



Christianity and anti-semitism

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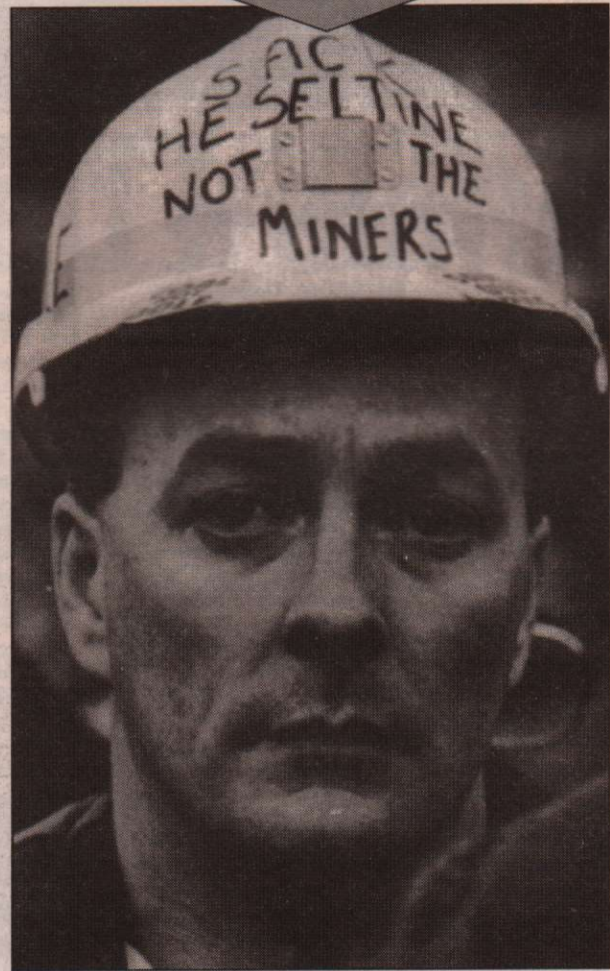
SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Unite the left!

Pits showdown looms

DON'T FORGET THE MINERS



LABOUR, TUC PREPARE TO FIGHT IN '93!

A rank and file miner makes an appeal to the labour movement:

Don't forget the miners!

By Paul Whetton

Ten pits are due to shut by the end of January. The other 21 pits in the Review aren't safe either. So the crunch comes next month. It's important to spell out what needs to be done. First of all to the miners I would say: the support is there. We have to go out and mobilise that support and turn it into action in order to save our pits

and our mining communities. To other workers I would say it's time to put up or shut up. It's no use every five years or so saying "there go the miners again. I support them." This time we want the solidarity action that people have been promising us for so long. We are looking to every other worker in this country to stand shoulder to shoulder with the mineworkers. It's not just a fight about

mineworkers, it's a fight for jobs. The Tories are trying to grind down working class people. If we don't win this one then we are indeed in for a very dark time. But I'm sure that with the positive lead we've been given by the leadership of the NUM and by the rank and file mineworkers themselves we can make 1993 a year we give the Tories the kind of lesson they

won't ever forget. 1992 has been an amazing year in many respects. We have seen the Tories struggle and blunder from mistake, to tragedy to farce. We've seen a government in crisis. But we've also seen the inability of the Labour Party and the TUC to trip them up. The Tories keep on falling over their own banana skins but the Labour Party and the TUC can't even trip them up.

Working class people are looking to those organisations to go for the throat of the Tories but they seem to be unable to do that. The Labour Party and TUC have spent that much time over the last few years purging themselves that they've got no strength left. They are emaciated. It's because they have been taking the laxative of new realism for so long it's as if they've got no

guts left. It's time to end all that. The Labour Party and TUC should turn round and give the working class some hope. They should say: we are the champions of the working class. We are a campaigning organisation and we are going to take the fight to the Tories. Paul Whetton was Secretary of the Notts strikers' rank and file committee in 1984-5.

Strikers at Burnsall's, Smethwick, Birmingham have been on strike since June for union recognition, equal pay, safer working conditions. On Saturday 28 November a demonstration in support of the strikers was held. Further information and support: Denny Parry, Jo Quigley 021-550 4888. Photo: Mark Salmon.



Student right-wing launches purge of Area organisations

By Jill Mountford

On the eve of a Government announcement of plans that could destroy the National Union of Students (NUS), the right-wing Labour leadership of NUS have launched a wrecking campaign against NUS Area organisations. At a National Executive meeting on 8 December, they voted to derecognise Tyne-Tees and Sussex Areas. They have set in motion the same wrecking mechanism (laughably called an "investigation") into North Yorkshire Area. Ever since the NUS right wing tore up the union's constitution in order to close down its Winter

Conference, they have been on the rampage. They have done nothing to run any campaigns involving students. With no Winter Conference to hold them to account, they feel safe. Sussex and Manchester Areas have organised successful demonstrations this term, showing up the NUS leaders' inactivity. Left-wing Areas have a strong tradition of building campaigns and involving Further Education student unions in NUS - which has earned them the hatred of the right-wing saboteurs of university student unions and of the NUS leadership. According to the NUS constitution, Areas are accountable to their members - i.e. colleges in

their geographic area - but with their usual disregard for the constitution the NUS Executive have decided that they can close down Areas if they don't like them. One thing is certain. The support for Tyne Tees, Sussex and North Yorkshire Areas built by years of left activists running campaigns and involving Further Education colleges will not vanish simply because the clique at the top of NUS have decided to gut the union. Area activists will fight these attacks all the way to NUS Easter Conference, where we will overturn the Executive's decision and settle scores with these wreckers.

Starving Africa needs peaceful aid, not stunts

By Gerry Bates

28,000 US troops are arriving in Somalia to police distribution of food aid. It is better for Somalis to get food from American troops than to starve in the chaos created by battling warlords. But where it judges the political payoff smaller - in Ethiopia, in Mozambique, in Bangladesh - the US is not generous with any sort of aid, even though it has the wealth and resources to save millions of lives. The timing of the action is probably set by George Bush's timetable for handing over to Bill Clinton. Bush can get credit for helping the starving, while Clinton will have to sort out the mess if - as is very likely - arrogance or bungling by the US forces mobilises opposition to them and

draws them into long-running battles. Somalia is one of many African states wrecked and bled by imperialism. According to Julian Ozanne in the "Financial Times" (8 July 1992), "Many Somalis... blame General Siad Barre, the cold war gladiator who ruled Somalia ruthlessly for 21 years. They also blame Moscow and Washington, who supported his repressive rule with military and economic aid as they played cold war politics by proxy... "Moscow first and then Washington sat by as the country disintegrated, continuing to pour arms and ammunition into Somalia, then considered a strategic piece of 'real estate' on the cold war chessboard..." It needs long-term peaceful aid, not self-serving gestures.

"Don't give up the fight for Freedom" Tape cassette with ten political songs by Pauline Bradley £5 from 31B Muswell Hill Place, London N10. All proceeds to the miners.

Next issue After this issue Socialist Organiser takes a Christmas break. No 546 will be out on 6 January.

Elements of Marxism Our feature on the anti-Jewish bigotry codified and transmitted in Christian myth and tradition (p. 10-13) has pushed out "Elements of Marxism" this week. We hope that readers using "Elements of Marxism" for regular study will find the feature on Christianity valuable for that purpose too. "Elements of Marxism" will continue as a regular weekly series in the New Year.

India: the price of "easy" nationalism

By Colin Foster

The bloodshed and destruction following the demolition of an ancient mosque by Hindu bigots in northern India on 6 December is the responsibility of India's capitalist Establishment. Alongside terrible mass poverty, India has a rich and well-educated upper class. Over the years since inde-

pendence, that class has reduced Indian politics to a mess of hucksterism, personal rivalries, and corrupt strivings for better access to the public honey-pot. The main official parties, nominally secular and even "socialist", have used religious and communal intrigues without scruple. They have created the basis for the right-wing BJP to come forward as an explicit-

ly Hindu chauvinist party. Hindu chauvinism was a strand in Indian bourgeois politics even before independence, especially through the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, who, despite his saintly official reputation, repeatedly linked the cause of Indian nationalism to Hindu symbols. No doubt it seemed an easy way to mobilise the masses of the people. Now it is ripping apart independent India.

Labour Party Socialists meet

By Vicki Morris

About 80 people attended the Labour Party Socialists (LPS) AGM in Sheffield last Saturday (5 December). We heard speakers from the Islington NALGO strike, Sheffield residential social workers' strike and Houghton Main NUM, Anthony Arblaster from the Socialist Society, and Bob Cryer of the Campaign Group of Labour MPs. The meeting passed motions supporting the maintenance of the link between the trade unions and the Labour Party, and outlining practical ways to defeat the Tories' pit closures plans. There was a lively debate on the attitude socialists should take to the Maastricht Treaty. The meeting passed a motion against the Treaty but which also stressed the importance of distinguishing ourselves from the chauvinist anti-Europeanism of sections of our own ruling class - by being advocates of unity amongst the working classes of Europe, and fighting for the democratisation of European political institutions. An amendment seeking to delete the words "We are against Maastricht, but for a united Europe. We are against a united Europe being capitalist, but not against a capitalist Europe being united" from the motion was defeated. There was a debate on the relationship between LPS and the newly-established Campaign Group Supporters' Network. The meeting supported the establishment of the Network and resolved to build it, but felt that this could best be done by building LPS, developing its cam-

paigned activities, and taking them into the Network. For more details of Labour Party Socialists, write c/o 106 Lyham Road, London SW2 5QA. They are bound by a treaty signed 100 years ago to do this. The people who now live in Hong Kong, as it has grown up over the last 100 years, have no say in this. Like it or lump it, in 1997 Beijing takes over. Britain has not allowed democratic structures to develop in Hong Kong because the neo-Stalinist Chinese government did not want it. The supposedly "communist" government in Beijing has formed an alliance with Hong Kong's capitalist elite, and the

British administration has done what Beijing wanted. Now Britain's new Governor-General, Chris Patten, has upset Beijing by proposals to make the stooge Legislative Council (which has only minimal powers) a little more representative. Hong Kong needs a democratically elected sovereign parliament. Britain should not give Hong Kong to the neo-Stalinist butchers unless the people vote in a democratic referendum to go under Beijing. Living people are more important than 100 year old treaties. Self-determination for Hong Kong!

A statement from the Advisory Editorial Board

In 1990 we set up an Advisory Editorial Board for Socialist Organiser, as a gesture of solidarity against the Labour Party's ban on the newspaper. We believed then that the ban would be a precedent for further moves to an intolerant and lifeless "one-faction" party; and so it has proved. Now we are winding up the Advisory Editorial Board, but we firmly maintain that the broadest possible campaign is necessary to defend the right of socialists to organise and to publish their views inside the Labour Party. Four Labour Party members from Sheffield Central CLP have been expelled by the National Constitutional Committee, on grounds of association with Socialist Organiser, and one suspended for two years. Five Labour Party mem-

bers have been expelled in Lambeth, mostly on the vaguest of charges, setting new precedents which could justify the expulsion of almost any Labour Party member doing anything which displeases the leadership. Other expulsions are under way in Brighton and in Coventry. We affirm our solidarity with all those facing these disciplinary charges, and our determination to fight for a broad and lively democracy inside the Labour Party. Vladimir Derer, Jatin Haria, Dorothy Macedo, Joe Marino, John McLroy, John Nicholson, Peter Tatchell.

Campaign Against the Witch-hunt, 56 Ashby House, Loughborough Road, London SW9.



Last week's roadblocks. Britain is moving closer to the conditions that have been normal in the North of Ireland

Neither IRA bombs nor British repression offer any way out For a federal united Ireland!

Last week, policemen armed with submachine guns manned roadblocks in London, doing spot checks for Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) bombers. Thus, Britain moves one small step nearer the conditions which have been normal for over 20 years in Belfast, Derry, and the other towns of Northern Ireland. The PIRA notches up a measurable success. If the roadblocks and other measures fail, they may notch up other, bloody, successes before 1992 is out.

Now is the time for plain speaking, both to the broad labour movement, much of which will go along with the official Tory Government's demonisation of the PIRA, and to those on the left who claim that immediate British withdrawal from Northern Ireland, without a political settlement, would lead to peace in a united Ireland.

The first thing that needs to be said about the situation is that the root responsibility for it rests with this and with previous British governments. The PIRA and its 20 year war, in Northern Ireland and in Britain, is a product of many decades of British misrule in Ireland this century, and of many centuries of oppression before that.

The PIRA is not — despite mindless tabloid abuse — an isolated gang of psychotics. It is backed and sustained by a sizeable part of the Catholic population of Northern Ireland, perhaps by as many as a third of Northern Ireland's Catholics. Without that support, the gangsterism and thuggery with which the PIRA rules some of the Catholic ghettos would bring it down to destruction very soon.

The question is why does one in three of the Northern Ireland Catholics — and many more than that at times of intense feeling — back the Provos? Because for half a century before 1969 the Catholics were second-class citizens within a Northern Ireland state ruled by the Protestant Unionists, under British protection. They were discriminated against

in jobs, housing, and local government voting rights; they were subjected to police terror by Protestant-sectarian Special Constables.

Nothing changed until the Catholics revolted at the end of the 1960s in marches and demonstrations for "civil rights" and "British standards". At first — before the PIRA had come into existence, and when the then-existing IRA proved no threat to anyone — the Catholics were met with great police violence.

British soldiers took over the policing of Northern Ireland in August 1969, and Britain abolished sectarian Protestant majority rule in a Belfast parliament in March 1972. But Britain continued to sustain the state structures according to which Ireland is divided into six-county (Northern) and 26-county (southern) entities.

By mid-1969 the Northern Ireland Six Counties state had already collapsed into Catholic-Protestant infighting, and, left to its own devices, it would have spiralled into chaos and civil war in mid 1969. The Six Counties state had shown itself unviable by collapsing — but from the day in 1969 that British soldiers, on behalf of the British government, took direct control, British policy has sustained the basic underlying status quo, the two-state structure set up between 1920 and 1922.

To sustain that status quo, they have harassed, terrorised, interned and shot down those who oppose it — the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland.

The Six Counties state was supposedly set up to guard Ireland's Protestant minority from oppression by the island's Catholic majority. The Protestant population wanted it. And yet inside the "Protestant state for a Protestant people" (as one Northern Ireland prime minister once put it), Catholics were one in three of the 1.5 million population. Now they are more than 4 in 10.

The artificially created Catholic minority in the Six Counties is a

bigger chunk of the Northern Ireland population than the whole Protestant population of Ireland, north and south, are of the population of the island. Catholics were and are a majority in about half the territory of the "Protestant state".

"Karl Marx knew what he was talking about when he said that a nation which enslaves another can not itself be free.

Keeping down the Catholics, Northern Ireland's Protestant-Unionist workers lost their own freedom."

This way of solving Ireland's Protestant minority problem — by creating a bigger, and artificial, Northern Ireland Catholic minority problem — was only possible because of the brutal power and determination of the British state and the Tory-Liberal government ruling it, after the First World War.

To impose the present settlement, Britain waged a savage war of lawless terror in the south of Ireland. Specially organised thugs — the so-called "Black and Tans" — were set on the rampage. They shot people in the street, systematically destroyed small rural factories (creameries), and burned the whole centres of Cork City and of small towns like Ennistymon.

In one notorious incident, they set up machine guns at a hurling match and opened fire on the crowd!

When they negotiated with Britain in 1921, the elected representatives of the Irish majority were given the choice of an "immediate and terrible" unequal war, or peace with partition. Partition was presented

by Britain, and accepted by the Irish, as a temporary measure. In a few years, the extensive Catholic areas of Northern Ireland — which were conquered territory, the people held against their will — would be allowed to join the South; and — so it was said and believed — the Protestant Unionists would be forced to make a new accommodation with the South.

When in 1925 the "Boundary Commission" met to carry out this part of the 1921 British-Irish treaty, the British and the Northern Ireland Unionists conspired to defend the status quo. Finally, the representatives of southern Irish capitalism accepted it, for a cash payment!

For 50 years, until they revolted in 1968-9, the artificially created Catholic minority in the Six Counties state paid dearly for this betrayal. The Catholics were kept down brutally — treated, as Protestant-Unionists feared they themselves might have been treated in a Catholic independent united Ireland.

They were too frightened of their big Catholic minority, and of its potential ability to "outbreed" them, to treat it fairly. For fear of the Catholics, and in competition with them for scarce jobs, Northern Ireland Protestant workers tied themselves politically to the Northern Ireland capitalists.

Karl Marx knew what he was talking about when he said that a nation which enslaves another can not itself be free. Keeping down the Catholics, Northern Ireland's Protestant-Unionist workers lost their own freedom.

The underlying absurdity of what Britain is doing in Northern Ireland now is shown in this fact: for 20 years, within the state set up to protect the Protestant majority, Britain has not allowed that Protestant majority to act as a majority, with majority rights because of the 50-year experience of that majority using its power to oppress the Catholics.

Out of this situation come young Irish Catholics to London bringing

bombs, death and destruction.

It does not follow from any of this that the PIRA are politically right. The PIRA is a symptom of the malaise of Northern Ireland. It is no part of a solution to it.

It fights for a "united Ireland" in which the Six Counties Protestants — one million of the five and a half million in the island and with their own distinct identity — would simply merge as an arithmetical minority. It would, in other words, swap the present situation where half a million Northern Ireland Catholics are kept against their will in the Six Counties state for one in which one million Protestants would be forced against their will into a Catholic state — and, once "in", would be kept in by as much force as necessary.

The PIRA calls for Britain to leave — but first to disarm the Protestants! That points to the contradictions at the political hearts of these so-called "Republicans". They are Irish Republicans in name only! Endlessly talking of a united Ireland, they yet feel free to wage a campaign of widespread murder against the Irish Protestant minority because, ultimately, they look to Britain to coerce the Protestants for them.

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

Karl Marx

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Reasons to be (slightly) cheerful

It's been a funny old year on the industrial front. Plenty of sell-outs and defeats, union membership continuing to decline, unemployment rising with little shopfloor resistance to redundancies. And, of course, in April, the election result, which hasn't exactly boosted rank and file confidence.

And yet there have been some important fightbacks and even some victories. As 1992 draws to a close there is good reason to be cautiously optimistic.

On the debit side, there have been serious setbacks on the jobs front. The only big fight to defend jobs came early in the year at GEC Alstom. The strike was well-organised and militant. Contacts were established with GEC workers in France. Then management upped the ante, threatening much bigger job cuts, and the leaders of the AEU and MSF promptly capitulated. The old story.

When the closure of Ravenscraig steel plant was announced in February, there was no fight at all, despite the Scottish TUC's much-vaunted popular front of concerned vicars, Tory MPs, and Nationalists. When BT management announced "Release 92", half the workforce rushed for voluntary redundancy. Not very encouraging.

Also on the debit side came BP's total derecognition of the unions at Baglan Bay.

But in early spring came a few disputes that reminded us that it is still possible to fight and win. There was a rash of disputes over union recognition on the London building sites, led by the unofficial Joint Sites Committee while UCATT and TGWU whispered quiet words of encouragement behind the scenes. The JSC secured some impressive victories, mainly because of the pressure they were able to put on small subbies desperate to keep their contracts with the big firms.

At Alcan Plant in Birmingham, a magnificent month-long strike was successful in resisting derecognition. Again, the strikers had some real economic leverage because of a spate of orders in the mini-boom that (briefly) followed the election.

Significantly, both the JSC campaign and the Alcan dispute were led by relatively young, inexperienced activists.

But still, the picture was generally grim. May saw the RMT's climbdown (no.1) on the London Tube, to be followed in November by a catastrophe.

At about the same time the Sheffield council manual unions did a deal to sell pay and conditions in return for some pretty thin promises on jobs. Their left-wing local leadership set a very bad precedent for other council workers up and down the country, fighting desperately to hold the line.

August and September saw Jimmy Knapp's betrayal of the Piccadilly Four - Manchester RMT guards sacked after a spontaneous walkout. The union ordered strikers back to work, promising a ballot. They won the ballot, so the judges moved the goalposts and Knapp agreed again to call off the action. What should have become a national dispute in defence of trade unionism on the railways ended in yet another sell-out.

Autumn saw the first signs of strike action against contracting-out in the civil service - at the British Museum and Companies House, Cardiff.

Then came the miners.

Within days of the Tories' announcement that they would close 31 pits, we witnessed the biggest working-class demonstrations in central London for twenty years.

But trade-union militancy and confidence has not been taken straight back to 1972. The Tube debacle, and the postal workers' huge vote to accept a miserable pay deal, prove this bitter truth.

The movement that has sprung up behind and around the miners is, so far, primarily a political movement. People are addressing demands to the government about how society should be run. Confidence in an alternative "political economy of the working class" (as Marx put it) is reviving. Working-class people are starting to feel confident about saying that human needs should stand before profit.

This political revival is not a lower form of life than good old-fashioned industrial struggle. With mass unemployment, and the pressure of the anti-union laws, a political recomposition must be the most probable way for any labour resurgence to start.

Now the revival has to be channelled and focussed on winning a fighting policy in the workers' existing mass organisations, the trade unions and the Labour Party.

When strike action is necessary - and it certainly will be - we need to do our best to ensure that it is both united across the unions and official. That is the foremost lesson of the Tube debacle (see page 15).

This is no time for fantasies about burgeoning unofficial action or the return of the 1970s' shop stewards' movement. The conditions for boomtime do-it-yourself reformism on the industrial front are long gone.

In a crisis, working-class struggle needs politics.

INSIDE THE UNIONS



By Sleeper

For a federal united Ireland

continued from page 3

Locked in an obsessive dialogue of bombs, bullets, and, occasionally, words, with Britain, these "Republicans" ignore the central problem for old-style Irish nationalist forces: the opposition of one million Irish Protestants to a united Ireland.

The present messy partition was the result of the alliance of the Irish Protestant minority with the British Tory party. The PIRA would, if it could, create a bigger all-Ireland mess - in which a coerced and disaffected minority one million strong, would replace the present half-million Catholic Northern Irish minority - in alliance with those in Britain whom it could coerce or bamboozle into coercing the Protestants.

Everything the PIRA does and advocates points not to a united Ireland, not to something better than the terrible reality in Northern Ireland now, but to something worse - civil war on the Yugoslav model.

The PIRA have the support of a big minority in the Catholic parts of

Northern Ireland - but only of a minority. In the recent southern Irish election, Provisional Sinn Fein got only 1.5% of the vote, which shows how far apart the Catholics on the two sides of the border have grown.

The idea that either the fundamental situation in Ireland, or the Provisionals' popular support, gives them the right to make war, is ridiculous. The idea that progress in Ireland can be won by murdering Protestants - and that is now, as for many years, the main substance of the war inside Northern Ireland - is not only ridiculous, it is deeply hostile to genuine Irish Republicanism.

The root idea of democratic Irish Republicanism is the idea that the whole people of Ireland, Catholics and Protestants alike, are equal. Nothing on this earth is more foreign to the PIRA than that idea!

The problem in Northern Ireland has been many centuries in the making. Long-term mass unemployment is one of the strongest living roots of the present Catholic-Protestant antagonism. Socialists should demand the

deployment of massive resources by the British and European Community governments to change that.

We advocate working-class unity, but we have no simple solution. Certain things should be clear, however.

"Troops out" must be part of a general settlement"

The Six Counties state as it now exists is untenable, a savage bearpit for all its people. A broader framework, all-Ireland at least, is needed. A federal Ireland, with minority rights of self-government for the Protestant-majority area, seems to us to be the only possible framework that could replace the present failed Six Counties entity. It is the only "constitutional settlement" that both Catholic and Protestant workers in Ireland could subscribe to, respecting each others' rights, and building working-class unity in the

process.

The way out of the bloody mess in Northern Ireland is not through trying to "unite Ireland" by force, but through uniting the Irish people, and in the first place Irish workers.

What the PIRA want would be disastrous. If they won, coercing the Protestants into a united Ireland, it would be - or risk becoming - the present situation in Northern Ireland writ much larger. They never can win. Sectarian civil war and a new bloody partition would come long before any such "united Ireland" could come into existence.

The British troops uphold an untenable, unjust, oppressive status quo. Should socialists now make "Troops Out" our answer, using the PIRA bombs to give point to the argument? No! British troops out without a political settlement would lead to sectarian civil war and repartition. "Troops out" must be part of a general settlement, or it is a British chauvinist proposal and nothing else - a way of saying that we care nothing for what happens in Ireland.

In the period ahead, the serious left will use the heightened interest in Ireland generated by the PIRA bombing campaign to promote discussion in the labour movement on Ireland - on British capitalism's long-term and ultimate responsibility, and on the necessity for a real solution.

Considering the circumstances...

PLATFORM

Jean Lane continues the debate on smacking children

I have read and re-read Sigrid Fisher's article, "Why mothers are desperate" (SO 536) and nowhere can I see the words, "I think smacking kids is a good thing". On the contrary, she states: "The arguments against smacking are indisputable: displays of violence by someone in a position of trust and power over a vulnerable minor are abuse..." And yet Belinda Weaver (SO 537) and Janet Burstall (SO 544) respond, at least in tone if not in words, as if she does condone it.

Sigrid deals with one aspect a very large one, of the circumstances in which children get hit: the fact that they are born into a society which puts all the onus of their upbringing and care on an isolated, private family unit, and ideologically on one member of that unit - the mother - while providing little or no support.

It is a society which tells girls at school that it is their role in life to have children,

whether they want them or not; which provides poor sex education, fails to provide failsafe contraception, allows abortion only to the rich and then punishes her when she carries out her "role in life".

When children are born because they are wanted rather than the done thing, and when they and their carers are treated and provided for with the importance and respect they deserve then the number of smacked children will certainly decrease.

Marxists look at society as it is, in all its horrors, in order to work out how to change it. They do not start from where they wish it were. To treat Sigrid as if she condones smacking because she dares to look at the world as it is and tries to deal with one reason as to why, is grossly unfair.

Both Belinda and Janet say that "circumstances are no excuse". I think it is perfectly legitimate to look at the desperate circumstances of families, some of whom are forced to have kids when they are barely more than kids themselves, in incredibly impoverished conditions where even the most basic necessities of food, shelter and warmth are not provided by a society that dictates that girls will have babies.

Not all smacking happens because of recession or poverty. To say so, suggests that only working class people smack their kids which is clearly not the case. The fact that middle class families send their kids to public schools where beatings and floggings are routine shows this. Janet and Belinda accuse Sigrid of not dealing with the cases of smacking which are done routinely or because parents think it is a good thing. But they don't

"Marxists look at society as it is... They do not start from where they wish it were"

deal with it either.

Janet says: "We do not content ourselves with arguing for a fundamental change in social conditions in order to combat rape. We propose specific measures and we argue against the ideology of male domination which feeds rape". Neither Janet nor

Belinda say what were the specific measures they would have carried out against people who smack their kids. Education? A fine? A custodial sentence? A care order on the child? Or just arguing against the ideology of adult domination which feeds child smacking? If a child is raped then the rapist should get done for rape. If a child is battered then the batterer should get done for battery. Which of these measures would Janet or Belinda give to the parent who clips their daughter round the ear for refusing to eat her cauliflower, and which to the parents who, due to recession, have to bring their family up in the single room of a bed and breakfast and whose "inquisitive" and "curious" child's fingers are about to explore the exciting prospect of a boiling kettle?

Not all smacking is on or anywhere near the same level as abuse. It certainly is not analogous with rape. And many a parent who smacks his or her child for being naughty and refusing to listen to reason will defend that child to the death should it be in any way threatened with harm or abuse. Would Janet or Belinda treat that parent under the same law as that used for batterers and

End of the line for Lincoln's Inn Fields



Camden Council: no money to rehouse the homeless...

Lincoln's Inn Fields has for years been home to 100 homeless people. Labour-controlled Camden Council had them all evicted last week. So far a maximum of 10 bedsits have been

made available to rehouse them! The law firms and accountants who own the prestigious offices surrounding the fields are sick of having their expensive view spoilt by the camp of the

homeless. Most of the campers are single adults who are not a "priority" for Camden Council rehousing. Camden, needing a "good" reason for its filthy action, claims that conditions in the

Fields' homemade dwellings and tents were deteriorating. Setting them to wander the streets and sleep in doorways is much more hygienic, is it not?

The real motivation for Camden's eviction was the threat of legal action from the Lincoln's Inn Fields Association. Their "problem" has now been "solved". Their homeless victims have been given a short, sharp lesson in justice from the well-shod legal parasites who run the Lincoln's Inn Fields Association.

The lawyers and accountants had the money to take legal

action against the council.

The council had money to pay the cost of eviction notices and of fencing off Lincoln Inns Fields.

But no-one has money to rehouse these homeless people desperate enough

to camp out all winter — people whose best option was that cold camp on a patch of green in one of the richest parts of London.

What sort of sick society do we live in?

Liz Millward

Homeless organise

By Debbie Leonard

The number of homeless people in Brighton has always been high, but this number is increasing at an alarming rate whilst properties are becoming vacant faster than ever.

Over the last few weeks more than 12,000 signatures have been

collected in support of a campaign launched by the Homeless Action Group in Brighton. The main emphasis of the campaign is to change the DSS law regarding social loan funds, and the petition will be handed in at a lobby of Parliament next February. The mass public support has led to a demonstration being

built for in central Brighton on Saturday 19 December.

- Join the demonstration! Assemble: 2.00, Churchill Square;
- Send donations and letters of support to: Homeless Action Group, c/o First Base Day Centre, Montpelier Place, Brighton.



...but money to pay for evictions and putting up fences

Government's school "league tables"

What learning would be really useful?

EDUCATION FOR BARBARISM

Colin Waugh writes the first article in an occasional series

On 18 November, the Government published "league tables" of GCSE and A/AS Level results for all state (and some private) schools. Basically, these show that schools in well-off districts do better than elsewhere.

Many parents will now try to get their children into a "successful" school, exposing other schools to cuts, redundancies or closure. This will speed up the growth of an education "market", and a two-tier system, with private or opted-out schools on the one hand, and cash-starved council schools on the other. There will be an even heavier emphasis on traditional subjects, and, within them, on memorising facts. Performance related pay for teachers is that much closer. The "successful" schools will not be able to absorb all the children whose parents will want them to go

there. Management will start to bring in discriminatory selection procedures and there will also be struggles over class sizes. Sooner or later, some sections of parents in worse-off areas will be spurred to campaign for local schools to be improved. What should we do? First, instead of complaining that this information has been released, we should demand that in future much fuller details about qualifications should be made publicly available — for example, about the socio-economic background of students in each school, and about the numbers

doing GCSEs and A/AS levels on a "second chance" basis in FE colleges. In short, not Tory propaganda masquerading as information, but the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Secondly, it's vital that when teachers in "successful" schools resist the worsening conditions caused by the schools' "popularity", they link this both with a fight against discriminatory selection procedures and for resources to go to worse-off areas. This is necessary both to stop the media portraying them as elitist professionals who want to keep underprivi-

leged children out of "good" schools and for a more positive reason. This is, thirdly, that the media focus on qualifications could potentially be used to challenge broader aspects of the Tories' education agenda. Obviously, under capitalism the tendency is all the time for education to be organised on the basis of exchange value (that is, of what job you can 'buy' with the piece of paper you get at the end of it) rather than use value (whether the learning you do to get the piece of paper is worth something to you in itself). In other words, the aim (the piece of

paper) wags the dog (the teaching/learning process). But there is now both inflation of qualifications (that is, more and more people are being pushed into trying to get more and more pieces of paper) at the same time as their exchange value dropping (because there are fewer and fewer jobs you can buy with them). Therefore, the possibility now exists for teachers who are socialists, if — and only if — they are seen to align themselves with the aspirations of working class parents and students, to pose the question "What learning would be really useful?"

Credit extensions

GRAFFITI

If you think that Norman Lamont's £4,700 unofficial Legal Aid to rid himself of his embarrassing tenant was outrageous, spare a thought for the long-suffering people of Argentina. Their President, Carlos Menem, has just negotiated a special loan from the World Bank. What's the loan for? To create jobs? To start to solve the problem of homelessness? To push public health care? No. It's to buy and furnish a \$66 million presidential Boeing 757 jet, complete with a 20-seat VIP lounge, the usual telephone and fax machines. Oh, yes... and a hair salon. Menem never goes anywhere without Tony and Estela, his two \$4,000 a month hair dressers. Their job is giving constant care to the 48,000 "hair extensions" glued all over Menem's head. "World statesman" and "well-respected" are just two of the phrases that do not spring to mind.

The following piece appeared in the bourgeoisie's own paper the *Financial Times*:

"...have you noticed Barclays Bank's latest advertising campaign — 'Starting a business this year?'

"It promises 'all the practical, actionable advice you need to turn your dream into reality'. The dictionary's definition of actionable is 'furnishing grounds for an action of lawsuit'. Hasn't Barclays got enough lawsuits on its hands already?"

Good to see one section of the ruling class having a go at another.

The Socialist Workers Party have at last attempted to justify their call to side with little-England, nationalist capitalism against European capitalism. An article in their Review states: "Europe shows strong working-class hostility to European union... 'adding as an afterthought, to separate themselves from the Thatchers of this world, '...on our rulers' terms."

They say that the only pro-Maastricht force came, in fact, from the ruling class. The evidence cited for this comes from France "...in the 'Yes' camp was a substantial section of white-collar, semi-professional workers such as teachers, lecturers and health employees... opposition to ratification was very much on class lines". Teachers and nurses will be surprised to find

that they are in the ruling class. As will most of the membership of the SWP who belong to those well-known bosses' clubs, NALGO and CPSA.

From the relative sanity of the SWP, to the "Alternatives to Maastricht" conference (5 December) organised by Ken Livingstone's "Socialist Forum" (a lash-up between Socialist Action and the rump of British Stalinism, the *Morning Star*). With a platform bulging with luminaries, the conference heard a full range of Labour Party opinion: Ken Livingstone "we've allowed our banks to invest too much abroad", Bryan Gould "the problem is one of democracy versus bankers... we need to invest more at home" and Peter Shore "limitation of public borrowing by treaty will stop investment at home". There... plurality of opinion in the Labour Party all the way from the right to... er, well, the right.

During the "Alternatives to Thinking" conference Tony Benn made a call for a Fifth Socialist International. Nothing wrong with that except he was sharing a platform with — Ken Livingstone (who, as a Labour member, is thus, like Benn himself, in the Second International); Tony Chater, editor of the *Morning Star* (who would have been in the Third International apart from the small detail that Stalin wound it up in 1943, when most of the *Morning Star* supporters at the conference were still in their forties); and Socialist Action (who, whilst becoming more and more indistinguishable from the Stalinists, were until recently the main representatives of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International). But most upset of all by the call must have been Peter Shore, a member of the very nationalist Bruges group of anti-European Tories.

Socialist Outlook's Duncan Chapple treated the Labour Party Socialists' AGM with a surprise amendment to the motion calling on the TUC to organise a day of action to support the miners. Duncan wants such a day to be preparation for an indefinite general strike to... er... kick out the Tories. This student of Marxism leads Outlook's 'kicking about of this slogan' in the North-West, but hasn't yet persuaded Outlook's editor to put it in the paper for general consumption.



French "yes to Maastricht" voters - ruling class?

GRAFFITI

Prevarication on Sunday

PRESS GANG



By Jim Denham

Just when you thought it was safe to start reading newspapers again, those bloody Royals are back on the front pages. This time, it's one of the less exciting of the soap opera's subplots — the wedding of Anne and Tim — so hopefully we'll be spared the acres of gossip, speculation and general nonsense that accompany the every move of leading characters like Bad Fergie, Sad Diana and Mad Chazza. Even so, I predict a spate of articles along the lines of the Agony of the Older Woman/Divorcee's Guide to Younger Men/Is It Too Late to Have Children? etc etc. Princess Anne is neither old enough nor glamorous enough to take the Joan Collins role and Commander Tim Laurence is a far from convincing

toy-boy, but the tabloids will make the best of this unpromising material, you can be sure.

The Princess and her intended have already achieved a remarkable "first" by providing the lead story for this week's *Independent on Sunday*, a paper that — together with its daily sister — once prided itself on not bothering very much with the House of Windsor and its tiresome doings. But the *IoS* story was rather different from the usual "Royal" coverage in that it was neither salacious nor deferential. It was a factual piece by two journalists (Cal McCrystal and Nick Cohen) not known as "Royal Watchers", describing how the Royal Family has "bent" the law in an attempt to keep the marriage plans secret.

"I predict a spate of articles along the lines of the Divorcee's Guide to Younger Men/Is It Too Late to Have Children?"

The *IoS* even devoted part of its editorial column to this matter, pointing out that "the Marriages (Scot-

land) Act, 1977, does not seem to have been strictly observed in this case", and then going on to note that the choice of Scotland for the nuptials was necessitated by the fact that "the bride's mother is supreme Governor of the Church of England and the Church of England's official policy is that divorced people who have a former spouse living cannot remarry in Church" — a dodge the *IoS* described as "humbug".

Why am I bothering to draw this tedious stuff to your attention? Well, I may be over-optimistic, but I have a suspicion that the *IoS* is testing the ice before coming out as Britain's first openly republican paper. The Murdoch press has long been suspected of closet republicanism, and long denied the charge. The week before last, the *Sun* and the *Sunday Times* both welcomed the Queen's decision to pay income tax and, effectively, declared their loyalty. The rest of the British press took much the same line, apart from the *IoS*, which concluded: "it would be wrong to conclude from last week's announcement [to pay tax] that Britain is creating a new kind of monarchy. The silver-sticks-in-waiting still

wait, and so does a genuine debate".

"I have a suspicion that the Independent on Sunday is testing the ice before coming out as Britain's first openly republican paper."

Back in early September, in the immediate aftermath of the Fergiegate/Dianagate revelations, *IoS* editor Ian Jack wrote a thoughtful piece about the monarchy in the *Independent's* Saturday magazine. He praised the tabloids for at least putting the question of the existence of the monarchy on the agenda. He berated the "serious", "liberal" press (explicitly the *Guardian*, but by implication the *Independent* as well) for not coming off the fence. He argued that Britain needed at least one "serious" republican newspaper.

Mr Jack seems to be bracing himself for a bold, dangerous leap into the unknown. So far his nerve has always failed him at the last moment. He needs encouragement. Write to him c/o The *Independent on Sunday*, 40 City Road, London EC1Y 2DB.

Health cuts hit women hardest

WOMEN'S EYE

By Rebecca Van Homan

The cuts in the NHS are causing thousands of women to miss out on an early termination of pregnancy, it was claimed this week.

NHS hospitals are not offering the new abortion pill, RU486, and GPs are failing to tell women they have the choice other than a surgical abortion.

The introduction of RU486 in July 1991 was expected to bring a sub-

stantial drop in the number of women requiring surgical abortions, reducing the trauma and giving them more control over the procedure. But fewer than 3,000 women have received it, according to the Birth Control Trust.

The Trust says that more than 60,000 women should have had the option of a non-surgical termination.

None of the major London hospitals is offering women the choice of an early medical abortion over surgical procedures.

In France, where the drug has been available since 1989, evidence suggests that at least a quar-

ter of women offered RU486 instead of surgical termination will take it.

"With the emphasis on the NHS as a public company, the need to balance the books is strong. As usual, women have to bear the brunt of the cuts."

The reason for the low take-up in the UK is down to money. It costs money to establish day care centres specifically designed for early medical abortion. So, although a

RU486 abortion costs the NHS about £182 compared with £270 for a surgical abortion, in the short-term it saves money to keep old premises, old equipment and old techniques.

With the emphasis on the NHS as a public company, the need to balance the books is strong. As usual in such times, women have to bear the brunt of the cuts.

Short-sighted economic madness is another symptom of the under-funded NHS. We want an NHS that doesn't have to worry about costs, but concentrates on providing decent healthcare for everyone.

Why we need a TUC day of action

The TUC's "National Day for jobs and recovery" on 9 December looks set to be a big flop.

That will come as no surprise to trade union activists up and down the country who have been trying to win solidarity strike action for the miners on the day.

The entire focus of the 9 December activities is all wrong. Trade unionists have been told to use the day to approach their bosses and ask them to make

several "pledges" including that there will be "no redundancies".

What exactly such a "pledge" is worth in the middle of the longest capitalist recession for 50 years is not clear.

Bosses usually take one of two possible attitudes to this question: either they say that there will be no redundancies while they are around or they use the threat of redundancies to worsen pay, terms, and conditions of work. A "no redundancies" pledge is not

worth the paper it is printed on.

At the national level the TUC and CBI plan a get together to discuss "Jobs and recovery". With CBI boss Howard Davies a keen advocate of the wage freeze, little or nothing is likely to come from this.

The TUC won't be discussing what is really needed: a day of action on a working day in solidarity with the miners and all other workers under attack.

But this call is vital. The need for an official

lead from the TUC has been shown by the way isolated groups of workers who have planned solidarity strikes have come under attack.

In Nottingham, activists in the low paid civil servants union CPSA have been balloting for a strike on 9 December in protest at the government's 1.5% public sector pay freeze and in support of the miners.

They were forced to call off the ballot when management threatened legal action against branch officials under the Tory anti-union laws. They received no backing from their union leadership.

This episode is very important. As one local CPSA activist put it: "If we had an official call for action on the 9th, combined with the national union declaring a dispute over the pay freeze then management couldn't have touched us".

"Instead all we've received from head office is a mind blowing circular from our general secretary Barry

Reamsbottom which says he expected spontaneous walkouts when the pay freeze was announced but since they didn't happen we should all wait until April Fool's Day before we declare a dispute with the government over pay.

"That's criminal, the miners, the railworkers, the tubeworkers and others are under attack now, we too should be fighting back now!"

Coming Events

Saturday 12th December

Ammanford South Wales
March and Rally

Darlington
March and Rally

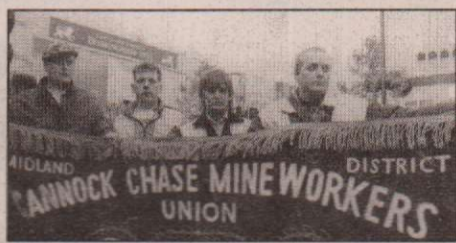
Seaham
Mass Rally

Thursday 17 December

Reading
Rally to meet Scottish NUM marchers; with Tony Benn

National Conference

SOLIDARITY WITH THE MINERS



Saturday 9th January

Sponsored by the NUM

Sheffield Hallam University
Students Union

11am - 5pm

Delegates from all bona fide labour movement organisations.

Registrations, £5 waged, £2.50 unwaged from: Carolyn Sikorski, 53a Geere Rd, London E15 3PN.

Cheques to Socialist Movement (TU)

INVITED SPEAKERS

Arthur Scargill
President NUM

Tony Benn MP

Called By: National Miners Support Network, SMTUC, Trade Union News, Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers

Emergency appeal for funds

The National Miners' Support Network, set up by a wide range of people on the left, has won strong backing from the labour and trade union movement and has been active in organising meetings and other activities in defence of the threatened pits.

If this campaign is to succeed it needs £3,000 at once to pay for the mailings and printed material.

We are appealing to you and your organisation to make as generous a donation as possible.

Please make it payable to National Miners' Support Network (address below).

We have not got much time to save the pits and a lot hangs upon the extent to which we can mobilise the backing of all those who are sympathetic to this cause — which is the cause of all of us.

Please help — and help now.

Yours fraternally,

Tony Benn MP
Frank Cave
Vice President NUM

National Miners' Support Network: Secretary Jeremy Corbyn MP, 219 Mare Street, London E8; or 129a Seven Sisters Road, London N7. Telephone: 071-263 9450. Fax: 071-281 5720.

March for Jobs

Glasgow to London

Saturday 14 November to Saturday 19 December

Scottish miners and supporters from local coalfields will march the 636 miles, over 36 days, from Glasgow to London to protest against government plans to close 31 pits. Well-wishers and friends can join the march, provide funds, and join rallies as they pass through the towns

and villages along the route.

Thursday 10 December:

Stafford to Walsall

Friday 11 December:

Walsall to Birmingham

Saturday 12 December:

Birmingham Rally

Sunday 13 December:

Birmingham to Coventry

Monday 14 December:

Coventry to Stratford

Tuesday 15 December:

Stratford to Banbury

Wednesday 16 December:

Banbury to Oxford

Thursday 17 December:

Oxford to Reading

Friday 18 December:

Reading to London

Saturday 19 December:

March and Rally:

Assemble Hammersmith

Support our Xmas Prize Draw!

The Alliance for Workers Liberty's Xmas raffle is well under way. Members and sympathisers are selling tickets for

- A video recorder — first prize;
- A colour television — second prize;
- An Xmas hamper — third prize.

The draw will take place at 6pm at the Red Rose Club, North London, on Tuesday 22 December.

All profits from the raffle will

go to help support Socialist Organiser.

Extra books of tickets are available from Xmas Raffle, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Our fund drive

Our Xmas raffle is part of a wide-ranging drive for extra funds to help our expansion plans.

Socialist Organiser needs the support of readers and supporters. We are currently raising funds for our £5,000 appeal.

The appeal's deadline is the final day of January 1993.

We want to pay for new equipment to produce Socialist Organiser and to pay the wages of extra workers. The result will be a larger circulation for our socialist ideas and a bigger influence of Marxism in the labour movement.

How you can help?

We have no rich backers. We rely on your support.

Why not send us an Xmas donation? Or buy a book of our raffle tickets.

Just fill in the form below:

Name

Address

.....

.....

Enclosed £..... (donation)

£..... (raffle tickets at 50 pence each)

Return to:
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Why Labour lost, and

As 1992 closes, the labour movement is reviving — but we still face a Tory Government. Why? And what are the prospects for change? This analysis is extracted from a document discussed and adopted at the Alliance for Workers' Liberty conference on 28-29 November.

Eight months after convincingly winning the General Election, the Tory Government is in very deep trouble, more seriously split — on Europe — than the Tories have been in living memory. They are adrift, rudderless, on key questions helpless, and led by a "second eleven" leadership widely believed to be out of its depth.

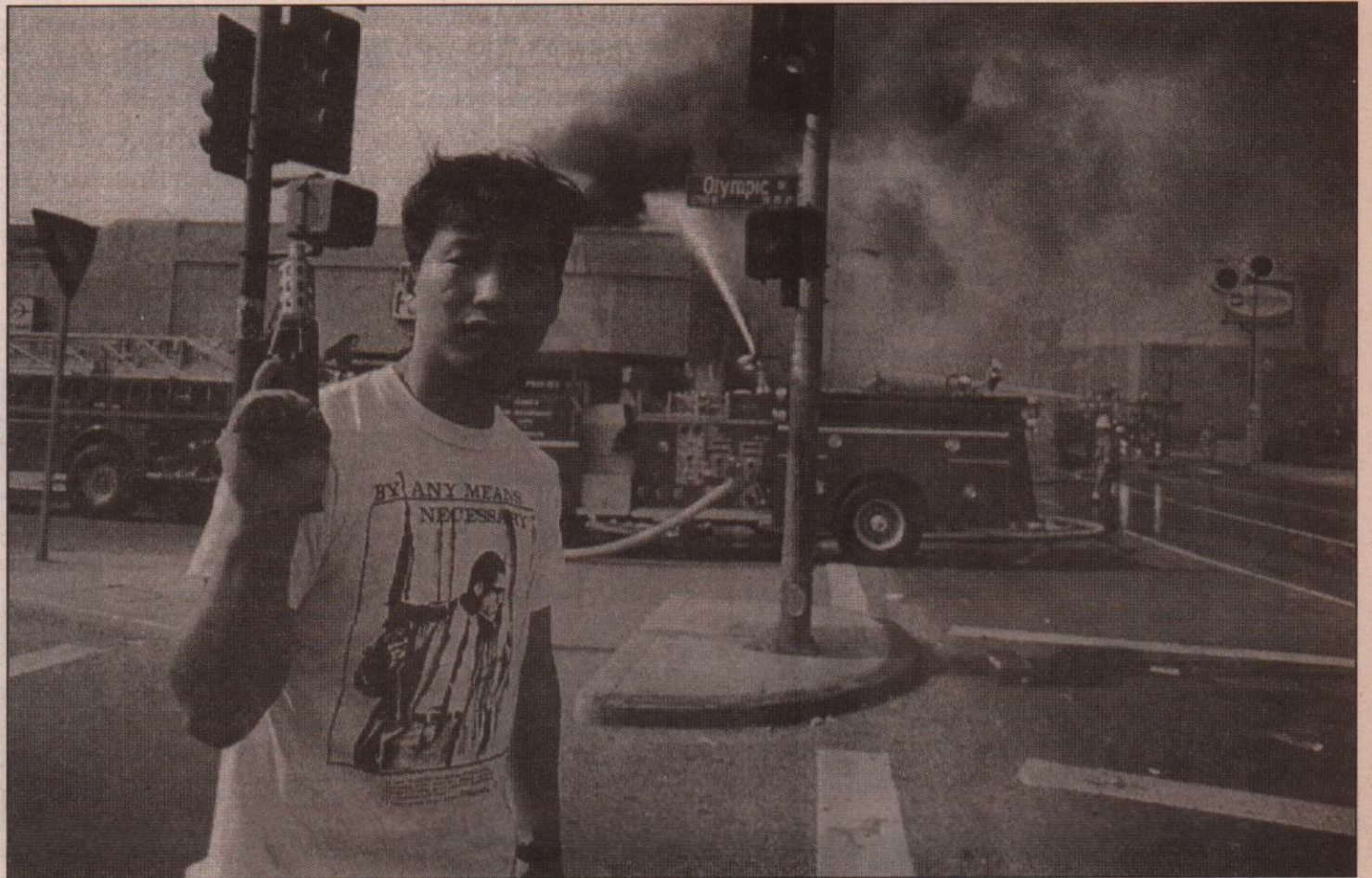
But, having adroitly and deliberately "got the election over with" before the economic slump broke to its present intensity, the Tories are constitutionally entitled to stay in power for the next four and a half years.

They are faced with Her Majesty's self-gutted and loyal opposition, John Smith's Labour Party. Were they faced with a vigorous and serious opposition — even an old-style right-wing Labour opposition — their chances of surviving anything like four and a half years would be very slim. As it is, unless rank and file revolt erupts to change the political relations in Britain, the Tories are securely — helplessly, but securely — in power.

Our major political focus for a long time before the April 1992 election was on helping to secure a Labour victory, and advocating the entire left should do the same. We argued that it was the only calculable way of getting the Tories out and beginning to turn the tide that has been flowing against the working class and the left since the beginning of the 1980s.

We spread no illusions in the Labour leadership, in its policies or even in its ability to win the election. Warning that Kinnoch could ruin it, we did what we could to secure a victory for the political labour movement over the Tories.

There was no alternative policy for the



Los Angeles: a mirror of Britain's capitalist future

broad labour movement — other than to accept defeat in advance on the basis of an a priori calculation that the Tories could not be beaten. Had we expressed this defeatism in the most radical possible tones of loud denunciation of the Labour leadership, in the style of the sectarians, it would have been no less a cringing and unforgivable defeatism.

The Tories won the election, as they won the preceding three elections, fundamentally because they are the ruling class organised to rule — able, by their social dominance and wealth, and the fact that they are the natural rulers of the system, to cluster all sorts of subordinate layers around themselves.

A radical opposition, even without going beyond the framework of capitalism, could still have rallied a majority around the militant core of the labour movement, and

defeated the Tories despite all their advantages as the party of the ruling class. The wretched Tory-understudy act which the Labour and trade union leaders decided on in the early 1980s and have pursued since only emphasised the natural superiority of the Tories as a ruling party.

Labour had no policies, no experience, no credibility — and they had abjured and thrown away opportunities like the Poll Tax and unemployment to build a mass movement against the Government, instead of siding with the Government against all those who dared to challenge it, from the miners through to Poll Tax demonstrators.

Underlying this is something far more profound: the crisis of a political labour movement which never (as a mass movement) got beyond reformism, and then began to disintegrate, failing to regenerate itself on a higher plane as it might have

done in the early 1980s.

As Labour became a mass party, it marginalised the revolutionary factions, whose sectarianism, made it easier. Labour's "socialism" was vague and ceremonial, while its real politics were a late 19th-century, left-Liberal belief in some state intervention to ease the evils of capitalism.

The Tories who won in 1979 had broken with the post-war consensus. They had learned from their own defeats and helplessness in the early 1970s, and come back to office determined to use the governmental and state power to fight and win the class struggle.

A series of anti-union laws were enacted, their cumulative effect making Britain the least free of West European societies where the labour movement is concerned. Over and above the "natural" effects of the

£8 billion wasted in Docklands

A monument to debauched capitalism

London's Docklands, the showroom of Thatcherism, could become a ghost town of empty office buildings and abandoned shops.

Olympia and York, the world's biggest property company, who built Canary Wharf, has effectively gone bust.

Canary Wharf is 40 per cent empty, the tenants who are there have been tempted in only by long rent free periods and any upturn must be a long way in the future, with 20 per cent of all office space vacant in the central area of the city.

At best Docklands will become "a gradually decaying backwater" kept alive by vast amounts of government money for transport links and by government agreements to take the empty office

blocks for the civil service.

In the early 1980s the Tory Government brushed aside plans drawn up by local people for redevelopment of the docks area to include low-cost housing and small industrial units which would provide local jobs. They set up a Docklands Development Corporation, free of all democratic control, and promised big tax breaks and lush profits to property developers.

There were few jobs for local people, but, for the Tories, that was just too bad. People had to adapt to the "enterprise culture", not vice versa.

It was more like enterprise barbarism. It was a typical capitalist debauch. Profiteers rushed in to grab a slice, without any planned relationship of what they built to social need. It was a sickening, sordid waste. Billions of pounds were spent on lavish marble-panelled offices while schools, hospitals and local authority housing were crumbling.

A Labour government should nationalise all building land, nationalise the big property companies and building companies, and set up a publicly-owned construction corporation to carry out a democratically decided national building programme" (S02 April).

Yugoslavia: from break-up to bloodbath

The old Yugoslav federation broke down in 1991. Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, and Serbia went to war against them.

In 1992 the fighting spread to Bosnia-Herzegovina. This republic, with its mixed population of Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslim Slavs, has been ripped apart into Serb areas (ready to be annexed by Greater Serbia) and Croat areas (ready to be annexed by Greater Croatia), with only tiny enclaves remaining to the Muslim community, which was over 40 per cent of the population.

In 1993 the danger looms of war spreading to Kosovo — where an Albanian population is held subject by Serbia — and to Macedonia. Albania, Greece, and Turkey could be drawn into the conflict.

Massive Western military intervention — demanded by the left-Labour weekly *Tribune*, for example — might halt the bloodshed for now, but would not bring a democratic solution. A big-power intervention would be concerned not about democracy but about re-establishing trade and investment at minimum cost. It would ride roughshod over any minority demand that seemed too costly to grant or weak enough to be suppressed.

Only a movement uniting workers from all the Yugoslav nations, on a programme of consistent democracy — self-determination for all nations, the broadest possible voluntary federation, local autonomy for minorities — can bring peace.

Socialists in the West should do all we can to help socialists, democrats and peace activists in ex-Yugoslavia — and to force Britain's mean-spirited government to open its door to refugees.

and how we can win

slump, the Tories deliberately devastated whole industries because they wanted to smash up the labour movements based on them: we see a vengeful echo of this now in the decision to wipe out the mining communities.

Against this Tory onslaught, general working-class struggle and a General Strike was the necessary answer. It did not come, and it proved impossible for the revolutionary socialists to make it come.

"Things could have gone differently. If... If... All such 'ifs' point to the question of leadership."

A terrible feeling of its own impotence seemed to grip the broad labour movement, whose leaders had been demoralised and pushed into cringing defeatism by the 1970s. Successive Tory blows ensured that this posture continued — with heroic exceptions like the great miners' strike of 1984-5 — and is only now being shifted.

Events did not go the way they did inevitably or mechanically. At various turning points things could have gone differently. To take one example: the miners' strike. If the deputies (pit foremen) had struck, as they nearly did, the miners could have won. If the dockers (picked off three years after the miners) had struck for more than brief periods in conjunction with the miners, we could have won. If the local government Left in Liverpool, even so late in the day as 1984-5, had fought and combined with the

miners, we could have won. If... If...

All such "ifs" point to the question of leadership.

At the core of the failures of the labour movement is the failure of the left — the real left. For about 25 years the British working class went through waves of politically headless industrial militancy, powerful enough to thwart the plans of the ruling class again and again. The Labour Party was unique of its kind in its openness; the trade unions were loose and ramshackle and not well policed by the bureaucrats. Tremendous possibilities existed for the building of a powerful revolutionary socialist — Trotskyist — party integrated with the mass working-class movement.

But the Trotskyist movement was marked, scarred, and mutilated by Stalinism. It was organised in the 1950s and '60s as a Stalinist-type automation party (the Healy organisation), and then, as the Healy monopoly was broken, by a series of such organisations, less grotesque than the Healyites but on the same lines — the SWP, Militant, etc.

It was sectarian, trying to lay down the law to the broad labour movement, shop stewards and Labour Party rank and file alike, and devoid of the idea — central to our politics since Marx and Engels — that the revolutionaries must help the broad labour movement evolve, organising "the party" in the process.

"Trotskyism" was primitive in its ideas, or, in reaction against the primitive dogmas, formless, shapeless, and boneless. It was a divided, confused, ultra-left, Stalinoid and sectarian "Trotskyism". The bureaucrats and the Stalinists were left in

control under a hail of usually incoherent denunciations, to do what they did.

Today socialism seems to be a depleted force. But it is the pseudo-socialisms that are a depleted force, including the Stalinist counterfeit of socialism which for decades linked "socialism" with horrors and monstrosities. The destruction of that "socialism" is good!

As a forest fire makes the ground fertile, the destruction of that Stalinist "socialism", together with the greatest crisis of capitalism in two generations, creates the conditions for a new growth of real working-class libertarian socialism. In the beginning was the critique of capitalism!

We are the bearers of that socialism, and of the unfalsified tradition of the Marxist movement. We are the bearers of the ideas that alone will fructify working-class struggles and enable them to avoid needless catastrophes such as that which the British working-class movement suffered in the 1980s.

The labour movement revives

Though on Wednesday 21 October the weather was cold, and on Sunday 25 October the rain came down in drenching bucketfuls, it was possible to have a sense of the sun rising after the long cold Arctic night through which the labour movement has come. The whole political climate is changing.

Against the widespread retreat of the left from the labour movement — and it is a retreat, no matter what "militant", "socialist", and righteously anti-reformist slogans are shouted — Socialist Organiser has insisted on the centrality of the labour movement, Labour Party and trade unions alike, for all socialist perspectives. It is another way of saying that the working class is central to all socialist perspectives. There is no longer any reason to doubt who was right in this dispute.

Cut off from the rhythms and logic of the class struggle, sectarians like the SWP jump in now, at the first stage of the labour movement's revival, with the most advanced of all slogans (short of "Revolution Now!") But if by a miracle the TUC were to declare a "General Strike Now", it would probably be a flop.

The ground has not been prepared. The labour movement is only beginning to feel a limited confidence in itself and in what it might do. "General Strike Now" is a proposal to abort the movement which began with the big demonstrations!

Such "left" shouting is not the way to promote the labour movement towards a general industrial confrontation with the Tories. It is a way to brand the left as toytown and irresponsible.

The movement must — if it is to develop, and not be a mere splutter of indignation — be a two-pronged movement: escalating trade union action and solidarity around defence of the miners and on such questions as hospital closures, combined with a political campaign against the Tories, and within the labour movement against the right wing.

(Socialist Organiser, 29 October).

January

- Boris Yeltsin decrees price rises in Russia, sending basic living costs to three, four or five times what they were before, and putting 90% of Moscow's population below the official poverty line.
- The army takes over in Algeria to forestall election victory for Islamic fundamentalists.
- 100,000 march against fascism in Paris, and 100,000 in Milan.
- Militant expels its long-time leader Ted Grant, who starts Socialist Appeal.

February

- AEU and EETPU ballots show big majority for a merger

March

- FW De Klerk wins big majority in whites-only referendum in South Africa.

April

- Tories win General Election

May

- Big public sector workers' strike in Germany wins improved pay deal.
- Riots sweep Los Angeles after a white jury acquits police shown on videotape beating up a black man.

June

- Denmark votes against Maastricht Treaty.
- Over one million workers in South Africa strike in protest at the De Klerk government's policies.

July

- John Smith elected Labour Party leader.
- Tory "White Paper" proposes that, over time, all schools should be transferred from Local Education Authorities to central government control and made to seek business sponsorship.

August

- Around four million workers in South Africa join protest strikes.
- In Rostock, in north-east Germany, thousands cheer Nazi thugs as they burn down a refugee hostel.

September

- Troops of the South African "bantustan" of Ciskei shoot dead 28 peaceful marchers.
- France votes narrowly "yes" to Maastricht, but nearly one million people spoil their ballots in protest.
- The European Exchange Rate Mechanism falls apart: the pound and the Italian lira are devalued. Bank of England wastes £10 billion on trying to defend the pound.
- Arthur Scargill reveals that the Tories intend to close "up to 30 pits". The real figure will turn out to be 31.

October

- Labour Party Conference offers no radical response to the Tory crisis — but does vote to keep Labour's trade union link.
- Mass strikes and demonstrations in Italy to protest against cuts imposed by the Italian government after the lira fell out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism. Big demonstration in Britain against pit closures.
- Tomlinson Report recommends closing several London hospitals and axing 20,000 health workers' jobs.

November

- Tory government announces a 1.5% pay limit — an enforced cut in real wages — for public sector workers.
- "Iraqgate": a court hearing reveals that the Tory government was secretly arming Saddam Hussein while he massacred the Kurds and while the Tories said publicly that arms sales were against the law.
- 350,000 march against racism in Berlin, and 150,000 in Bonn.



In July John Smith was elected leader of the Labour Party, to continue Kinnock's tradition of attacking the left but not the Tories



The tabloids and the Tories

"So now we know we're ruled by a bunch of incompetents who would probably fail GCSE Economics and wouldn't know how to run a whelk stall. What a pity that the Telegraph, Mail, Sun etc didn't tell us all back in April." (SO, 5 October)

The roots of

By John O'Mahony

In the last few years, undisguised anti-semitism has again become a force in Europe, especially in Russia and the east. It has re-emerged both in its racist, zoological, 19th century form, and in its earlier Christian, "native Russian", form.

Why does this happen? Why, again and again, in one form or another, time after time, does Jew-baiting become a force in history? There are always "immediate" reasons, but one central, continuous, underlying reason is this: anti-semitism is threaded into the very fabric of Europe's two thousand year-old Christian civilisation.

Christianity is saturated with anti-semitism. The Christian *New Testament* is one of the main documents of historic anti-semitism.

As the classic, Marxist writer Karl Kautsky shows in the excerpt from his book *The Foundations of Christianity* on the following pages, the *New Testament* writers set out, deliberately and systematically, to demonise the Jews and foment hatred against them as the murderers of Christ. They did it by inventing fantastic and self-contradicting tales about the death of Christ.

When Christianity merged with the declining Roman state 1,700 years ago, and then, 1,500 years ago, with its successor states, the *New Testament* and its stories, ideas and motifs became, for well over a thousand years, the main subject of art and literature.

Many dozens of generations of children were drilled in the *New Testament's* malignant



Louis Farrakhan: his anti-Jewish demagoguery is given an Islamic gloss, but feeds on Christian tradition

tales, presented as the word of God. "Who condemned Jesus Christ to death?" goes the question in the Catholic catechism which, until recently, children from the age of five or six learned by heart. The answer? "Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, did it at the desire of the Jews".

An imaginary parallel will help make it clearer. Suppose that our own civilisation has broken down, as that of Rome did in the fifth and sixth centuries. Most of the survivors regress to subsistence farming. Literacy is almost lost, becoming the special expertise of monks and priests.

Most of our great books of learning and science are lost. Those we save acquire great authority in a world where the observation and experimentation of science go out of fashion and venerable authority is considered sufficient.

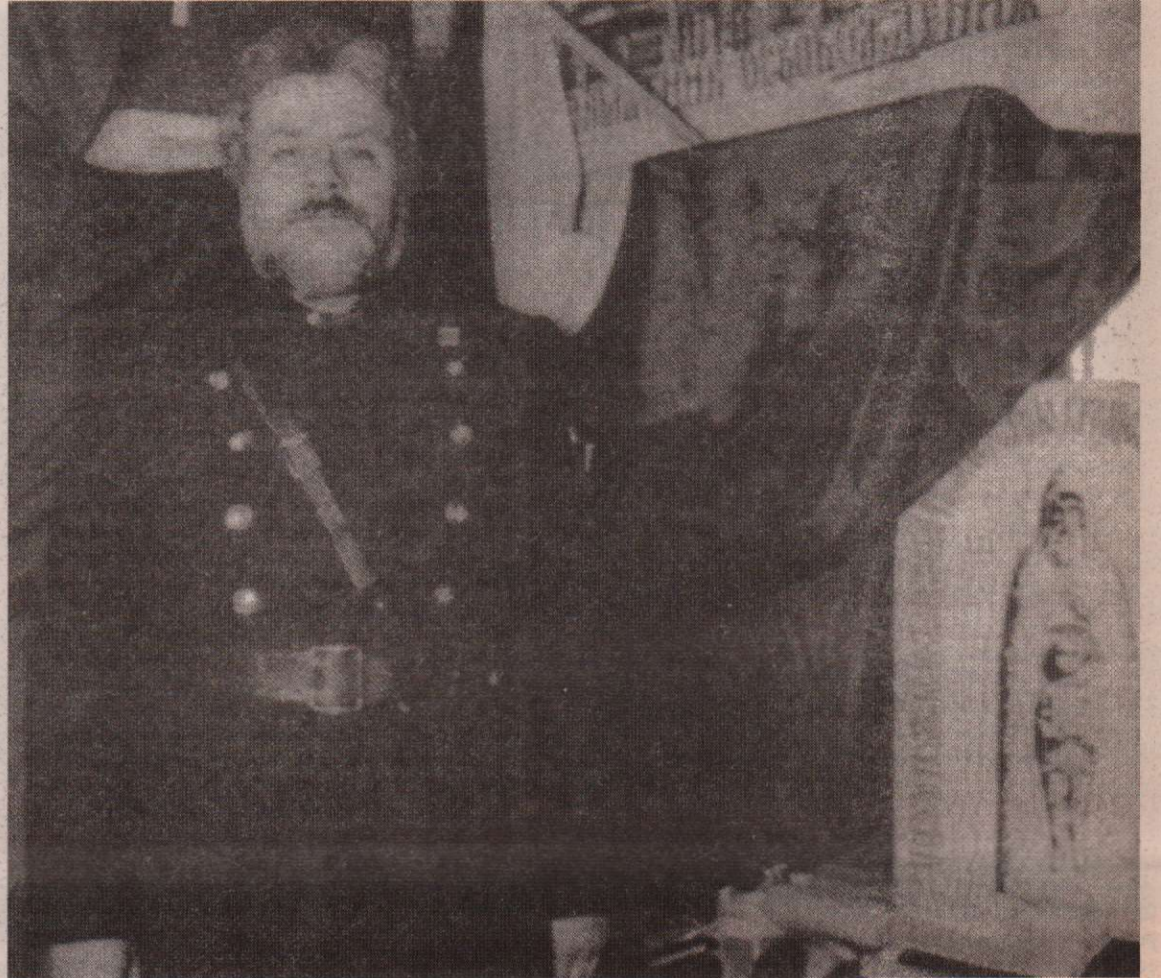
One of the books which survives, preserved by its devotees, is *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*. This book purports to be a Jewish account of Jewish plans to take over the world. It was forged early this century by the Okhrana, the political police of ultra-Christian, Tsarist Russia.

It recast the traditional, Christian Jew-hatred, with which Tsarist Russia was saturated, into a venomous modern political fantasy. It had immense influence. It has been called a "warrant for genocide".

Suppose then that in our imaginary world, thrown back to the level of barbarism, a new religion takes shape, a sort of neo-Christianity, organised by a powerful caste of priests. It worships, as one of its central "holy books", the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

And then, as society evolves and develops over many hundreds of years, slowly redeveloping a civilisation, generation after generation would learn the divine truth concocted by the Okhrana policemen.

It would form the subject of paintings and literature and drama. When a new Enlight-



Pamyat is the modern successor to the "Black Hundreds", the semi-official Tsarist organisation for the persecution of Jews

ment arose, and drove this nonsense off the highways of intellectual life, it would survive as prejudice and folk-wisdom. Living Jews and their behaviour would be judged not according to everybody else's standards but according to the patterns of malevolence outlined in the *Protocols*.

This fiction is horribly close to the true story of our own civilisation and its development. The *New Testament* — with whose vicious anti-Jewish libels we are so familiar that they can and do go unnoticed — has, down the centuries, been the warrant for generations and ages of persecution. It is the soil on which the anti-semites have grown up again in Eastern Europe and Russia.

The Stalinist rulers did not fight anti-semitism, but fomented it. They took Christian anti-semitism and wove it into their own "Protocols", according to which the great evil conspiracy is not Jewish exactly, but "Zionist", and centred on Israel.

Many on the would-be serious left, misled by their justified and proper sympathy

with the Palestinian Arabs who are in conflict with the Jewish state of Israel, uncritically accept this Stalinist reworking of the old anti-semitism. An article by Stan Crooke, in *Workers' Liberty* no.10*, demonstrates conclusively the Russian Stalinist origins of the conventional far-left "anti-Zionism".

Karl Kautsky's detailed analysis of the anti-semitism in the *New Testament*, and therefore at the heart of European civilisation, is part of the necessary antidote to this poison.

The events analysed by Karl Kautsky are set two thousand years ago in Roman-occupied Judea.

The vast Roman Empire united Europe, much of North Africa, and parts of Asia. The Judeans resisted Roman rule fiercely. While the upper classes tended to make peace, the people refused.

The Jews were divided into parties and factions — Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots. Eventually, in 70 AD, the Romans razed the city of Jerusalem to the ground, completing the dispersal of the Jews, who already had

settlements all over the empire.

The early Christians were one sect of Jews, feeling sectarian hatred towards the others. As time wore on, the dominant Christian faction, led by Paul of Tarsus, ceased to be Jews, no longer, for example, requiring converts to be circumcised.

By the time the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were written, decades after the events they depict, the antagonism between Christian and Jew was very bitter.

Christianity grew stronger in the next 300 years, until it became a mighty power in the ossifying Roman Empire. At the beginning of the fourth century, Christianity became the official religion of the empire, and its priesthood merged with the immensely powerful bureaucracy of the Roman state.

Over time it got to the position of not having to tolerate other religions. The dominant Christian faction persecuted rival Christians, too.

* *Workers' Liberty* 10, price 95p plus 34p postage, is available from: AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

anti-semitism

The Bible's great anti-Jewish lie, by Karl Kautsky

There are indeed few things that may be pointed out in the Gospels with a certain degree of plausibility as actual facts in the life of Christ: his birth and his death; two facts which indeed, if they can be proved, would show that Jesus actually lived and was not merely a mythical figure, but which throw no light whatever upon the most important elements in a historical personality: namely, the activities in which this person engages between birth and death. The hodgepodge of moral maxims and miraculous deeds which is offered by the Gospels as a report on these activities is so full of impossible and obviously fabricated material, and has so little that can be borne out by other evidence, that it cannot be used as a source.

Not much different is the case with the testimony as to the birth and death of Christ. Yet we have here a few indications that an actual nucleus of fact lies hidden under the mass of fabrications. We may infer the existence of some such basic facts if only from the circumstance that these stories contain communications that were extremely embarrassing for Christianity, which Christianity had surely not invented, but which were obviously too well-known and accepted among its adherents to have enabled the authors of the Gospels to substitute their own inventions for them, which they often did without hesitation in other cases.

"Tradition declared that the Romans had crucified Jesus as a champion of Jewish independence, a traitor to Roman rule. This tradition became embarrassing. Christianity wished to be on good terms with the Roman authorities."

One of these facts is the Galilean origin of Jesus, which was very inconvenient in view of his claims to be a Messiah of the line of David. For the Messiah had to come from the city of David. We have seen what peculiar subterfuges were required in order to connect the Galilean with this city. If Jesus had been merely a product of the imagination of some congregation with an exaggerated messianic vision, such a congregation would never have thought of making a Galilean of him. We may therefore at least accept his Galilean origin, and with it his existence, as extremely probable. Also, we may accept his death on the cross. We have seen that the Gospels still contain pas-

sages which permit us to assume that Jesus had planned an insurrection by the use of force, and had been crucified for this attempt. This also is such an embarrassing situation that it can hardly be based on invention. It is too sharply in contrast with the spirit prevailing in Christianity at the time when it was beginning to reflect on its past and to record the history of its origin. Not — be it remembered — for historical purposes, but for polemical and propaganda purposes.

"As the evangelists were just as ignorant as the great mass of the lower classes in those days, they produced the most remarkable mixtures of colours in their retouching of the original picture."

The death of the Messiah himself by crucifixion was an idea so foreign to Jewish thought, which always represented the Messiah with the splendour of a victorious hero, that only a real event, the martyrdom of the champion of the good cause, producing an ineffaceable impression on his adherents, could have created the proper soil for the idea of the crucified Messiah.

When the pagan Christians accepted the tradition of this crucifixion, they soon discovered that it had a drawback: tradition declared that the Romans had crucified Jesus as a Jewish Messiah, a king of the Jews, in other words, a champion of Jewish independence, a traitor to Roman rule. After the fall of Jerusalem this tradition became doubly embarrassing. Christianity was now in open opposition to the Jews, and wished to be on good terms with the Roman authorities. It was now important to distort the tradition in such a manner as to shift the blame for the crucifixion of Christ from the shoulders of the Romans to those of the Jews, and to cleanse Christ not only from every appearance of the use of force, but also from every expression of any pro-Jewish, anti-Roman ideas.

But as the evangelists were just as ignorant as the great mass of the lower classes in those days, they produced the most remarkable mixtures of colours in their retouching of the original picture.

Probably nowhere in the Gospels can we find more contradictions and absurdities than in the portion which for nearly two thousand years has always made the profoundest impression on the Christian world and stimulated its imagination most powerfully. Probably no other subject has



For many centuries the literature and art of Europe was saturated with Christianity — including Jew-hatred. Here, the crucified Christ, having risen from the dead, confronts his sceptical disciple, Doubting Thomas, who probes his wounds

been so frequently painted as the sufferings and the death of Christ. And yet this tale will bear no sober investigation, and is an aggregation of the most inartistic and crude devices.

It was only the power of habit which caused even the finest spirits of Christendom to remain obtuse to the incredible interpolations made by the authors of the Gospels, so that the elemental pathos involved in the crucifixion of Jesus, as well as in any martyrdom for a great cause, had its effect in spite of this mass of detail and imparted a brighter halo even to the ridiculous and absurd elements of the story.

The story of the Passion begins with Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem. This is a king's triumphal procession. The population comes out to greet him, some spread their clothes before him on the road, others chop down branches from the trees, in order to strew them on his path, and all shout to him with jubilation: "Hosanna (Help us!); blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Mark xi, 9).

Kings were received thus among the Jews (cf. Kings ix, 13, speaking of Jehu). The common people are attached to Jesus; only the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, "the high priests and scribes", are hostile to him. Jesus conducts himself as a dictator. He has sufficient strength to drive the sellers and bankers out of the Temple, without encountering the slightest resistance. He appears to have

absolute control of this citadel of Judaism.

Of course this is a slight exaggeration on the part of the evangelist. If Jesus had ever possessed such great strength, it would not have failed to attract considerable notice. An author like Josephus, who relates the most insignificant details, surely would have had something to say on the subject. Besides, even the proletarian elements in Jerusalem, the Zealots, for instance, were never strong enough to govern the city without opposition. They encountered resistance again and again. If Jesus had been attempting to enter Jerusalem and purify the temple against the opposition of the Sadducees and Pharisees, it would have been necessary for him first to fight a victorious battle in the streets. Such street battles between the various Jewish factions were every-day events in Jerusalem at that time.

It is worthy of note, however, in the tale of his entrance, that the population is represented as greeting Jesus as the bringer of "the kingdom of our father David", in other words, as the restorer of the Jewish kingdom. This shows Jesus not only in the light of an opponent of the ruling class among the Jews, but also as opposing the ruling classes of the Romans. This hostility is surely not the product of a Christian imagination, but of the Jewish reality.

There now follow in the report of the Gospels the events that we have already treated: the order that the disciples obtain arms, the treason of Judas, the armed conflict on the Mount of Olives. We

have already seen that these are remnants of an ancient tradition that later were no longer felt to be appropriate and were retouched to make them more peaceful and submissive in tone.

Jesus is taken prisoner, led to the high priest's palace and there tried:

"The court assembles immediately after the arrest in the palace of the high priest. What would we think in Germany of the reliability of an account of a trial for high treason, with the court reported as sitting in the Royal Palace in Berlin?"

"And the chief priests, and all the council sought for witnesses against Jesus to put him to death; and found none. For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together... And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying: Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee? But he held his peace and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him: Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said: I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest rent his clothes, and saith, What

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need we any further witnesses? ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye? and they all condemned him to be guilty of death" (Mark xiv, 55, 56, 60-64).

Truly a remarkable form of court procedure. The court assembles immediately after the arrest of the prisoner, the same night, and not in the courthouse, which was probably on the Mount of the Temple, but in the palace of the high priest. What would we think in Germany of the reliability of an account of a trial for high treason, with the court reported as sitting in the Royal Palace in Berlin? False witnesses now appear against Jesus, but in spite of the fact that no one cross-examines them, and that Jesus makes no reply to their accusations, they can adduce nothing to incriminate him. Jesus is the first to incriminate himself by declaring that he is the Messiah. Wherefore all this apparatus of false witnesses if this admission is sufficient to condemn Jesus? Their object is solely to demonstrate the wickedness of the Jews. The death sentence is immediately imposed. This is a violation of the prescribed forms, on which the Jews at that time laid very careful stress. Only a sentence of acquittal could be pronounced by the court without delay; a condemnation could only be pronounced on the day following the trial.

But did the council at that time have the right to impose sentence of death at all? The Sanhedrin says: "Forty years before the destruction of the Temple Israel was deprived of the right to pronounce judgment of life and death."

We find this confirmed in the fact that the council does not execute the punishment of Jesus, but hands him over, after having tried him, to be tried again by Pilate, this time under the accusation of high treason against the Romans, the accusation that Jesus had intended to make himself king of the Jews and thus free Judea from the Roman rule. An excellent indictment to be drawn by a court of Jewish patriots!

It is quite possible, however, that the council had the right to pronounce sentences of death which required the approval of the Procurator for their execution.

Now what course does the trial take before the Roman potentate?

"And Pilate asked him: Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him: Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him again, saying: Answerest thou nothing. Behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled. Now at that feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired and there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. But Pilate answered them, saying: Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? For he knew that the chief priest had delivered him for envy. But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. And Pilate answered and said again unto them: What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? And they cried out again: Crucify him. Then Pilate said unto them: Why, what

evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly: Crucify him. And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified" (Mark xv, 2-15).

In Matthew, Pilate goes so far as to wash his hands in the presence of the multitude and to declare: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said: his blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew xxvii, 24, 25).

Luke does not tell us that the council condemned Jesus to death; the council simply denounced Jesus to Pilate.

"The Jews had not the slightest cause to be indignant at a man who summoned them to refuse to pay taxes to the emperor... acting in the spirit of Zealotism, then dominant in the Jerusalem population."

"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate, and they began to accuse him, saying, we found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said: Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people: I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place" (Luke xxiii, 1-5).

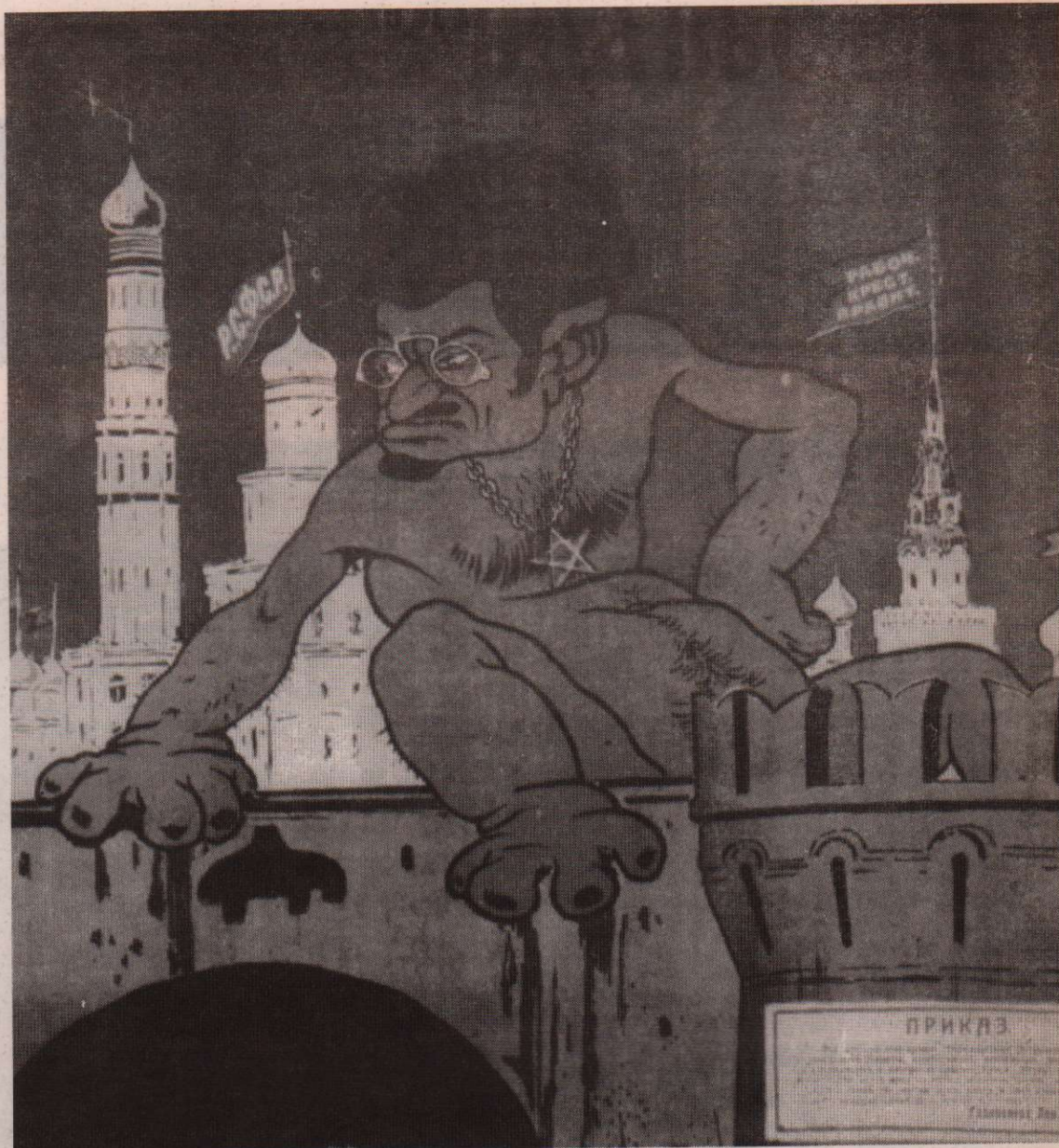
Luke is probably closest to the truth. Jesus is here accused of treason in the presence of Pilate and with courageous pride he does not deny his guilt. When asked by Pilate whether he is the king of Jews, in other words, their leader in the struggle for independence, Jesus declares: "Thou hast said it." The Gospel of Saint John is aware how awkward it would be to retain this remnant of Jewish patriotism, and therefore has Jesus reply: "My kingdom is not of this world," meaning: if it had been of this world, my subordinates would have fought. The Gospel of Saint John is the youngest; it therefore took a long time for the Christian writers to make up their minds thus to distort the original facts.

The case for Pilate was very clear. As a representative of the Roman power, he was merely doing his duty in having the rebel Jesus executed.

But the great mass of the Jews had not the slightest cause to be indignant at a man who wished to have nothing to do with Roman rule and summoned them to refuse to pay taxes to the emperor. If Jesus really did so, he was acting in full accord with the spirit of Zealotism, then dominant in the Jerusalem population.

It therefore follows from the nature of the case, if we assume the accusation in the Gospel to be true, that the Jews sympathised with Jesus, while Pilate was obliged to condemn him.

But what is the record in the Gospels? Pilate finds not the slightest guilt in Jesus, although the latter admits such guilt himself. The governor again and again declares the innocence of the accused, and asks what evil this man has done.



The Russian workers' revolution declared war on the Russian traditions of anti-semitism, placing anti-Jewish agitators and pogrom organisers outside the law. The whites, whose heirs now strut the streets of Russia, fomented anti-semitic prejudice against the workers' government. Here is a typical piece of their art, depicting Leon Trotsky

This alone would be peculiar. But still more peculiar is the fact that although Pilate does not recognise Jesus's guilt, he yet does not acquit him.

Now it sometimes came to pass that the Procurator found a political case too complicated to judge it himself. But it is unheard of that one of the emperor's officials should seek a solution of the difficulty by asking the masses of the people what was to be done with the accused. If he preferred not to pronounce condemnation in cases of high treason, he would have to send the accused to Rome, to the emperor. The Procurator Antonius Felix (52-60 A.D.), for example, acted thus. He enticed the head of the Jerusalem Zealots, the bandit chieftain Eleazar, who had harried the land for twenty years, to come to him, by promising him safe-conduct, then took him prisoner and sent him to Rome, besides crucifying many of his adherents.

Pilate might thus have sent Jesus to Rome. But Matthew assigns a most ridiculous role to Pilate: a Roman judge, a representative of the Emperor Tiberius, lord of life and death, begs a popular gathering in Jerusalem to permit him to acquit a prisoner, and on their deciding negatively, replies: "Well, slay him, I am innocent of this blood". But no quality could more violently contradict that of the historical Pilate than the clemency suggested in the Gospels. Agrippa I, in a letter to Philo, calls Pilate "an inexorable and ruthlessly severe character," and accuses him of "corruption, bribery, violence, theft, manhandling, insults, continuous executions without sentence, endless and intolerable cruelties."

His severity and ruthlessness produced such terrible conditions

that even the Central Government at Rome became disgusted and recalled him (36 A.D.).

And we are asked to believe that this man was exceptionally just and kind in the case of the proletarian seditious Jesus, besides showing a degree of consideration for the wishes of the people that was of fatal outcome for the accused.

"The evangelists depict us mob that hates Jesus to such an extent it would rather pardon a murderer than him — no more worthy object was available — and is not satisfied until Jesus is led off to crucifixion."

The evangelists were too ignorant to notice these difficulties. But they must have felt that they were assigning a peculiar role to the Roman governor. Therefore they looked for a cause that would make this role more plausible: they report that Pilate was accustomed to release a prisoner at Easter at the request of the Jews, and that when he offered to release Jesus they replied: "No, we should rather have the murderer Barabbas."

In the first place, it is peculiar that no such custom is mentioned anywhere except in the Gospels; such a custom would be contrary to the Roman practice, which did not give governors the right of pardon. And it is contrary to any orderly legal practice to assign the right of pardon to an accidental mob rather than to a responsible body. Only theologians could accept such legal conditions at

their face value. But even disregarding this, even if we accept the right of pardon so peculiarly assigned to the Jewish mob that happens to be circulating in front of the Procurator's house, we must nevertheless ask what is the relation between this practice and the present case?

Jesus has not even been legally sentenced. Pontius Pilate is faced with the question: Is Jesus guilty of high treason or not? Shall I sentence him or not? And he answers with the question: Will you make use of your right of pardon in his favour or not? Pilate, instead of pronouncing judgment, appeals for pardon! If he considers Jesus innocent, has he not the right to acquit him?

Now follows a new absurdity. The Jews are supposed to have the right to pardon; how do they exercise this right? Do they content themselves with asking that Barabbas be freed? No, they also demand that Jesus be crucified! The evangelists apparently infer that the right to pardon one implies the right to condemn the other.

This insane judicial practice is paralleled by a not less insane political practice.

The evangelists depict for us a mob that hates Jesus to such an extent that it would rather pardon a murderer than him; the reader will please remember, a murderer — no more worthy object of clemency was available — and is not satisfied until Jesus is led off to crucifixion.

Remember that this is the same mob that only yesterday hailed him as a king with cries of hosanna, spread garments before his steps and greeted him jubilantly, without the slightest contradicting voice. And it was just this devotion on the part of the mob that constituted — according to the

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Gospels — the cause for the desire on the part of the aristocrats to take Jesus's life, also preventing them from attempting to arrest him by daylight, making them choose the night instead. And now this same mob appears to be just as unanimous in its wild, fanatical hatred against him, against the man who is accused of a crime that would make him worthy of the highest respect in the eyes of any Jewish patriot: the attempt to free the Jewish community from foreign rule.

Has anything happened to justify this astonishing mental transformation? The most powerful motives would be needed as an explanation of such a change. The evangelists merely utter a few incoherent and ridiculous phrases, if anything at all. Luke and John assign no motives; Mark says: "The high priests incited the multitude against Jesus"; Matthew: "They persuaded the multitude." These turns of phrase merely show that the Christian writers had lost even the last remnant of their political sense and political knowledge.

Even the most brainless mob cannot be talked into fanatical

hatred without some motive. This motive may be foolish or base, but there must be a motive. The Jewish mob in the Gospels exceeds the most infamous and idiotic stage villain in its stupid villainy. For without the slightest reason, without the slightest cause, it clamours for the blood of him whom it venerated but yesterday.

The matter becomes still more stupid when we consider the political conditions of the time. Distinguishing itself from almost all the other portions of the Roman Empire, the Jewish community had a particularly active political life, presenting the highest extremes of all social and political oppositions. The political parties were well-organised, were by no means mobs beyond control. The lower classes of Jerusalem had been completely imbued with Zealotism, and were in constant sharp clash with the Sadducees and Pharisees, and filled with the most savage hatred against the Romans. Their best allies were the rebellious Galileans.

Even if the Sadducees and Pharisees succeeded in "inciting" cer-

tain of the people against Jesus, they could not possibly have brought about a unanimous popular demonstration, but at most a bloody street-battle. There is nothing more ridiculous than the notion that the Zealots would dash with savage cries, not against the Romans and aristocrats, but against the accused rebel whose execution they force from the jelly-fish Roman governor, in spite of the governor's strange infatuation for the traitor.

No one ever invented anything more outrageously childish. But with this effort to represent the bloody tyrant Pilate as an innocent lamb, and to make the native depravity of the Jews responsible for the crucifixion of the harmless and peaceful Messiah, the genius of the evangelists is completely exhausted. The stream of their invention runs dry for a bit and the original story again peeps through at least for a moment: After being condemned, Jesus is derided and maltreated — but not by the Jews — by the soldiers of the same Pilate who has just declared him innocent. Pilate now has his soldiers not only crucify Jesus, but first has him scourged

and derided as King of the Jews; a crown of thorns is put upon his head, a purple mantle folded about him, the soldiers bend the knee before him, and then they again beat him upon the head and spit on him. Finally they place upon his cross the inscription, "Jesus, King of the Jews".

This again brings out the original nature of the *dénouement*.

Again the Romans appear as Jesus's bitter enemies, and the cause of their derision as well as of their hatred is his high treason, his claim to be King of the Jews, his effort to shake off the Roman yoke.

Unfortunately, the simple truth does not continue to hold the floor for long.

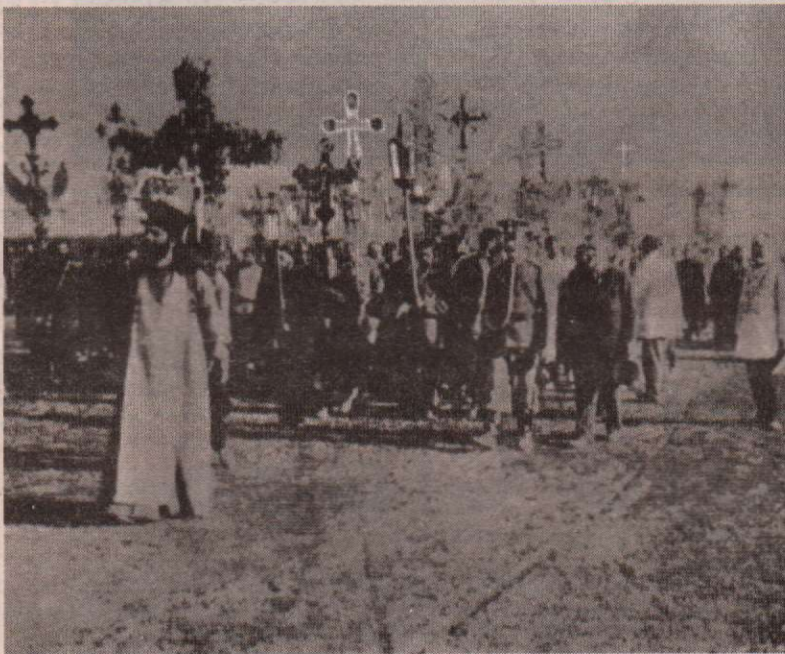
Jesus dies, and it is now necessary to furnish proof, in the form of a number of violent theatrical effects, that a god has passed away: "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of

the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matthew xvii, 50-53).

The evangelists do not report what the resurrected "saints" accomplish in and after their joint outing to Jerusalem, whether they remain alive or duly lay themselves down again in their graves. In any case, one would expect that such an extraordinary event would have made a profound impression on all eye-witnesses and convinced everyone of the divinity of Jesus, but the Jews still remain obstinate; again it is only the Romans who recognise the divinity.

"This tale was for many centuries one of the best means of arousing hatred for the Jews, endowed by nature with the most wicked malice and obstinacy, that must be kept away from all human society."

The "Black Hundreds" was the popular name for the Tsarist state's semi-official, holy organisation for persecuting and murdering Jews. Here they are in procession, crucifixes and priests to the fore, preaching hatred and gathering crowds who would descend on Jewish districts, beating, raping, looting, burning and killing. The police would help rather than hinder them



Bolsheviks outlawed anti-semites

In all Russia's long history, decisive blows against anti-semitism were struck only by the workers' revolution of 1917. A speech by Lenin, from 1919, and a government decree of 1918, show how the Bolsheviks attacked the problem.

Anti-Semitism means spreading enmity towards the Jews. When the accursed tsarist monarchy was living its last days it tried to incite ignorant workers and peasants against the Jews. The tsarist police, in alliance with the landowners and the capitalists, organised pogroms against the Jews. The landowners and capitalists tried to divert the hatred of the workers and peasants who were tortured by want against the Jews. In other countries, too, we often see the capitalists fomenting hatred against the Jews in order to blind the workers,

to divert their attention from the real enemy of the working people, capital. Hatred towards the Jews persists only in those countries where slavery to the landowners and capitalists has created abysmal ignorance among the workers and peasants. Only the most ignorant and downtrodden people can believe the lies and slander that are spread about the Jews. This is a survival of ancient feudal times, when the priests burned heretics at the stake, when the peasants lived in slavery, and when the people were crushed and inarticulate. This ancient, feudal ignorance is passing away; the eyes of the people are being opened.

It is not the Jews who are the enemies of the working people. The enemies of the workers are the capitalists of all countries. Among the Jews there are working people, and they form the majority. They are our brothers, who, like us, are oppressed by capital; they are our comrades in the struggle for social-

ism. Among the Jews there are kulaks, exploiters and capitalists, just as there are among the Russians, and among people of all nations. The capitalists strive to sow and foment hatred between workers of different faiths, different nations and different races. Those who do not work are kept in power by the power and strength of capital.

Rich Jews, like rich Russians, and the rich in all countries, are in alliance to oppress, crush, rob and disunite the workers.

Shame on accursed tsarism which tortured and persecuted the Jews. Shame on those who foment hatred towards the Jews, who foment hatred towards other nations.

Long live the fraternal trust and fighting alliance of the workers of all nations in the struggle to overthrow capital.

According to reports received by the Council of People's Commissars, the

counter-revolutionaries are carrying on agitation for pogroms in many cities especially in the frontier zone, as a result of which there have been sporadic outrages against the toiling Jewish population. The bourgeois counter-revolution has taken up the weapon which has slipped from the hands of the Tsar.

The absolutist government, each time when the need arose, turned the wrath of the peoples directed at itself against the Jews, at the same time telling the uneducated masses that all their misery comes from the Jews. The rich Jews, however, always found a way to protect themselves; only the Jewish poor always suffered and perished from instigation and violence.

The counter-revolutionaries have now renewed hatred against the Jews, using hunger, exhaustion and also the backwardness of the most retarded masses as well as the remnants of that hatred against the Jews which was planted among the people by absolutism.

In the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic, where the principle of self-determination of the toiling masses of all peoples has been proclaimed, there is no room for national oppression. The Jewish bourgeois are our enemies, not as Jews but as bourgeois. The Jewish worker is our brother.

Any kind of hatred against any nation is inadmissible and shameful.

The Council of People's Commissars declares that the anti-semitic movement and pogroms against the Jews are fatal to the interests of the workers' and peasants' revolution and calls upon the toiling people of Socialist Russia to fight this evil with all the means at their disposal: National hostility weakens the ranks of our revolutionaries, disrupts the united front of the toilers without distinctions of nationality and helps only our enemies.

The Council of People's Commissars instructs all Soviet deputies to take uncompromising measures to tear the anti-Semitic movement out by the roots. Pogromists and pogrom-agitators are to be placed outside the law.

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, ULYANOV (LENIN);

Administrator of Affairs of the Council of People's Commissars, BONCHE-BUREVICH;

Secretary of the Council, N. GORBUNOV.

July 27, 1918.

"Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly, this was the Son of God'" (Matthew xxvii, 54).

But the high priests and Pharisees on the other hand still declare Jesus to be an imposter (xxvii, 63), and when he is resurrected from the dead the only effect is that the Roman eyewitnesses become richer by the bribe we have already mentioned, in payment for their declaring the miracle to be an imposture.

Thus, at the end of the story of the Passion, Jewish bribery transforms the honest Roman soldiers into tools of Jewish treachery and baseness, which had shown devilish hatred in fighting the sublimest divine clemency.

In this entire tale the tendency of servility toward the Romans and hatred for the Jews is laid on so thick and expressed in such an accumulation of monstrosities that one would think it could not have had the slightest influence on intelligent persons, and yet we know that this device worked very well. This tale, enhanced by the halo of divinity, ennobled by the martyrdom of the proud proclaimer of a high mission, was for many centuries one of the best means of arousing hatred and contempt for the Jews, even in the most benevolent minds of Christendom; for Judaism was nothing to them, and they kept aloof from it; they branded the Jews as the scum of humanity, as a race endowed by nature with the most wicked malice and obstinacy, that must be kept away from all human society, held down with an iron hand.

But it would have been impossible ever to secure a general acceptance of this attitude toward the Jews, if it had not arisen at a time of a universal hatred and persecution of the Jews.

Arising at a time when the Jews were outlawed, it has immensely aggravated this condition, prolonged its duration, widened its sphere.

What we know as the story of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ is in reality only an incident in the history of the sufferings of the Jewish people.



The middle class nightmare movie, such as "Patriot Games" was very big this year

1992: a nightmare for the middle class

Cinema

Belinda Weaver looks back on the films of 1992

I thought *The Crying Game* was 1992's best film; it was the neatest and least predictable. *The Last of the Mohicans* was hard to beat for adventure, even if it didn't have anything to say. *Mississippi Masala*, set in Uganda and Mississippi, and *Raise the red lantern*, set in pre-Communist China, were both fresh and sur-

prising, totally unlike standard Hollywood movies.

There were some feelgood movies I liked — *The Prince of Tides*, which was sentimental but right about facing up to family problems; and *A League of their own*, the good-natured, women's baseball movie.

Political films were weak. *JFK* was over-long, and it shot itself in the foot by manufacturing evidence, when the case for a conspiracy to kill Kennedy was already strong enough. *Bob Roberts* was an honest attempt to satirise right-wing American

politicians, but it wasn't angry enough.

The middle-class, nightmare movie was big this year. In a whole series of films — *Patriot Games*, *Pacific Heights*, *Unlawful entry*, *Single white female*, *The hand that rocks the cradle* — the sanctuary of the American home was breached by nutters bent on revenge.

"With the ending of the Cold War, the American middle class seems paralysed by fear of a new enemy much closer to home — the have-nots, the down-and-outs."

With the ending of the Cold War, the American middle class seems paralysed by fear of a new enemy, an enemy much closer to home — the have-nots, the down-and-outs. *Straight out of Brooklyn* showed that "nightmare" from the other side, showed what life is like for poor, black Americans with no jobs and no future. I know whom I feel sorrier for.

Most of Hollywood's big money films left me cold this year. With the exception of *The Last of the Mohicans*, all the so-called epics, the big historical films like *1492* and *Black Robe*, failed to get out from under a welter of costume and detail; their stories were a mess, or non-existent. Many of them were an excuse to push today's causes. Preserving the wilderness proved the most popu-

lar, cropping up in films as different as *1492* and the creakingly inept *Medicine Man*.

The vast and lavish expenditures on empty, leaden movies this year sickened me. Two gangster era biggies, *Bugsy* and *Billy Bathgate*, were particularly wasteful, with costumes and sets taking centre-stage. They had nothing to say.

The Player tried to satirise Hollywood, but didn't go far enough. It ridiculed the shallowness and philistinism of Hollywood producers, but the portrait was more affectionate than angry.

The big sex film of the year, *Basic Instinct*, was a dud. The hype ensured it drew an audience — it's still packing them in — but it was shallow and misogynistic, its plot full of holes.

There were some films I missed (*Unforgiven*, *Cape Fear*); some I've yet to see (*Strictly Ballroom*, among others), so the list below is the best of what I did get to see. Some of the films are still around, so see them if you can.

My top ten for 1992:

The Crying game
Glengarry Glen Ross
Straight out of Brooklyn
Raise the red lantern
Mississippi Masala
Bob Roberts
The Prince of tides
Europa Europa
A League of their own
The Last of the Mohicans

Dud of the year:

Shining through (Melanie Griffith fights the Nazis)

Most pretentious:

Voyager (trendy alienation).

An island for citizen Procrustes*

It happens often: "You?" — they mean to cut —
 "No Irishman!" My politics don't fit;
 The island is the Nation: not "them", "it"!
 Folk? No — geography! But you must not
 Arraign those dancers of the communal strut,
 Or wash old blood out of your eyes, or audit
 The soundings from the suppurating pit,
 Or speak of Tone — dry bones stomped underfoot.
 "West Brit! Not your identity or birth
 Or inbred love of the Gael tells who you are,
 Or names your place: — strait politics engirth,
 Ingather: we define, and we debar!"
 The real is cut to fit a false design,
 Grown monstrously unreal, then malign.

Sean Matgamna

* In the old Greek tale, Procrustes was a crazy innkeeper who murdered his lodgers trying to fit them exactly to his beds. The short he stretched on a rack to elongate them; the tall he chopped down to the required size by lopping off feet or head.

Politically right-wing Books

Cathy Nugent reviews the **Official Politically Correct Dictionary and Handbook**, by Henry Beard and Christopher Cerf

This book is misleadingly named. This is definitely the unofficial and unauthorised dictionary of right-onness for the 1990s. Whilst it appears to be a straightforward list of Politically Correct terminology and directives, it is not. With a healthy cynicism, illustrations and tongue-in-cheek humour the authors attempt to subvert this Newspeak for the 1990s.

They give the game away in the introduction by this explanation; because PC advocates believe language is the major force in 'constructing' what we perceive as 'reality', explain the authors, "it is easy to see why so many reformers have forsworn a unified assault on such distracting side issues as guaranteeing equal pay for equal work, eliminating unemployment, poverty, homelessness... in order to devote their energies to linguistic inequities described in these pages."

In other words, linguistic right-onness is what is worrying the middle class these days. This is just another side of bourgeois politics. And what a pathetic hodge-podge of intellectually inept concepts and elitist trash it is.

Some of it is very difficult to get your head around. For instance whilst it is Politically Incorrect (and hurtful) to avoid sitting by someone in the tube who smells it is also Politically Incorrect to choose to smell yourself (of soap or perfume for example) as this is oppressive to people with allergies.

We have the patronising:

- Economically marginalised = poor
- Environmental hygienist = cleaner
- Houseless: this is apparently more sensitive than "homeless" because, after all, home is wherever you are.

Then there is the dishonest and patronising:

- In an orderly transition between career changes = on the dole.

Perhaps most revealing of the white liberal guilt/angst of PC's basis is the phrase "difficult to serve" — as in Hannibal Lector is "difficult to serve".

Politically Correct might just be an amusing, hip thing to write about in the Sunday colour supplements in Britain. But in America it does appear to be catching on among certain sections of the academic elite and student population. It's not a distinct movement as such, but is obviously related to radical or cultural feminism and black nationalism. The highly controversial Dr Leonard Jeffries, for instance, is a leading figure.

Politically Correct also has its origins in a shabby, regurgitated post-modernist ethic. As well as denying reality is "knowable" this involves a destructive and irrational relativism. A post-modernist would say no book is inherently more valuable or interesting than another. And what is as equally important is the readers' response, no matter how random. Thus something is not "boring", it is "differently interesting". Of course, for the Political Correcters, things are only relative up to a point: obviously Rudyard Kipling is not as "differently interesting" as Alice Walker.

In fact what is behind PC is censorship, the banning of all that is not PC it is right wing. This piece of reactionary nonsense — an advert for services — from British Coal Enterprise sounds just like something out of the Politically Correct Handbook: "BCE has unrivalled experience in the resettlement of a multi-disciplined labour force" (ie sacking people)", "Now that experience is available to any company which is about to reorganise its employment profile" (ie sack lots of workers).

Double speak, Newspeak, dishonest and elitist. Politically Correct should be fought. George Orwell is turning in his grave.

The case for a public sector alliance

By Angela Sweet

The sheer scale of the attacks which will be launched on public sector workers in the coming period, the more obvious political character of those attacks, and the potential they create for a politicised, industrial fightback across the unions, renders the role of an educated group of revolutionary socialists indispensable.

If the Tories have their way 1993 will truly be a *annus horribilis* for public sector workers. The Tories are intent on:

- a 1.5% public sector pay limitation, cutting the living standards of 5.8 million workers;
- the closure/privatisation of the coal industry;
- the carve-up and sale of British Rail, Parcellforce, London buses, Companies House, Driver Vehicle

Licensing Agency and Vehicle Inspectorate;

- the 'market testing' of some 44,000 civil service jobs by September 1993;
- the massive extension of market testing in local government and the NHS;
- pushing through their education reforms (with inevitable job loss);
- driving home their counter-revolution in the NHS, closing wards, hospitals and services (Tomlinson as the most immediate threat);
- implementing the Company Plan on the London Underground.

These attacks are part of the Tories' plan to destroy much that was obtained in the decades after the Second World War (a 'welfare state', with millions of workers in relatively stable, public sector employment and overwhelmingly represented in

trade unions), recasting British capitalism in the image of the red in tooth and claw American model.

If the Tories succeed, tens of thousands of public sector jobs will be destroyed (over the longer term, hundreds of thousands); the pay and conditions of millions of workers will be slashed; thousands will be cast into poverty, now and in their old age; a major social change will have been effected as workers are moved from historically secure to immensely insecure employment; local democracy will be gutted; and the material bases of Labourist politics substantially undermined. And for the service-users in whose name this onslaught will be carried out? Poorer services!

The threat to the trade union movement is immense. With the decline of manufacturing industry, the public sector is now a

bigger base for trade unionism than the private sector.

If the public sector is broken up into competing elements, some at least will be fighting for their survival. The Tories know this. They are determined to break up the public sector 'monopolies' in order to break up the unions resting on them.

Unions which have recruited and organised public sector workers relatively easily will not find things so easy with private contractors who are vehemently anti-union and whose contracts are dependent on cutting labour costs and keeping the workforce docile.

Breaking up the trade unions and refusing to recognise them has been a central feature of contracting out to date.

In some cases (civil service computing, notably) it seems to have been the major factor in contracting out.

Even where work remains in-house, contracting out squeezes serious trade unionism. The day after the general election, the *Financial Times* was explicit: "In practice the ability of the unions to hold individual councils to ransom has been considerably weakened by Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT). Council or health authority manual workers must now work to targets they agree in contracts with the employer. If they take industrial action and fail to hit those targets, they may lose their contract to the private sector."

In the 1991 Liverpool strike, the council's manual workers abandoned their action before the white-collar staff, after losing some contracts to outside companies. It is unlikely that white-collar staff will be able to hold out as long as they did in Liverpool with the imminent

extension of CCT to their jobs. The formation of UNISON, increasing as it does the potential for abuse of union power, makes it essential that CCT should continue in public services."

Campaign priorities

We should campaign for:

- the broadest possible unity of public sector workers;
- unity of public service workers and users, advocating the democratic control of services and defining those services according to our needs rather than defending the status quo of a mythologised welfare state;
- an official national demonstration against privatisation, contracting out, job loss, cuts in working conditions and living standards, and, in the event of such a demonstration not being called, we should agitate for an unofficial demonstration called by Broad Lefts, rank and file groups, SMTUC, Labour Party lefts and as many official bodies of the labour movement as possible;
- a cross-public sector day of strike action against service cuts, pay cuts and job loss, linked to the miners;
- co-ordination of unified, legal pay strikes across the public sector to break the 1.5% limit;
- for the largest possible conference of civil service trade unionists early next year.

Contracting out

Contracting out is essentially a political attack on the whole working class (which will also devastate the lives of huge number of middle class people).

It therefore requires a militant industrial and political response, uniting service workers and users.

We fight for co-ordinated selective action leading to all out action.

In opposing contracting out we do not accept political responsibility for existing state functions and services. We at all times advocate services defined by and in the interests of the working class.

The existing leadership of the labour movement is hostile to the development of any such strategy. Whatever their differences, the trade union leaderships are all essentially relying on the law and in-house bids. Nevertheless there are small signs of them moving under pressure.

The building of the maximum pressure within unions and for cross-union rank and file links is therefore vital. This should be essentially on the basis of trying to turn our official unions around to fight contracting out. While not fostering illusions in the law, neither should we react kneejerk to the bureaucracy's craven reliance on it. We are for using all weapons appropriate to particular situations. We are for action "with" the bureaucracy where possible, and against them where necessary.

We are for the use of all negotiating processes to delay tender procedures, to complicate specifications and provide some safeguards for members. We oppose trade union involvement in in-house bids, tender review panels and the cutting of jobs and conditions.

The left and the London Underground débacle

LEFT PRESS

By Dick Walker and Peter Stone

If you wanted some serious analysis of what went wrong in the recent London Underground dispute you would not have found it in most of the left press.

The *Morning Star* was clearly the worst. They managed to portray as a victory the acceptance by the RMT leadership of the whole of the Company Plan, which involved flexible rostering, compulsory overtime, the abolition of travelling time, unpaid meal relief and the abolition of seniority, not to mention 5,000 job losses!

The *Star's* headline after the RMT called off the strike was "Tube bosses forced to retreat".

Obviously, just one more step in the British capitalist class's decade-and-a-half-long retreat... "Defend and advance" as they say.

Socialist Worker was little better. They worked out that acceptance of the Company Plan by the RMT was a disaster. Unfortunately they then confused the issue, saying that the RMT should have gone ahead with the strike on 24 November. They are wrong.

The strike would have been solid in a couple of areas, but in most places the news was bad. Every activist on the Underground shared this assessment, including semi-detached members of the SWP who knew the mood in the depots.

In fact *SW* doesn't actually argue why the strike should have gone ahead. They simply assert that because there was a 3-1 majority for action there had to be a strike.

It's a bit hypocritical for a small group of people who insist on full strike pay as a condition for all-out action in areas like local government, where their own members are involved, to call on tubeworkers to go into battle with all the odds against them. Assessments of the "balance of forces" are okay on the Islington NALGO strike committee, say, but not, it seems, on the London Underground. One rule for the proles, another for the SWP.

Militant were a bit better.

Their article was obviously written by someone with a feel for the real situation. The problem was that the comrade tried to have his cake and eat it.

At one point *Militant* asserts: "We do not believe that the strike should have been called off but postponed until the other unions had had their ballot results". While elsewhere in the same article we read: "Had the strike gone ahead it would not have been totally solid from day one but we would have had enough support to cause major disruption to the service and formed a platform from which to build a strike".

If the *Militant* are for postponement, why play around with the notion that the RMT should have gone ahead with the action?

As no *Militant* supporter actually argued that at the time, we can only assume that this paragraph was put in to make it appear that *Militant* were for the strike regardless.

The function of this two-faced approach is simple. By arguing the case for postponement of the action until the other two tube unions had balloted, *Militant* can talk to real, live tubeworkers. Throwing in the stuff about the strike going ahead regardless sounds nice and militant to the general reader.

Unfortunately for *Militant*, Marxists have to tell the truth. And telling the truth means spelling out the realities of the situation.

This is how one tubeworker did that in last week's *SO*:

"RMT leader Jimmy Knapp sold us down the river. But it was right not to go ahead on Tuesday 24 November. The strike should not have been cancelled but postponed until the ASLEF ballot result.

"RMT organises the majority of the train crew on the two lines which still have guards, the Northern and the Central. On the one-person-operated (OPO) lines, ASLEF has a big majority of train crew.

"Train crew are crucial in deciding the success or failure of any strike. Because of the ASLEF leaders' hostility to action, and the RMT leaders' stupidity in calling their strike before the ASLEF ballot result, it was clear on Monday 23rd that the response to the strike was likely to be poor, especially on the OPO lines.

"Because the bosses are legal

ly entitled to sack all strikers at a particular workplace, a strike with a small minority of RMT and ASLEF activists out on the picket lines while the big majority of workers went in would have enabled management to carry through a mass clean-out of the best trade unionists.

"The sooner any decision to postpone the strike was taken, the better, but even on Monday 23rd it would not have been too late."

Militant's tubeworkers were prepared to tell the truth and argue for postponement at the District Council. It's a pity their paper was not.

How did *Socialist Outlook* respond?

The article in the latest *Outlook* by a "London Underground train driver" doesn't really make any clear points at all. The basic argument seems to be: 'All of us on the London Transport District Council are good class-fighters, we did our best, so leave us alone'.

The argument is contradictory, to say the least.

At one point their comrade asserts: "Readers of *Socialist Worker* or the *London Evening Standard* probably believe the incident was a straightforward sell-out by the RMT bureaucracy.

"In fact the leadership played little role from start to finish. The strike was demanded, fought for and organised by rank and file activists around RMT's London Transport District Council, and called off at the behest of the same 100 or so militants."

Let's take this argument at face value.* It raises more questions than it answers. For a start, "was the RMT right to call a strike without waiting for the other unions' ballot results?"

It would seem not: "The [RMT] vote for action revealed a desire to strike; but workers were not convinced we could win without the other unions."

However, that is just a half-thought. In the real world, leading *Outlook* people — no names, no packdrill — argued straight down the line that it would be wrong to wait for ASLEF.

In fact, it was even against the RMT constitution to propose postponing the strike! [God help us if that was broken!] Decisions about calling off the strike or not were up to RMT NEC. We could not let ASLEF dictate to

us, etc. etc. *ad nauseam*.

Within a few days this self-same great "rank and file leader" went from telling mass meetings "I don't want to hear about ASLEF" to explaining the disaster in terms of "ASLEF are no longer a union".

The simple facts of the matter are this. *Socialist Outlook* argued long and hard for a united fight. The *Outlook* people on the Underground dithered. As the strike loomed nearer some of their supporters and fellow-travellers came to accept our case for postponement to wait for the ASLEF result. But they then backed-down at an open District Council Executive meeting after their representative on the "class struggle leadership" spoke out against postponement, and said it could not be discussed.

The rest is history. The strike was not postponed; it was called off.

The whole of *Outlook's* coverage had been characterised by a tendency to over-emphasise the objective situation, the balance of forces, while simultaneously downplaying what a conscious and coherent leadership could have done to develop tactics to deal with that objective situation and existing balance of forces. If you don't do this you just end up saying "In these circumstances workers won't fight". This is a poor trade union policy for Marxists.

We believe that any serious analysis of the objective situation would lead to the conclusion that every possible effort had to be put into getting a united strike with ASLEF.

If that proved impossible, the conditions for the maximum number of ASLEF members not crossing RMT picket lines had to be created. Inescapably, this meant waiting for the ASLEF ballot result. (Or for the ASLEF leadership to risk everything by calling off their own ballot while RMT had held back waiting for the result.)

For RMT to go ahead without ASLEF is to propose that the majority of train crew (who are in ASLEF) strike unofficially. If this is the correct approach, why on earth didn't the RMT District Council organise unofficial action themselves? The answer is simple. The RMT decision to strike alone was not serious trade union tactics. It was an ultimatum designed to "expose" the ASLEF leadership.

Outlook's coverage of the dispute is full of praise for the "class fighters" and the "militant minority tradition" of the London Transport District Council. Well, self-praise is no praise. And when it merges into covering things up, it becomes something worse.

The fact is that preparations for the strike revealed an appalling state of RMT organisation, with the union's sectional councillors and other activists not being seen, or going sick. The District Council leaders just carried on sleepwalking — until the strike was called off.

Outlook can't hide this problem completely. In fact their own article makes a side reference to it: "In some areas, union reps even resigned their positions and told members to come into work". But the basic picture they present is of a "rank and file leadership" above criticism.

Such stuff may impress the Thirty-Something professionals, with a manual worker fixation, who read and — very occasionally — sell *Socialist Outlook*. Tubeworkers deserve something better.

* Footnote

We don't accept the role *Outlook* assign to the RMT NEC.

We think LUL's threat of withdrawing the check-off if there were a strike certainly put the fear of god into Knapp. There's nothing that worries a bureaucrat like a threat to his income.

Also:

a) the RMT leadership set up secret negotiations with LUL management to work out a deal to which Underground NEC rep. Bob Crow was not invited until they had been going on for 13 or 14 hours.

b) The RMT NEC, not the District Council, called off the strike. The NEC met on the Monday morning, the announcement of cancellation was made at lunchtime, and the District Council met in the evening.

c) The strike was not called off at the 'behest' of the District Council. On the contrary. An open meeting of the DC Exec. was told by the DC leadership that postponing the action was not even an option open for discussion. The RMT Exec. had called off the strike and that was that. *Outlook's* comrade-with-no-name backed them up.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

Council tax means cuts

Scotland – democracy yes, nationalism no!

Break links with

Tories and bosses



Scotland United demo, May 1992> This is a dead end. We don't want a labour movement that unites with "patriotic bosses" against the Tories

By Harry Tuttle

The European summit in Edinburgh will be faced with a big demonstration for constitutional change in Scotland. The demonstration on 12 December is backed by all the opposition parties but the main force behind it is the "Scotland United" group, led by George Galloway. The demonstration raises the demand for a multi-option referendum to choose between independence, an Assembly and the status quo of the union with England.

Socialists should support this demand, and an assembly, as a democratic gain against the wide perception that the Scots have been cheated and disenfranchised at successive General Elections.

But the leaders of the campaign have no coherent strategy to win a referendum from the Tories. If the labour leaders in Scotland were serious about

such a demand, they would organise parliamentary disruption on a wide scale, and non-cooperation between the Labour councils in Scotland and a Tory Government with no mandate.

Instead, Scotland United are going down the disastrous road of organising an unofficial "referendum" as a publicity stunt, paid for by a couple of rich, nationalist pop stars. Not only does this divert from the campaign for a referendum that counts, but it is likely to be an embarrassing failure.

The fact is, the Scotland United group has tended to wither, and has not called a big mobilisation since the spring. The "constitutional question" has largely been swept aside by the slump and the movement around the miners. It is these battles that will channel the anti-Tory anger of those who gathered in Glasgow's George Square on the Sunday after the Tories' election victory. Meanwhile, the promises to "live dangerously" from some of Labour's leaders have proved

to be hollow. More and more, Galloway's rhetoric becomes indistinguishable from that of the nationalists.

Socialists must spell out some basic home truths to Galloway: we don't want a Scotland where the labour movement unites with "patriotic" bosses against the Tories, but one that fights militantly against capitalism whether "English" or "Scottish". The miners have lit the touch paper for such a movement.

But this means raising the sights of the Scottish labour movement and breaking from the old, cross-class politics of the Scottish TUC's broad alliances. Those politics have achieved nothing from Ravenscraig, to Caterpillar, or in the campaign against the Gulf War. Instead of yet another platform of dignitaries, Stalinists and bishops, the STUC should call a day of action on a working day to back the miners, against job cuts, and for a referendum on constitutional change.

Already local councils are making drastic cuts and - with some Labour councils to the forefront - trying to smash council workers' union organisation.

Next year will be worse - much worse. The Tories' new council tax, their replacement for the poll tax, starts in April. Councils are now publishing the lists saying which houses or flats fall into which "band".

The whole operation is planned to allow local authorities to spend only 0.4% more in cash next year. With inflation of four or five per cent, that will mean real cuts of four or five per cent.

Stiff budget-"capping" regulations will empower central government to impose these cuts on any council which might try to avoid cuts by an over-the-odds council tax.

The tax itself is set to be a shambles. Each household will have to pay an amount depending on the "band" their home falls into, with a discount for single-person households and an exemption for those on Income Support.

- The council tax is slightly less unjust than the poll tax - but only slightly. The richest people, with the biggest houses, will pay a maximum of only three times as much as the poorest.
- In some areas even the houses of the well-off will fall into the bottom bands, so council tax will be almost a flat-rate tax.
- In other areas, notably London, a lot of households which are not at all rich will be in the upper bands. Whether a borderline house is put in one band or another will depend on little more than luck - but can make a difference of over £200 to the bill. To appeal against banding will cost at least £50, probably about £150.
- Poll tax arrears will still be collected. Labour councils will still pursue non-payers - of a tax which even the Tories themselves have abandoned as unjust and unworkable.

Local authority trade unionists and Labour Party members should start organising now to stop drastic cuts budgets being pushed through next spring.

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Enclosed (tick as appropriate):

- £5 for 10 issues
- £13 for six months
- £25 for a year
- £ extra donation.