provisionals were proposing a federal united Ireland, albeit in a rather clumsy and archaic form based on the four historic provinces of the island.

Nothing much came of the talks. On 'Bloody Friday', in July, the Provisionals killed nine civilians with bombs aimed at economic targets in the centre of Belfast. Capitalising on the shock, the British organised 'Operation Motorman', taking down the Catholic barricades in Derry and Belfast.

Britain would make one more

attempt at serious reform. In December 1973 the Sunningdale Agreement was signed by London and Dublin, and in January 1974 a 'power-sharing' executive was set up in Belfast.

It included the Catholic middle-class SDLP and 'moderate' Unionists. 'Moderate', in the shifting world of Northern Ireland politics, now meant Brian Faulkner, the man who brought in internment.

The power-sharing executive was made a lame duck after only a few weeks. A miners' strike in Britain forced the Tory government to the polls. In the February elections for Westminster, anti-power-sharing Unionists swept the board in Northern Ireland. Faulkner and his allies were shown to have no base. In May, when the power-sharing executive tried to activate the provision in the Sunningdale Agreement for a Council of Ireland, it was swept from of-

fice by a Protestant general strike.

There followed ten years in which Britain tried to stabilise Northern Ireland by beating down the Catholics, the Catholics remained unquellable, and bitterness grew on all sides. The Anglo-Irish deal of November 1985 marked an attempt by Britain to find a new direction, but so far it has meant little change.

Repression, repression, and more repression — that has been the answer of successive British governments to Northern Ireland over almost all of the last twenty years. It erodes the civil rights of everyone, and it does not work.

Northern Ireland needs a political programme on which Catholic and Protestant workers can begin to unite — a federal united Ireland, with regional autonomy for the Protestant-majority area, and with some confederal links between Ireland and Britain.



EETPU rank and file at Wapping

Stay in EETPU!

Martin Thomas argues (SO 365) that, whatever may have been SO's attitude in the past, the only way now to beat what has become the "scab EETPU" is an all-out membership war assuming the union is expelled at September's TUC.

Socialists should join that fight to stop it being one-sided, and argue for electricians and plumbers to leave the union for TUC-recognised ones. If the left could not beat Hammond from the inside, then they have little option but to do it from the outside, as part of a membership war that will happen anyway.

Martin calls this "a responsible policy". I think it is defeatist.

The vast majority of electricians and plumbers will remain inside the EETPU. This is accepted by the *Flashlight* group which is planning the breakaway. Their initial recruitment figure from the EETPU is 1.5% of the membership!

Once outside, it will be more difficult to convince the EETPU rank and file. Militants will be relating to them as part of a hostile membership war, and there will be an inevitable reflex loyalty. Much better to stay inside and, as members of the same union, use the consequences of the EETPU leadership's policies as a powerful argument for a renewed fight against them.

Much better also to have an organised left inside the EETPU if its touted merger with the AEU

comes off. What would Gavin Laird prefer — to merge with an EETPU with no militants because they had walked out, or merge with a union with a left that was able to link up with AEU activists to fight the right wing in both unions?

The EETPU is certainly not yet comparable to either the UDM or the RCN. Its component parts are long-standing trade unions. It is not, like the UDM, an organisation of strike-breakers, formed with considerable assistance from the bosses and the Tories; nor, like the RCN, a professional association defined by its refusal to strike or be part of the labour movement.

The fact that Hammond and his ilk are extremely right-wing, hobbnob with the UDM, hold fringe meetings at the CBI conference, and organise open strike-breaking, does not turn the majority of EETPU members into scabs.

SO has always argued that the central question is winning over the EETPU's rank and file. This is the way to defeat Hammond and his brand of 'business unionism'. The TUC — and many on the left — have never been interested in this.

The EETPU's expulsion from the TUC will make that job more difficult — the majority of *Flashlight* have said from the beginning that they will leave — but the difficulties cannot be sufficient reason to throw in the towel and abandon the overwhelming majority of the EETPU's 336,000 members to Hammond.

John Bloxam,
Bow.

No illusions in TUC

I have no illusions about magically "transforming the TUC's timid and bureaucratic objections to Hammond into a principled defence of trade unionism" (Tom Rigby, SO 366). But I do believe that the definitive split between the EETPU and the TUC will inevitably take out into the workplaces disputes which until now have been kept within the TUC corridors.

David Felton reported in the *Independent* of 8 August: "The EETPU has... drawn up plans for a recruitment war. Senior officials say that at least five per cent of the members of any union are dissatisfied and ripe for poaching..."

A group of large trade unions plans a recruitment war aimed at 'strangling' the electricians' union after it has been expelled from the TUC next month... Most officials now regard a bitter recruitment battle as inevitable... The TGWU and GMB have instructed their full-time officials to prepare for the attack on the EETPU."

More recently the EETPU has won the right to represent Docklands Light Railway staff in competition with the rail unions.

No doubt the TUC leaders will bungle this membership war. No doubt their talk of 'strangling' the EETPU is hot air. No doubt only a small part of the

EETPU membership will be won over to TUC unions.

But we can't afford to wash our hands of the whole business. We can't afford to be on the sidelines. Whatever the bunglings and hypocrisy of the TUC leaders, the membership war will be about basic principles of trade unionism.

On the one side, the EETPU will be bold and unrestrained in pushing no-strike deals. It will get a lot of backing from employers and the press. On the other side, the TUC leaders will be pushed into some activity, even if only to defend their dues income.

This battle matters. We would not have chosen to fight it this way, but it will be fought whether we like it or not. Socialists must throw our full weight on the side of defending the TUC and pulling as many members as possible out of the EETPU.

"Staying and fighting" in the EETPU will mean being on the sidelines. This will be an EETPU with leaders emboldened by their split from the TUC, with more new members handed to them by eager employers, and without most of its militants (for they will leave whatever we say). A struggle by a few socialists inside such an EETPU will have no grip at all on the battle for or against no-strike business-unionism which is about to unfold.

Martin Thomas,
Islington.

Documents from the 1940s

The Trotskyists and the formation of Israel

Introduction by the magazine *Quatrieme Internationale* (1948).

The theses of our Palestinian comrades, which we publish here, were drafted before the formal proclamation of the State of Israel and the invasion of Palestine by the armies of the Arab states.

The theses explain the basic developments, so it will be sufficient here to outline briefly the position of the Fourth International on the recent events.

What we said at the time of the UN decision to partition Palestine [document published in SO 365-6] remains completely justified in relation to the new miniature 'State' of Israel. Far from resolving the Jewish question, it will give it an even more tragic sharpness, not only by sharpening anti-semitic tendencies in Britain and in the countries of the Near East, but also and above all by crystallising the anti-imperialist sentiments of the Arab masses in all the neighbouring countries.

Even apart from the question of the attitude of the great powers, this State has no historic future. Subject to permanent crises and convulsions — permanent civil war having been avoided only by the complete purging of all the Arab villages on its territory — it will collapse in terrible butchery at a forthcoming stage of the Arab revolution, unless the Jewish proletariat separates itself in time from Zionist chauvinism.

The task of Jewish revolutionaries in Israel is to prepare that break. Their political line should remain unshakably that of struggle against the partition of Palestine, for the reintegration of the territory of Israel into a united Palestine, in the framework of a Federation of Arab States of the Middle East which will guarantee the Jewish minority all the rights of national cultural autonomy.

The Arab feudal potentates, Farouk [king of Egypt] and Abdullah [king of Jordan], far from struggling against the partition of Palestine, seek above all to partition this unfortunate country between their own kingdoms. Their invasion aims above all to divert the attention of their own subjects from the mounting social tension in their countries.

At the same time, they have tried to exploit the anti-imperialist sen-

We continue our series of reprints on 'The Trotskyists and the Formation of Israel' with a document issued by the Palestinian Trotskyists in 1948.

When the left today writes or speaks about the 1948 Israeli-Arab war, it is a story of anti-Arab atrocities by the Jews, and no more. The clear implication is that the Arab side of the war deserved support, whatever the faults of its leadership.

Marxists in 1948 saw it quite differently. Of course they condemned anti-Arab atrocities. But some Trotskyists internationally (as we'll see from later reprints in this series) backed the Jews; the Trotskyists in Palestine itself condemned both sides as chauvinist. They could all see that the Arab forces were led by corrupt feudalists, manipulated by British imperialism, and engaged in a "racial war".

We also print here an introduction to the Palestinian Trotskyists' document by the official magazine of the world Trotskyist movement, which published it in 1948. The introduction softens the line considerably. Here the mass Arab chauvinism indicted by the Palestinian Trotskyists has mystically become a force for "the Arab revolution", which drives forward despite the crushing of socialist and working-class organisation among the Arabs. It is a first example of a way of thought which would grip the whole Trotskyist movement, in which any nationalist mobilisation or disturbance, whatever its form, is automatically a 'new rise of the world revolution'.

By 1948 it had become plain that the Trotskyists' position of 1946-7 (document reprinted in SO 365-6) was flawed. The Trotskyists had maintained that the formation of a Jewish state was impossible; it now existed. The Trotskyists had insisted that the main issue in Palestine was the determination of British imperialism to keep it as a military base; the proposal to partition Palestine was denounced as a manoeuvre to stabilise the presence of British troops, and the document ended with calls for joint Jewish-Arab struggle against Britain which had no grip on the situation. Now the British troops were leaving.

The focus on 'British troops out' had served to cover up lack of answers on the question of how both Jewish and Arab rights could be protected. (It foreshadows the arguments within the British left today about Ireland; only in 1947 there was more excuse. The British Empire was still a big power; a whole era of great anti-colonial struggles was in course). Now the Palestinian Trotskyists offered no general political slogans, confining themselves to the task of keeping links among the tiny minority of Jewish and Arab internationalists. Their comrades in Paris said "a united and independent Arab Palestine, with full national minority rights for the Jewish community"; but how, in the actual situation, could the Jews have had any national minority rights without the right to their own state?

Even the mistakes and flaws of these documents, however, have much to teach us.

timents of the masses to cover their own miserable capitulation to world capital (the Sudan affair, Iraq's and Jordan's treaties with the City, etc.) A few weeks of war have been enough to show the lamentable organisation of their military forces.

It is not under their leadership that the Arab masses will be able to reunify Palestine. Still less will the struggle against imperialism develop under their aegis, when even in the case of Palestine the Arab sovereigns are ready at the end of the day to have the compromise currently being worked out by the great powers imposed on them.

The opposition that the Arab masses everywhere manifest to the State of Israel and to the intervention of imperialism in this part of the world is quite another matter. This opposition is an incontestably progressive force which tomorrow will reinforce the general current of the Arab revolution in the Middle East.

Today, the masses remain in a waiting mood, as long as their own masters seem to be taking up the battle. When the treason of the latter is exposed to the world, the independent intervention of the Arab masses will be on the agenda.

It will permit at that point a convergence of the struggle against the

feudal lords and the terrible social misery, and the struggle against imperialism and Zionism. To prepare, as from today, this convergence, is the task of the revolutionaries in the Middle East who, while struggling against any chauvinist or anti-semitic current, will concentrate their propaganda on the following slogans:

• Down with the partition of Palestine! For a united and independent Arab Palestine, with full national minority rights for the Jewish community.

• Down with imperialist intervention in Palestine! Out with all the foreign troops and the UN 'mediators' and 'observers'! For the right of the Arab masses to determine their own future. For the election of a Constituent Assembly through universal secret suffrage! For the agrarian revolution!

• Down with the Arab League, instrument of imperialism! Down with the corrupt kings and the feudal exploiters! Long live the Arab socialist revolution in the Middle East!

Against Arab chauvinism! Against Zionism!

1 The weakness of British imperialism after the Second World War, the consolidation of the native bourgeoisie in certain important colonies and the development of the working class, with the intensification of its social and anti-imperialist struggle, have forced Britain to withdraw its troops from certain colonies and to propose a readjustment of the defence of the Empire.

On the other hand, the native bourgeoisie has become a more trustworthy agent of indirect imperialist domination because of its growing fear in face of the organised working class, which has come out of this war stronger than ever. Particularly in the colonies and semi-colonies and in the colonial regions where American imperialism has penetrated as the foremost economic power, British imperialism is trying to pass over a part of the tasks of defence of the Empire and of the preparation of the next world war to American imperialism. On the other hand, Britain tries to keep as much economic influence and authority over the native bourgeoisie as it can.

That is what is going on at present in the Middle East. On the one hand, British imperialism is withdrawing some of its troops from Palestine and Iraq and leaving the UN, that is, American imperialism, the job of deciding the fate of Palestine; and, on the other hand, it is inciting 'holy war' in Palestine to gain political influence in the Arab world and it is trying to ally itself with the Arab states, as in the projected treaty with Iraq which would give British imperialism as much power as possible in conditions of indirect domination.

The antagonism between American and British imperialisms in this region manifests itself particularly on the question of how each of them can get most direct influence over the local economies and politics while sending the fewest troops.

The decision to divide Palestine, supported by the United States apparently in opposition to Britain, has created the following situation

in the Arab East. Britain has gained the possibility of withdrawing some of its troops while enhancing its prestige in the Arab world. America, whose oil interests have not suffered by a certain loss of prestige, thanks to the economic links which tie the native bourgeoisie to American imperialism, has gained a direct agent there: the Zionist bourgeoisie which, through this, has become completely dependent on American capital and American policy.

Besides, American imperialism now has a justification to intervene militarily in the Middle East whenever that suits it.

The two imperialisms have created a situation of mounting imperialist chauvinism in which has become possible to crush the Arab working class and all the left movements in the whole Arab East — and the Russian support for the imperialist plan for dividing Palestine must equally be blamed for this.

2 The Arab feudalists and the Middle East bourgeoisie see the Zionist bourgeoisie not only as a competitor on the consumer goods market (as regards Egypt), but also on the market for imperialist agents in the Middle East.

By its racial war against the Jews of Palestine, the Arab League wants to limit the zone of activity of the Jewish industries and to prove to imperialism that it is a factor that can serve it even better than Zionism. At the same time, it favours imperialism in its large-scale plans in the Middle East, and it is only too interested in following its orders with a view to using this chauvinist war to boost anti-Russian sentiments and brutally to crush the Arab working class and all the left groups.

It sees the Zionist bogeyman and the Palestine problem in general as a good opportunity to divert the attention of the oppressed masses of the Arab countries from their social problems and from native and imperialist exploitation, to heighten racial hatred against minorities, and to recruit the jobless for the 'jihad' in Palestine.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Democracy, not revenge!

The way to Arab-Jewish workers' unity

Why 'holy war'?

INSIDE

More on Israel/Palestine

'Democracy, Not Revenge': available for 20p plus 13p post from SO, PO Box 823 London SE15 4NA.



In these circumstances, the traditional antagonism between the two cliques of the Arab League — the British Hashemite family on the one hand, and the American bloc of the Arabian oil king, of Egypt, and of the present regime in Syria on the other — manifests itself in their competition to have the most extreme and active intervention in Palestine, so as to be on the spot, to create established facts there, and to gather loot when it becomes necessary to comply with the final decisions of imperialism.

3 The Arab feudalists of Palestine, knowing that in such a racial war they are the natural leaders, want in this way to regain their authority over the Arab population of Palestine, an authority which had been weakened by the development during the war of the young bourgeoisie of the coastal cities and by the growth and the organisation of the Arab working class in Palestine.

The direct support which British imperialism has given to these feudal leaders, against all other Arab elements ('repatriation' of the Husseins, recognition of the Arab High Committee imposed by itself, etc.) — all this because English imperialism had an interest in seeing the most reactionary and chauvinist Arab leadership — has allowed these feudalists to put their own stamp on the present events from the start.

While the revolt of 1936 began by a general strike, and was concentrated at the start in the cities, this time the main feature of the activity has been, from the start, military action by bands of rural guerillas. While in 1936-9 many of the 'battles' were waged against British troops (even if the main drive was against the Jews), this time it is mainly the Jews who are attacked, while the functionaries of British imperialism and its officers and soldiers are treated in a friendly way or at most accused of not holding to the promised 'neutrality'.

In this way the Arab leaders have managed to create an atmosphere of extreme chauvinism, in which a provocation can lead to a massive massacre of Jewish workers, as in the refineries of Haifa, by the backward sections of their Arab fellow-workers (some of the most advanced Arab workers did not participate in this action, and others rescued Jews), and where there are no more joint strike struggles by Jewish and Arab workers for the same demands, but, on the contrary, the struggles are waged separately, for the introduction of security measures against possible attacks.

The separation between Arab and Jewish workers, and the separation between the Arab working class of the most advanced cities and their hinterland — the rural poor — (one of the principal aims of the division) are brought about by the supposed struggle of the Arab feudal leaders against division. The Arab bourgeoisie, to the extent that it exists in Palestine as an independent class (the owners of lemon planta-

tions and urban elements of the coastal cities — the followers of Muss el-Alami) want order and security in the interests of business, but its 'national guard', in the midst of mass chauvinist attacks, is less and less important in comparison with the feudal-led guerillas.

4 Zionism, which seems to be at the height of its diplomatic successes, has managed to help imperialism in which the Jewish masses have to learn what it means to be the scapegoat of imperialism.

The present civil war, which raises the chauvinism in the Jewish masses to the extreme, is itself in part the result of the Zionist chauvinism which accompanied the establishment of a closed Jewish economy.

Imperialism has managed to divert from itself the discontent of the Arab masses in the Middle East and to direct it against the Jewish masses in Palestine, and the inevitable consequence of this war will be the total dependence of Zionism on American imperialism.

5 In these circumstances the decline of the influence of the Arab workers' organisations is obvious.

After having managed to become an important factor in Arab political life, they are today almost paralysed. We must moreover expect that they will not be able to regain their position in the near

future, for the following reasons.

a) The wave of crushing of left-wing and working-class organisations in the Arab East developed before they were strong enough to defend themselves and hold their position. If that is true in the centres of the Arab working class, particularly in Egypt, then undoubtedly it will influence the more backward working class of Palestine.

b) In the near future, we have to expect a numerical decline of the Arab working class in Palestine, firstly as a result of the decline of work for the British Army and secondly as a result of the stoppages of work caused by the conflict. Unemployment among the Arab workers will not only threaten the limited conquests of recent years, but will create fertile ground for chauvinism and favour recruitment to feudal-led gangs.

c) The Arab Stalinists have lost part of their political and organisational influence because the masses see them as the representatives of Russia, which has betrayed the Arab masses by favouring partition and the Jewish state.

d) The growing chauvinism of the Jewish workers, and the open support given to partition by the 'left' Zionist leaders, including the Jewish Stalinists, are mirrored among the Arab workers, and constitute another factor pushing them into the arms of feudal reaction.

On the other hand, the social composition of the Arab working class is much more progressive today than it was at the beginning of the 1936-9 revolt. While in that period agricultural workers, shop

workers, and so on constituted more than half the Arab working class, today almost three quarters of the Arab workers are employed on government works, in the oil companies, and in other industrial establishments. After the period of reaction and retreat, the starting point will be at a higher level than in 1939.

6 In the past the political activity of the revolutionary party among the Jewish workers was difficult because of their privileged position in the closed Jewish economy.

It will be all the more so today, now that this position is supported not only by American imperialism but also by Russia. The turn by the Jewish Stalinists, who have become the most enthusiastic advocates of the partition of Palestine and the creation of the Jewish state, further limit the points of contact which could have been used by the revolutionary party as a starting point for its activity among the Jewish workers.

On the other hand, the increased influence of the Arab feudal reaction is mirrored by an increased chauvinism on the Jewish side. There is a certain perspective for our work in the possibility of individually winning over Stalinists who have remained firmly opposed to partition and who may therefore recognise the treachery of Stalinist Russia.

7 The foregoing analysis shows that in the near future (the next few months) we cannot expect large-scale actions by the Arab workers, still less common actions by Arab and Jewish workers.

Until the weariness caused by the deterioration of the economic situation and the bloodshed makes itself felt — that will be the starting point of a new revolutionary rise — it is very probably that there will be a strengthening of chauvinism and massacres on a grand scale.

In the near future, our work will be limited essentially to maintaining links between the Arab and Jewish comrades, and to strengthening the cadres, particularly on the Arab side, as the basis for revolutionary activity in the future.

We must explain patiently to the most advanced sections of the Arab proletariat and the intelligentsia that racial military actions only deepen the gulf between Jews and Arabs and thus lead in practice to political division; that the fundamental factor and the main cause of division is imperialism; that the present battles are only strengthening imperialism; that, thanks to the bourgeois and feudal leadership of the Arab countries — which is the agent of imperialism — we have been beaten at one stage of the anti-imperialist struggle; and that we must prepare for victory at the next stage — that is, for the unification of Palestine and the Arab East in general — by creating the only force which can achieve these goals, the revolutionary proletarian party of the Arab East.

Our success will depend in large part on the consolidation in good time of the revolutionary communist forces in Egypt.

Haifa, January 1948.

**Arabs, Jews
and
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Breathless and feckless

Belinda Weaver reviews Jean-Luc Godard's film 'Breathless' — an avant-garde sensation when it came out in 1959, and recently re-released.

'Breathless' has as much emotional weight as a soap bubble.

Its anti-hero, Michel, models himself on Bogart and seems to believe he's living inside a movie, where guns go bang but don't ever hurt anybody.

The girl he loves, Patricia, is an ambitious journalist, but she's weightless too, like Michel. They both seem to move in a dream world.

Godard's film was an attempt to show how modern life and culture are destroying us and making us lose our souls. The petty crook Michel steals cars for fun and uses his gun as if it were a toy, while Patricia goes along for the ride. These two don't seem to know or care about right and wrong; they seem to have no moral sense at all.

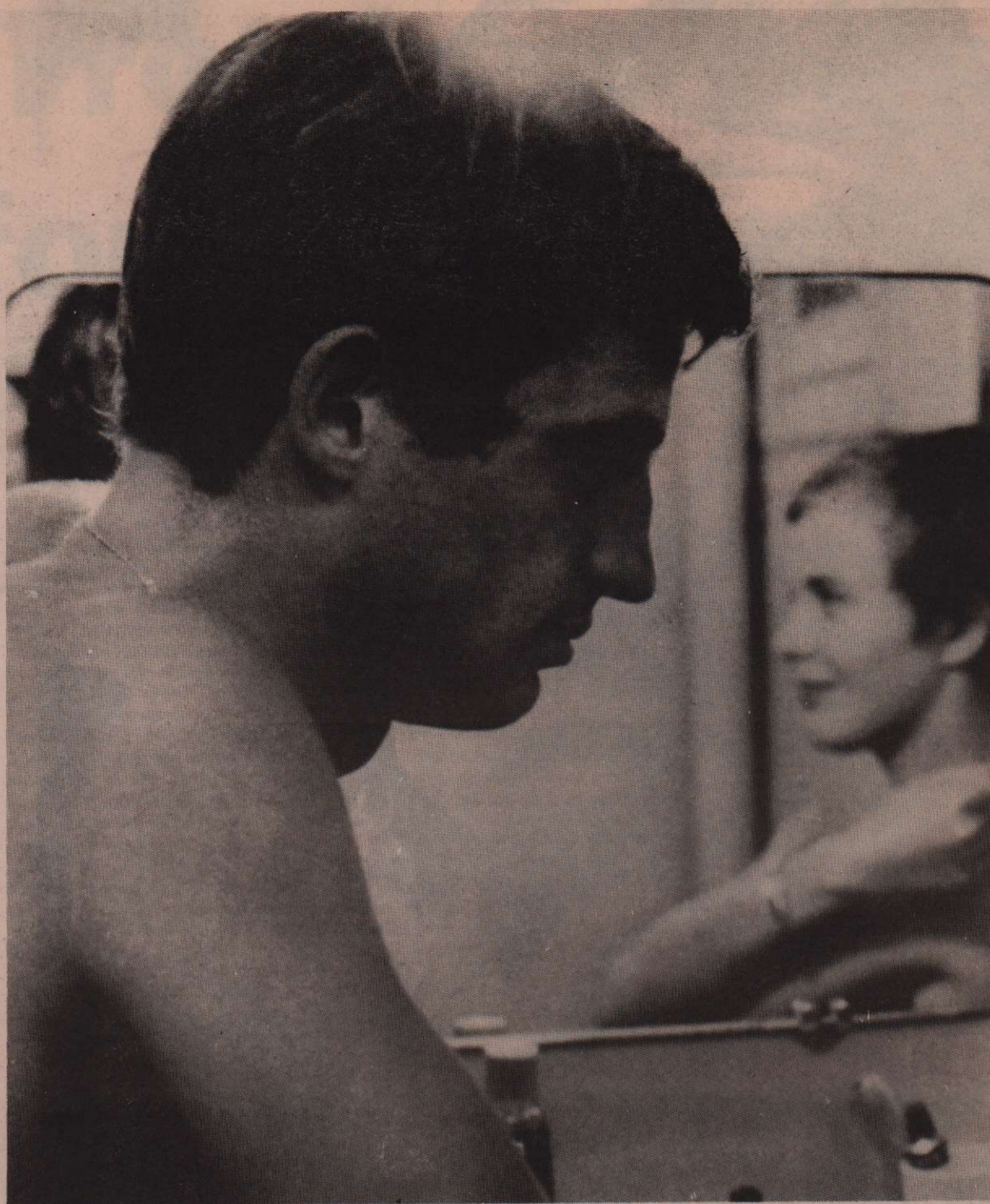
Yet Godard himself is only playing at condemning them. The two characters are simply too appealing to be reprehensible. Belmondo's Michel, with his apeing of Bogart, is foolish but charming, while Seberg's Patricia is stylish and mysterious. She's a bit of a blank, but you can see that's why Michel finds her irresistible.

Godard sends up his own ideas by the form the movie takes. It veers from being an arty, New Waveish essay to being a full-on B grade gangster film. Yet Godard just plays with the B grade formula. He doesn't hold us in suspense. The plot is spelled out (literally) for us, and the conventions are sent up. It's B grade drama as comedy.

The idea for the film came from a newspaper article, and the film has some of the simplicity of a tabloid article. Michel, the killer and thief who thinks he's a movie tough guy, is the kind of creation the tabloids helped bring into being — crims who want the notoriety of being on the front page.

Michel is a simple soul. In the movies he admires, the corpses walk off the set when the director calls "Cut!" But Michel isn't in the movies and he has finally to come to terms with his actions and the consequences they bring.

Godard is kinder to his hero than to his heroine. Patricia doesn't have Michel's charming fecklessness. She



Jean Paul Belmondo looking young

gets impatient with him, and finally finds him a bit of a nuisance.

As a journalist and supposed contributor to the mass culture that's affecting us all, Patricia is shown as being in some way responsible for the way Michel has turned out. There's something a little cruel in the way Godard shows her emotionlessness. Godard mourns for Michel but he hasn't much sympathy for Patricia, the cool,

modern girl.

What's amusing about the film is the way Michel uses the movies to romanticise about his own sordid, hand-to-mouth existence, the way he interprets his life as a grand romantic adventure. Though he's a hood on the scrounge, he has an innocence that makes us like him all the same.

The film seems to have caught on. In a new print with up-to-the-

minute subtitles, it's packing them in in London.

It probably makes a change having a genuine 1959 film for a change instead of all the eighties imitations that have been around the past few years. Whether it's value for money, though, is hard to say.

It's big on style, but there's nothing to it. You can watch it, and then walk out and forget it all in two minutes flat.

Les Hearn's
SCIENCE COLUMN

Dam nuisance

Planning for the future needs of society is the essence of socialism, but a planned society is not necessarily a socialist one.

Democratic control and discussion of planning is necessary, too. To see what can happen in the absence of this, we can look at the recent attempts of the Hungarian, Czechoslovak and Austrian governments to plan their future energy resources.

Their plan involves a highly ambitious scheme for diversions and dams affecting some 200 km of the River Danube.

A massive reservoir is being established at Hrusov, near Bratislava, capital of Slovakia. The Danube is to be diverted from its old bed to a newly excavated concrete canal for some 25km. There are to be dams and hydro-electric generating systems between the reservoir and the canal, along the canal, and 100 km downstream at Nagymars in Hungary.

The Austrian and Czechoslovak sections of the scheme are well advanced but cannot be used until the Hungarian dam and 150 megawatt power station are ready. This is because the hydro-electric turbines along the canal work best when water is allowed down it in massive surges, and there needs to be a barrage at Nagymars to break the flow.

The Hungarian government has done very little on their part of the scheme, pleading poverty. An additional factor, though, has been a growing movement of environmental protest at the project.

In particular, Duna Kor (the Danube Circle) has come up with substantial scientific objections, disconcerting official circles because of the strength of their arguments and of their considerable popularity in the country. Pressure on Hungary from its partners, and financial offers, have led it to go ahead from 1 October. Together has come a clampdown on Duna Kor and other groups.

Scientific objections continue to mount. A major objection is that the reservoir and canal will destroy the flood plain and river branch system in Southern Slovakia and north-west Hungary, the backbone of the Danube eco-system.

The flood plain, with its system of natural canals, is a giant fish hatchery and nursery, supplying lower reaches of the Danube with fish and nourishment for fish. Slovak scientists predict that the annual Danube fish catch will drop by three quarters.

More serious for the human population will be the effect on drinking water. Beneath Bratislava and the Hrusov reservoir lies Europe's largest natural reservoir of drinkable water — ten billion litres. At the bottom of the artificial reservoir will collect some 3 to 4 million cubic metres of sediment each year. This will contain bacteria and pollutants which will eventually percolate into the natural reservoir and pollute it.

Also, nearly half of Hungary's drinking water filters through the Danube's banks into the surrounding soil, its purity depending on the high oxygen content and low organic material content. These in turn depend on the plant and animal life of the river. If these are harmed as predicted, the water will no longer be so fit for drinking.

A further drawback, I would think, would be extra erosion of the river banks by the surges of water, leading to rapid silting up of the Nagymars dam.

Karolyi Grosz's new government will find it difficult to choose between the financial cost of cancelling the project and compensating its partners and the political cost of suppressing scientific and environmental opposition with wide support in the country.

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own

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We stand:

For full equality for women, and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. For a mass working class based women's movement.

Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and

gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

We want Labour Party and trade union members who support our basic ideas to become supporters of the paper — to take a bundle of papers to sell each week and pay a small contribution to help meet the paper's deficit. Our policy is democratically controlled by our supporters through Annual General Meetings and an elected National Editorial Board.

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Pickets at the Maudsley Hospital earlier this year. Photo: Ian Swindale

Strike ballot in London

By Ray Ferris

COHSE nurses at the Maudsley Hospital in South London balloted this week for all-out indefinite strike action. SO talked to Jim Sharky, one of the stewards at the hospital.

"The strike is basically about clinical grading. Nurses are not getting the right grades and so they are losing out — in some cases to the tune of £2,000. It's still about the basic question of NHS funding. The only reason the strikes stopped last time is because the government offered nurses more money.

We feel we've had enough of one-day or 24-hour strikes, so we're balloting Yes/No on all-out indefinite action with emergency cover. If it was for a national strike I think more people would vote for it so we're taking a chance. But we have to show people just how serious the situation in the NHS is. If nurses don't get their grading they'll leave the NHS in droves.

A lot of other hospitals want to know what's going on here and other COHSE branches seem to be having similar meetings. We had an overtime ban of nurses earlier this year which forced concessions on staffing levels. The charge nurse now has much more leeway to decide how many staff are needed on a ward. We're lucky because most people are in COHSE with very few RCN.

Last time we really thought the TUC should have got more involved. I don't think the Labour Party have done enough either. We've got public support but we need more. The Labour Party would gain in popularity itself as well as helping us to win".

Retreat on Scottish privatisation

By Stan Crooke

While Health Boards in Scotland continue to press ahead with the privatisation of hospital ancillary services, resistance to this by the Scottish TUC privatisation sub-committee (involving representation from the 6 trade unions in the NHS) has now collapsed.

In early August Grampian Health Boards announced that a series of cleaning contracts had been awarded to private firms, at the cost of some 500 redundancies amongst NHS ancillary workers. Union leaders in Grampian declared that no industrial action would be taken in opposition to this decision.

Less than a week later the Greater Glasgow Health Board announced that the bulk of £8 million pounds worth of cleaning and catering contracts had been awarded to private firms, and that the remaining cleaning and catering contracts would be

put out to tender by the end of this financial year.

Its decision cost at least 135 jobs and in-house staff with contracts in only two hospitals. Most of the contracts had been awarded to 'Initial' and 'Hospital Hygiene Services', subsidiaries of companies which already have an atrocious track record of attempting to provide privatised ancillary services in England and Wales.

Union leaders encouraged the submitting of in-house tenders as the way to 'fight' privatisation. One unsuccessful in-house tender had involved staff taking a wage cut of 30%!

The day after the announcement of Greater Glasgow Health Board's decision domestic workers at Stobhill hospital in Glasgow voted to continue the fight against privatisation, but not to pursue industrial action after trade union leaders had warned against it.

Next in line to make an announcement about privatisation of ancillary services is Lothian Health

Board. Although due this month, the announcement of the Health Board's decision has now been postponed until September.

In response to the decision by Grampian Health Board the STUC privatisation sub-committee had called off the freeze on industrial action against privatisation which had been imposed in March. However, it clearly had no intention

of actually resuming a campaign of industrial action.

Meeting again on 16th August, the STUC privatisation sub-committee rejected any further industrial action and instead adopted a policy of attempting to influence private contractors who had made a successful bid for ancillary services on issues of pay, working conditions, and union negotiating rights.

Unions fail to lead

North Manchester's two COHSE branches will strike for 2 hours on this Thursday lunch-time. NUPE in North Manchester refused to take part in the strike meeting. Elsewhere in Manchester the situation is patchy and confused.

The local managers are handling talks over nurses' gradings differently in each Health Authority (often because they do not know how much money there will be for implementation).

Meanwhile, the NUPE and COHSE officials nationally and locally are fail-

ing to organise nurses' anger and to link up with ancillary workers over their pay claim.

COHSE talk vaguely of a campaign, while NUPE say the government has now made concessions — both focus on negotiations rather than action. There is even confusion over whether or not to cooperate with the management questionnaires on the new grades.

Protest at Withington Hospital's Alcohol Treatment Unit last week postponed its closure. The Health Authority put off the closure when patients and staff refused to move out of the unit.

Coca-Cola: back the TGWU!

By Jim Denham

The row over the AEU's single union deal with Coca-Cola at Wakefield is the latest in a series of disputes to have rocked the TUC over the last couple of years.

In many ways, the Coca-Cola affair typifies the ongoing battle between 'traditional' trade unionism (in this case represented by the

TGWU) and the unashamed 'business unionism' of the EETPU and AEU.

As happened around the proposed Ford Dundee plant, the existing majority union, the TGWU, has been muscled out of plans for the new plant as a result of a sweetheart deal between the company and a more pliant and right-wing union — in this case the AEU. As at Dundee, management's intention is quite clearly to use the agreement reached

at the new plant as a Trojan Horse to undermine jobs and conditions at its other plants.

The TGWU's call for a national overtime ban of its 900 members in Coca-Cola/Schweppes, in response to attacks that have already begun on existing conditions, has been overwhelmingly supported.

TGWU officials deny that the overtime ban is in any way related to the Wakefield dispute, but no-one (least of all the TGWU membership) believes them.

The AEU leadership argue that the TGWU took part in Coca-Cola's 'beauty contest' for recognition at Wakefield and would have been quite willing to accept exactly the same terms as the AEU eventually settled for. The EETPU made similar criticisms of the TGWU at Dundee and it may well be true.

Certainly, the TGWU leadership has based the union's case against the AEU around the niceties of the Bridlington Agreement rather than any principled opposition to no-strike deals (concern for the Bridlington Agreement also explains the TGWU's insistence that the national overtime ban has nothing to do with Wakefield).

But whatever the shortcomings of the TGWU's position they must, of course, be supported against both Coca-Cola and the AEU. The TGWU's 'traditional' trade union approach is no answer to the business unionism of Hammond and Jordan, but at least it represents an attempt to defend basic working class interests.

AEU members, meanwhile, must demand that their leaders withdraw from the Coca-Cola deal, and that no attempt is made by the Jordan/Laird leadership to use the issue to strengthen links with the EETPU outside the TUC



Lech Walesa



A genuine trade-union fight

The Polish miners' strike has been much in the news this week. Some miners have been occupying their pit.

The strike is for higher wages and recognition of Solidarnosc. I think you have to see it in context: first, the British miners' strike, now,

miners on strike in France and Poland.

I still have my doubts and suspicions about Solidarnosc, particularly about the Church having its dirty little paws in there. In the past I have been told that miners in Poland are very conservative, so it must have taken a lot to stir them to take this action.

Until I hear anything different I would urge support for the Polish miners. It seems a genuine trade union fight.

I wait with interest to hear Maggie Thatcher's attitude to the strike. I can't imagine it would be the same as her attitude to Notts miners if they occupied the pits to demand recognition.

Sammy Thompson's death was a great blow. He had been deeply involved in the union all his working life, and was only recently elected vice-president as the left's candidate against Kinnockite 'new realism'. I went to the funeral and was pleased that all the coalfields were represented.

Obviously the NEC will have to meet and come up with a timetable for new elections. It will be very interesting to see what candidates are put forward, but I imagine it will be a similar contest to the one last time — the left versus the soft left.

In Northern Ireland internment will not solve the problem. It will add fuel to the fire. What's needed there is a political solution which the people of Northern Ireland are involved in. Any attempt at suppression will exacerbate the situation, not help it.

A final reminder this week: don't forget to come to the Notts NUM miners' gala in Mansfield on 10 September. We want the biggest turnout yet!

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire, and former secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

Gay rights

A trade union issue

By Janine Booth

A GCHQ worker has lost his job because he is gay.

Andy Hodges has 'had his positive vetting withdrawn', and is currently suspended on basic pay, while a 'more suitable position' is found for him in the Civil Service, away from the Government Communications Headquarters.

When Andy realised he was gay, he told friends, family, workmates and bosses. He was then summoned to a vetting review, and asked lots of very personal questions, which he answered frankly and honestly. His clearance was removed on the grounds that he was vulnerable to blackmail — a little odd, given that he had never hidden his sexuality from anyone.

Andy has been open and honest about his sexuality, and his honesty has been rewarded with suspension. But when has honesty ever been justly rewarded by Britain's secret service?

A court ruled two weeks ago that it wasn't even allowed to comment

on the rightness and wrongness of the GCHQ management decision, since it was 'an issue of National Security', and on such matters the Government may do as it pleases. The Court was presided over by Justice Glidewell, who was wearing a wig and a long black frock with matching stockings.

In 1984 trade unions were effectively banned at GCHQ. While a few workers are still members of the civil service union CPSA, Andy is not one of them, since he was on his probationary period when the ruling was made.

Gloucester Law Centre's Ann Whitford, the solicitor representing Andy, explains that, "obviously, from the point of view of collective action, he would be in a much stronger position if he were unionised". Andy himself could not speak to me — he would have been sacked outright if he had.

The slogan has been raised at many Conferences and in many campaigns that lesbian and gay rights is a trade union issue. What Andy Hodges' story serves to demonstrate is that trade union rights are a lesbian and gay issue.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Constituency Labour Parties conference

17 September, 11am to 5pm, at the Manchester Mechanics' Institute
Guest speaker: Eric Heffer

The initiative for this conference comes from a fringe meeting at the Chesterfield Socialist Conference called by Wallasey CLP. An organising meeting open to all CLPs will be held on Saturday 20 August, noon, at the TGWU offices, Birkenhead. Contact: Richard Aplin, Wallasey CLP, 8 Agnes Grove, Liscard, Merseyside L44 3LP, or Lol Duffy, 051-638 1338.

Support the constituency parties' conference!

FIGHT THE TORIES

REBUILD

THE

LEFT!

By Lol Duffy

Last Saturday, August 20, a meeting was held in Birkenhead, Merseyside, as part of the build-up to the CLPs Conference to be held in the Mechanics Institute, Manchester, on September 17.

The meeting was held to give CLPs a chance to decide how the conference should be organised. Representatives from constituencies in Islington, Wakefield, Stockport, Stretford, Stoke and Wallasey attended, as well as representatives from the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) and the Campaign Group of MPs.

An agenda for the conference was agreed, which covers: the reasons for calling it, issues coming up at the Labour Party Conference, unilateralism, public ownership, the witch hunt, campaigning and democracy.

The final session will draw together ideas and proposals which have come up during the day, and the maximum time will

be made available for discussion.

The speakers are Eric Heffer, Les Huckfield (Campaign Group), and representatives from CLPD and Labour CND. Victims of the witch hunt will also be speaking throughout the day.

Everyone who attended the organising meeting agreed that links between constituencies have to be maintained and strengthened. Next month's conference will only be the start of that work.

We also discussed other ideas, such as a follow-up conference in 1989 and a newsletter for CLPs, and also some statement of positive rights for Labour Party members.

An ad hoc steering committee was set up, to carry on the organisational work. 20 CLPs have sent in delegation fees and we expect many more in the next few weeks. We know of many CLPs who have agreed to attend but have not yet sent in their money.

A further leaflet will be produced advertising the conference and will be circulated as widely as possible. Visitors from constituencies will be welcome.



20 years after the Prague Spring

Twenty years ago Russian troops, backed by Polish, East German, Hungarian and other Warsaw Pact soldiers, invaded Czechoslovakia to stop the Czech Gorbachev, Alexander Dubcek, carrying through a Czechoslovakian glasnost and perestroika.

They did it very effectively. Today Czechoslovakia is still in the icy grip of those placed in power then by the Warsaw Pact armies.

Czechoslovakia was one of the two most advanced economies in the Stalinist bloc, the other being East Germany. Before Hitler's war there was a mass Communist Party there. But by the '60s, in the second decade of centralised control under a totalitarian state, the Czechoslovakian economy was stagnant and in trouble.

It was like the USSR now. Sec-

tions of the ruling elite opted for a big economic shake-up, using controlled market mechanisms. Ideas and proposals like that were common then in both the USSR and other countries, including Hungary. The reformers faced immense resistance from other sections of the bureaucracy. The conservatives appealed to the workers against the new ideas, which would have created unemployment and increased pressure on the workers.

So the reformers opted for liberalisation — an unprecedentedly open criticism of the officeholders, and freedom of speech unknown in the Eastern bloc. Just like Gorbachev.

Dubcek preached 'socialism with a human face'. At first the workers were suspicious. But there was a flowering of socialist ideas. Some of the roots of Czechoslovakian socialism were still alive from pre-war.

This, together with the liberalisation, worried and frightened the Russians and others, like the East Germans and Hungarians, who were themselves carrying through economic shake-ups similar to Dubcek's.

On 20 August they invaded Czechoslovakia. Full-scale armed resistance was considered hopeless, but there were strikes and mass resistance for months.

The Czechoslovakian CP leaders were kidnapped and forced into collaboration with the invaders. A few months later they were kicked out, and the present regime installed.

Tens of thousands of Czechoslovakian CP members were purged from the party and, if they were intellectuals or professionals, purged from their jobs or professions too. An ice-cap that still freezes there descended on Czechoslovakia.