

# A Socialist ACTION

**BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM**

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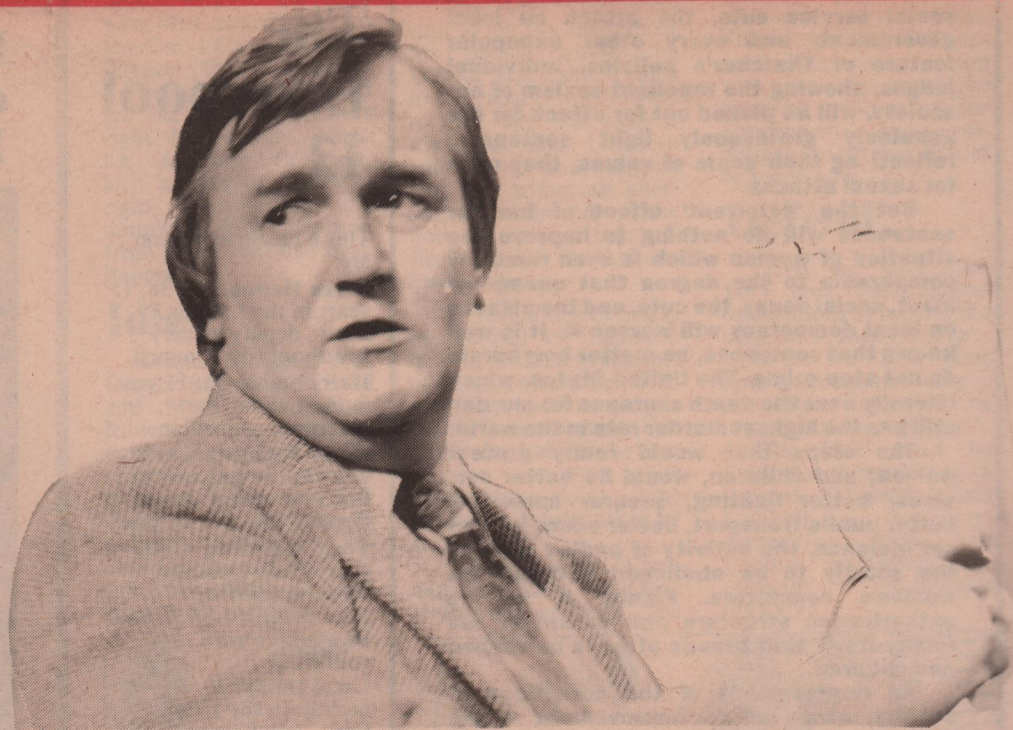
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**END THE WITCH HUNT!**



# DEFEND LIVERPOOL

# DEFEND LAMBETH



LAST MONDAY'S meeting of the Labour Party NEC brought out the full meaning of the witch hunt. It is a technical division of Labour between Neil Kinnock and the capitalist courts.

Last week the courts stepped in to surcharge, disqualify, and in practice bankrupt the Lambeth and Liverpool councillors who voted to uphold Labour Party policy and defy rate capping. The laws under which these convictions took place are so reactionary that even John Cunningham, right wing Labour front bench spokesperson, has been forced to condemn them.

Neil Kinnock at the NEC voted for the resolution which established that the next Labour government would end the ban on holding public office of those convicted under the law.

But instead of backing up those who were subject to such vicious laws, Kinnock proceeded to witch hunt them himself. The

NEC finally drew up the charges for expulsion against 12 Liverpool party members — including councillors under surcharge. Even the resolution of Tony Benn to defer the expulsion proceedings until after the possible appeal by the Liverpool councillors against disqualification was defeated. Neil Kinnock, and the party leadership, just can't wait to get in with their expulsions even if it means prejudicing a court appeal by Liverpool councillors.

The expulsion charges make a mockery even of Kinnock's sop to widespread hostility to the surcharges — the hardship fund which is to be established. This was counterposed to the real need for retrospective legislation by a future Labour government which would reimburse the Lambeth and Liverpool councillors for their losses in defending their communities. As Derek Hatton and other councillors will be expelled, no money to reimburse them will come from a fund established by the Labour

Party.

Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth council, rightly claimed on Tuesday that the resolution passed by the NEC properly interpreted, would mean using public funds to reimburse the Liverpool and Lambeth councillors. It stated 'consideration will be given to the best and most equitable method of dealing with compensation for loss occurred.' But the qualifications, and following phrases in the resolution about 'the Labour movement's clear commitment to the upholding of the law' have already been used by Kinnock to rule out any proper reimbursement by the state.

The pattern with Liverpool and Lambeth is now exactly the same as with the miners. Anyone fighting to defend their community is first frontally assaulted by the courts and state, as with the sequestration of the funds of the NUM and now the surcharges and disqualifications of councillors. Kinnock, and the party leadership, then step

in to vilify whoever is under attack and make it harder to defend both them and those they are fighting on behalf of. A future Labour government led by Kinnock would have exactly the same approach.

Lambeth and Liverpool shows the real meaning of the witch hunt. It is not about 'democratic socialism' as the right in the party claim. Nor is it simply about democracy in the party — although it is centrally about that. The witch hunt is about the attempt by Kinnock to smash all those who stand up and fight for their communities against this government. And he can't tolerate that because it shows up his lack of fight.

Anyone opposed to the policies of this Thatcher government has to be against, and fight against, this witch hunt. That means starting today by defending the Liverpool and Lambeth councillors. It means opposing any expulsions from the party on 28 March.

# Socialist ACTION

## The Fleet Street gutter

**NOTHING COULD** be more repellant and hypocritical than the new law and order campaign launched in the press over the last week. Its concentration was on the acts which are the most horrifying in our society — rape, sexual murders, the abuse and killing of children.

What makes this campaign totally repellant is both who is carrying it out and who is behind it. That sexual assaults, child abuse and attacks on children are social matters which society must take in hand and throw its weight behind eliminating, is not in doubt. But what is involved in the present press campaign is that people who are responsible for the increase in these attacks, and the atmosphere that creates them, are utilising them for their own purposes under the guise of claiming to want to eliminate them.

The *Daily Mirror* pontificated on Tuesday on the need to eliminate pornography. The *Sun*, with scab labour or without, has continued to carry on its so called campaign against sexual attacks.

But no one is more responsible for holding up women as sexual objects, as victims for attack, than the popular press. The *Sun* is protesting about an atmosphere which creates sexual attacks without bothering to consider its own pages!

The Fleet Street press pours out daily a portrayal of human relations based on a perversion of human emotions. The titillatory stories, portrayals of power and submission are the staple fare of the *Sun*, *News of the World*, *Mail* and *Mirror*.

Even more cynical is the role of Thatcher, and the Thatcher government, in this. It is well known that the strategy of the Tory government for reviving its popularity is to launch a massive law and order campaign. The popular press, jumping to orders like obedient poodles, is launching it.

The aim of the campaign is designed to take away attention from unemployment, social service cuts, the attack on local government, and every other unpopular feature of Thatcher's policies. Individual judges, showing the repellant sexism of our society, will be picked out for attack for the genuinely grotesquely light sentences, reflecting their scale of values, they pass for sexual attacks.

But the 'deterrent' effect of harsher sentences will do nothing to improve the situation of women which is even remotely comparable to the degree that unemployment, social decay, the cuts, and the attacks on local democracy will worsen it. It is well known that sentences, no matter how harsh, do not stop crime. The United States, which liberally uses the death sentence for murder, still has the highest murder rate in the world.

The steps that would really protect women, and children, would be better services, better lighting, securer nurseries, better public transport, better education for self-defence, the activity of bodies such as the shortly to be abolished GLC and its women's committee. Finally it is the authoritarian structure and nature of the family itself that breeds attacks on women and children.

An improvement of the conditions of society, above all an improvement of the position of women in society, is the *only* way that sexual attacks on women and children, and murder, will be brought under control.

It is the decay and violence of United States society, for example, that breeds its record high level of murder, rape and sexual crimes. Thatcher, and the system she defends, is the person creating the deepest conditions for the rocketing of the attacks on women, and on children.

It is not necessary or possible to wait for socialism before dealing with the attacks on women. They have to be dealt with now. The *only* practical way forward in that lies in a reversal of the entire social policies of the Thatcher government and its press backers. Without that it is merely a question of the criminal calling 'thief' to divert attention from the real crime.

Those practical measures are genuinely the only way to practically combat these assaults. Those social changes must be at the core of the labour movements reply to the law and order campaign and to really tackling crimes against women and the horror of the family.

## NEC purge — full steam ahead

**TWELVE** of the six named in the majority report at the enquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party have received their 'charges' and will appear before Labour's National Executive on 26 March. The NEC is ploughing ahead with its witch-hunt regardless of the havoc it is wreaking with Labour's election prospects.

It could not have handed the Tories and their courts a better Easter Present.

The decision to defer the meeting from 12 March appears to have been made in order to avoid possible court action against the procedure on the grounds that the 12 have not had time to prepare their 'defence'.

The four not charged are: Sylvia Sharpey-Shafer, chair of the women's council; Josie Aitman, agent for Broad Green CLP, and Paul Astbury and Pauline Dunlop, both councillors.

Of the twelve still on Whitty's hit list, four are councillors: Derek Hatton, Tony Mulhearn, Felicity Dowling and Harry Smith. Of the 16 named in the report, only 10 were agreed unanimously by the six-member majority. But not all the four dropped are those on whom the majority of the inquisition could not agree. Josie Aitman, against whom disciplinary proceedings were agreed by all six members, has also been dropped. 'The party is proceeding judiciously in terms of the constitution,' said Neil Kinnock at the weekend in a Scottish TV interview.

He was questioned on the Liverpool purge after a speech to Scottish Labour Party conference in which

speech this weekend'.

But the running was left to general secretary Larry Whitty, who also addressed the conference in Perth. 'Nothing threatens the unity of the party more than an abuse of the rules and democracy of the party,' he said, and called for 'discipline mixed with tolerance.' It is clear that the tolerance to which he refers is that expected to be exercised by those members of the party be-

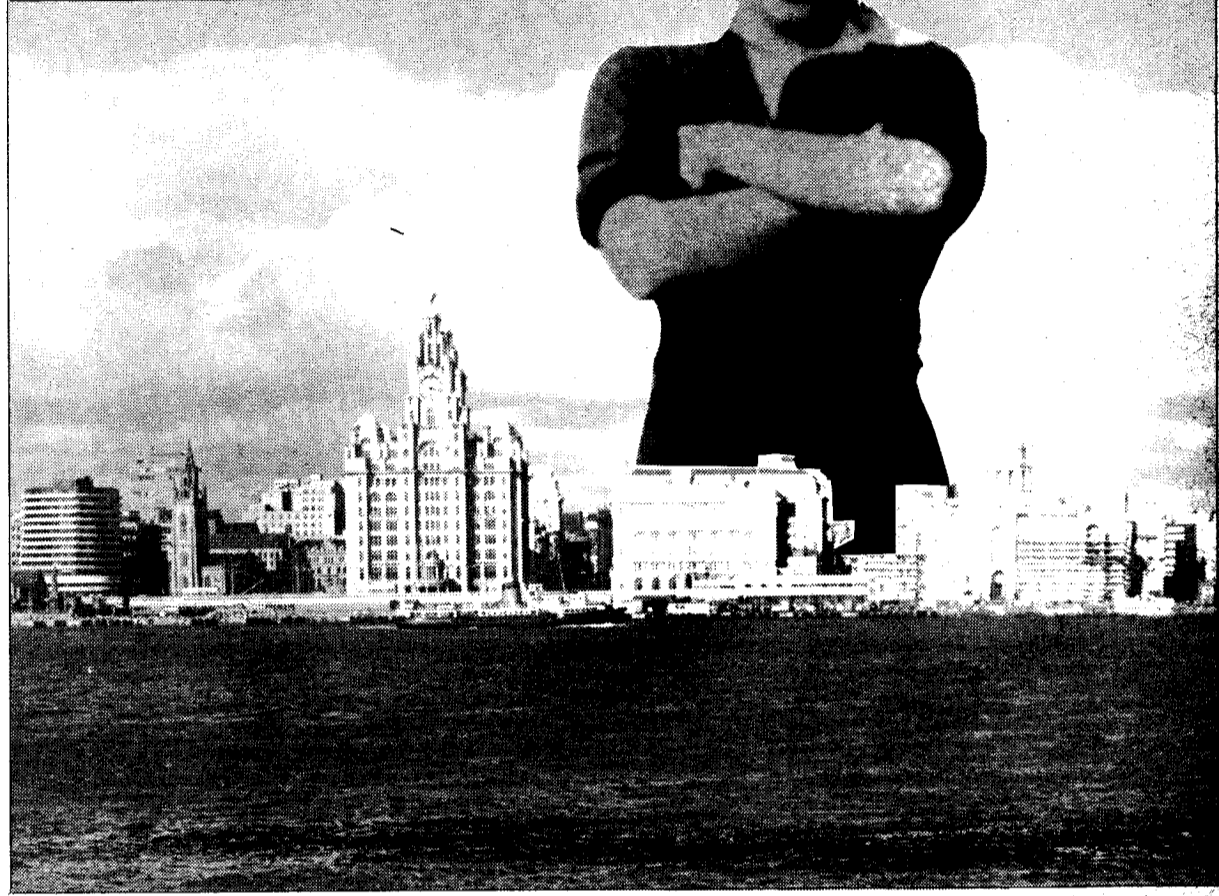
he made no reference whatsoever to the issue. There was press speculation to the contrary. Last Friday's *Glasgow Evening Times* reported: 'Labour leader Neil Kinnock is set to blast Militant tendency in another hard-hitting

ing disciplined and those who oppose such measures.

'Tolerance' from the NEC, as the decision to uphold the enquiry report showed, has been ruled out in advance. At the end of Whitty's speech most

delegates felt he'd made clear that Liverpool expulsions were now under way.

Any doubt was further clarified on Sunday by John Cunningham. Announcing the decision to set up a hardship fund for surcharge councillors, he pointed out 'If the Labour Party decides on a fund of this kind, it would apply to people who are members of the Labour Party. I don't see the Labour Party fundraising for people who are not members.'



## The Liverpool 12

Those facing expulsion are:

**Derek Hatton:** age 38, 15 years in the Labour Party, deputy leader, Liverpool City Council.

**Harry Smith:** 36, 15 years in the Labour Party, Liverpool councillor.

**Roger Bannister:** 34, 15 years in the Labour Party, secretary, Broad Green CLP

**Tony Mulhearn:** 47, 23 years in the Labour Party, president, Liverpool District Labour Party, Liverpool councillor.

**Carol Darby:** 36, 5 months in the Labour Party, black activist.

**Ian Lowes:** 35, 10 years in the Labour Party, chair, Joint Shop Stewards' Committee.

**Tony Aitman:** 37, 22 years in the Labour Party.

**Terry Harrison:** 47, 28 years in the Labour Party, vice-president, Liverpool District Labour Party.

**Richard Venton:** 33, 15 years in the Labour Party.

**Cheryl Varley:** 25, 3 years in the Labour Party, student sabbotical officer.

**Felicity Dowling:** 35, 19 years in the Labour Party, secretary, Liverpool District Labour Party, Liverpool councillor.

**Richard Knights:** 31, 15 years in the Labour Party.

## Expel them, but do it carefully: What the NEC enquiry said



*Doing the Tories' work: John Cunningham wants to stop the expelled councillors receiving money from the hardship fund*

### Para 15.16a

The investigation team consider that: there have been *abuses* and breaches of Labour Party rules and constitution and the resultant distortions of party organisation in Liverpool are of sufficient gravity to require action to be taken by the National Executive Committee. We recommend that the general secretary be instructed to consider the evidence in respect of the above matters given to the team against the persons concerned and, where applicable, to formulate charges against them to be heard by the NEC.

### Para 15.16b

In addition, as indicated in section 14, it is beyond reasonable doubt that the Militant tendency is an organisation with its 'own pro-

gramme, principles and policy for distinctive and separate propaganda, possessing branches in the constituency.' Members of the Militant tendency would therefore be ineligible for membership under Clause 11(4)(b) of the constitution of the Labour Party. The investigation team believe that there is evidence that there may be members of the party who are part of that organisation in Liverpool and the investigation team recommends that the NEC should consider their position under Clause 11(4)(b) in the light of the decision of the 1982 Labour Party conference, the January and July 1983 decisions of the NEC and the subsequent endorsement of those decisions by the 1983 Labour Party conference.

We therefore further recommend that the general secretary be instructed to consider the evidence relating to possible membership of the Militant tendency against the persons named below and, where applicable, formulate charges against them to be heard by the NEC

### Paragraph 15.17

The following members should be considered under (a) or (b) or (a) and (b) above: Tony Mulhearn, chair, DLP, Terry Harrison, vice-chair, DLP, Felicity Dowling, secretary, DLP, Josie Aitman, Tony Aitman, ★ Paul Astbury, ★ Roger Bannister, ★ Carol Darby, ★ Pauline Dunlop, Derek Hatton, Richard Knights, Ian Lowes, ★ Sylvia Sharpey-Shafer, ★ Harry Smith, Cheryl Varley, Richard Venton.

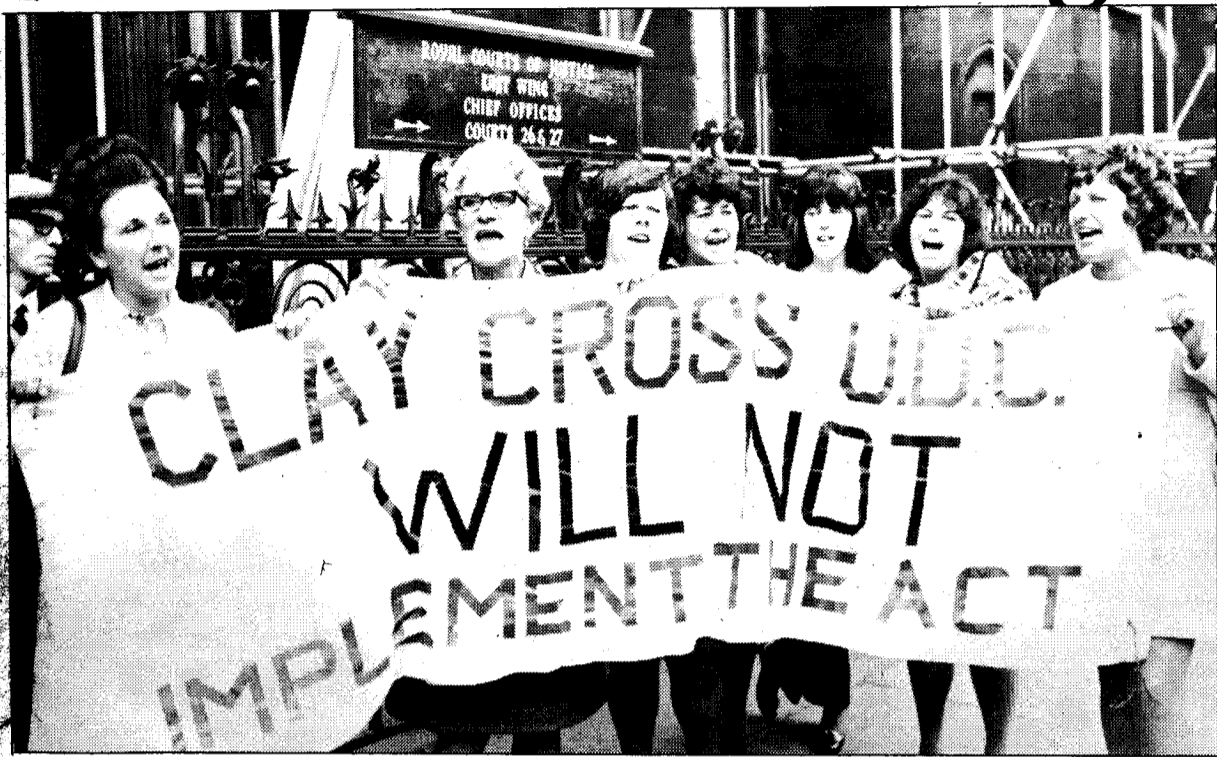
Those asterisked were agreed by four members of the team only. The remainder were agreed by the six NEC members signing this report.

### Para 15.18

There may be other members of the party who have, to varying degrees, been involved or supported Militant tendency in the past. However, the investigation team believes it is neither probable nor profitable to add to the above list. The investigation team recommends that the NEC takes a decision as to disciplinary action if appropriate as rapidly as possible.

It is important to ensure that the rules of natural justice and the constitution of the Labour Party are upheld in conducting these interviews and reaching any decision on disciplinary action.

# Defend party policy, defend the surcharged councillors



Then: Clay Cross councillors even won right wing support for standing up to an unjust law ...

**EIGHTY COUNCILLORS** from Liverpool and Lambeth were surcharged in the courts last week after their two-year long attempt to implement Labour Party policy and defend working people from the attacks of the Thatcher government. In the case of Liverpool that has meant refusing to set a rate, for Lambeth simply setting one late. In addition, the 80 will now be faced with huge court costs and, of course, banned from holding office.

The labour leadership's response came quickly enough. Labour's spokesperson on the environment, John Cunningham appeared on TV

only hours after the court decision ... to point out that Labour's leaders had warned Liverpool and Lambeth that this would happen!

At last, and too late, Neil Kinnock is backing the fund to relieve hardship for surcharge. But there will be no attempt to reverse the court's blatantly political judgement should Labour reach of-

fice. And Cunningham has apparently decided, on behalf of the labour movement, that expelled councillors will not benefit from the fund.

According to media pundits, the decision now puts other councillors, including Sheffield's David Blunkett, under the same threat. In reality, there seems little chance that such action will be pur-

sued. The intention of the Liverpool and Lambeth 'show trials' is to warn others off. The judges took pains to distinguish Liverpool and Lambeth who 'refused' to set a rate from everyone else who 'deferred' setting a rate. And the auditors are already split on whether to proceed further.

By Annie Brady

As usual, politics will determine the actions of these 'impartial' non-elected gentlemen. To take proceedings against David Blunkett and others would risk precipitating a response from the Labour leadership that the Tories and their legal stooges were confident of avoiding in the case of Liverpool and Lambeth.

## Reach

The NEC's 'support' for Liverpool and Lambeth doesn't even reach the level the *right wing* gave to Clay Cross in 1972.

As the *Guardian* editorial of Friday 3 March archly commented: 'It is already clear that the national party leadership's response is much more forthright than ever it was years ago, over Clay Cross.'

Then, the mining village's refusal to implement the 1972 Housing Finance Act led the party's deputy leader, the right wing Mr Edward Short, to tell the 1973 party conference that the next Labour government would see the rebel councillors right. In the event, it was Mr Anthony Crosland, also a man of Labour's right, who lifted the automatic disqualification from office that had been imposed.'

## Idle

Despite two party conference decisions, in 1984 and 1985, the Labour leadership today expects to be able to sit idly by while representatives of the party are pilloried for their stand in support of those policies. Indeed, the immediate background for the Tory court's decision was set by the party's na-

tional executive a week previously.

That NEC accepted the recommendations of the majority report of the enquiry into Liverpool: to shut down the district party and begin expulsion proceedings against up to 16 Liverpool Labour Party members. Those include six of the Liverpool city councillors who are now surcharged and debarred from office.

If it wasn't already clear to the Tories, that decision gave them the green light on Liverpool and Lambeth councillors.

## Strict

Speaking at a meeting of the local campaign group in Pontypridd last weekend, Eric Heffer explained: 'These councillors strictly carried out policies agreed at 1984 party conference. For that political act they are being treated like criminals.'

That suits the Labour leadership down to the ground. Policies defending working people are fine for Sunday-best speechifying, but not for action.

Criminalising Liverpool and Lambeth councillors dove-tails into Neil Kinnock's own policy of illegitimising within the Labour Party any currents who are prepared to stand up now against the Tory attacks.

## Fuel

That very court decision — by the enemies of the people whom the Labour leadership claims to represent — will be used to fuel the fire against Liverpool and Lambeth councillors and anyone else who offers an alternative to the 'drop the policies and get into office' line of the Labour leadership.

In reality however it is the refusal of Labour's leaders to stand in support of Liverpool and Lambeth councils, and the people whom they represent, that risk losing Labour the next election — and not, as the leadership claim, the determined stand taken by such councils.

'Liverpool and Lambeth councillors,' said Eric Heffer last weekend, 'are

## Campaign Group support

HAVING discussed the issue of the surcharged and disqualified councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool at its meeting last Wednesday, the Campaign Group of Labour MPs decided to lend its full support to those councillors in their campaign.

'Their only crime,' said Campaign Group secretary Alan Meale, 'if indeed it was such, was to carry out Labour Party policy. We find it absolutely disgraceful that once again Tory-appointed judges should totally negate the democratic processes by wilfully finding against the interests of working people.'

'We call on the whole of the labour and trade union movement to do whatever is necessary to aid the plight of democratically elected councillors and to fight to see an end to their surcharge and disqualifications.'

victims of Thatcherism because they have fought for their local people, people who elected them. They deserve our full support. There is no reason why such help cannot be given by a future Labour government — and a commitment to do that should be made now.

## Defend

'First we have seen Tory laws used against trade unions defending the interests of their members. Now we see those same laws used against Labour councillors defending the interests of local people.'

The NEC must be flooded with resolutions in support of Liverpool and Lambeth councillors: demanding that the Labour leadership implements conference policy.

## Labour conference policy — the councillors' crime

This Conference considers that the present Government's policy towards local government, notably through the 1984 Rates Act with its related framing and use of the law to eliminate political opposition, is an abhorrent and unacceptable violation of fundamental democratic values and procedures. The last six years have seen an unprecedented level of legislation against local government, either through the withdrawal of local decision-making powers or by adding to local authorities' responsibilities without the essential financial support from central government for their full implementation. It therefore confirms support for those Labour councillors, trade unionists and other representatives of the labour movement who are trying to implement the policy of non-compliance with rate-capping, the penalty system and the equivalent claw back legislation in Scotland. It congratulates those councillors who voted not to set a rate in 1985 until the Government restored the rate support grant stolen from their authorities, and trade unionists who took industrial action in their support.

Conference recognises that non-compliance with these laws is a continuing struggle:

- a) several local authorities have a clear deficit budget for 1985/6 which will lead to crisis at the beginning of 1986 when, at the same time, they and others are likely to be facing a new rate cap or claw back in income;
- b) councillors in Lambeth and Liverpool are being threatened with disqualification, surcharge and bankruptcy for supporting Party policy in defence of their local communities and workforces;
- c) all councillors who resisted rate-capping are similarly threatened;
- d) the combination of rate-capping, reductions in rate support grant and the cost of taking over services as a result of the abolition of the GLC and Metropolitan counties will lead to even more severe cut-backs in 1986/7 if not challenged by the whole labour movement;
- e) cuts and redundancies achieve the same results whether implemented by Labour and Tory councils;

f) this struggle is for local democracy, local services and jobs, and is nothing less than a fight to defend the future of housing, education, social services and the standard of living of all working and unemployed in this country.

Conference recognises that different local authorities face different problems, that tactics must reflect local situations and that the same approaches will not always be applicable in all situations. To make its support practical, conference resolves to:

- i) Call upon the National Executive Committee and Parliamentary Labour Party
  - to support and campaign wholeheartedly with Labour local authorities and trade unions for non-compliance with these unjust laws;
  - campaign vigorously in support of those democratically elected councillors who are being threatened by unelected district auditors with removal from office for carrying out the mandate on which they were elected;
  - link the struggle against rate-capping and cuts in local authority expenditure with the Party's economic and social policies and the Jobs and Industry Campaign as an integral part of a national campaign for jobs and public services, in which a central role must be played by the Party leadership;
- ii) Reconvene the National Local Government Conference within three months in order that precise and united tactics for non-compliance in 1986/7 may be determined;
- iii) Commit the next Labour Government:
  - To repeal the rate-capping and claw back legislation;
  - To restore the rate support grant taken in penalties by this Tory Government;
  - To fully compensate those representatives of the labour movement who have suffered personal loss, bankruptcy, disqualification or whatever as a result of non-compliance with these laws;
  - To reassure the relationship between central and local government finance to provide the maximum freedom for local councils to meet the needs of their communities.

Moved by Sheffield Heeley CLP, seconded by Vauxhall CLP, and adopted by the 1985 Labour Party conference.



... and now: the Labour leaders expel them while the courts bankrupt them.



## Black sections youth committee

THE BLACK sections Annual General Meeting, which took place last weekend, took a number of vital steps to turn to black youth and guarantee them a role. The constitution was changed so that five members of the black section youth committee are automatically on its national committee; the national youth organiser will have a place on the executive; and the youth committee will have the right to send resolutions to the conference. **KINGSLEY ABRAMS**, youth organiser, submitted the following report to the AGM which was enthusiastically endorsed.

It is quite clear that if the Labour Party Black Sections do not build a viable and radical youth section there will be no future for our movement. We have seen Black Youth over the past few years at the forefront of the struggle against this vicious Tory government. Black youth is the most radical element in society.

The Black Sections must work to involve and recruit Black youth to the Labour Party. Therefore, the youth committee must be given the necessary support and resources by the national movement to launch a national recruitment and mobilisation drive.

Over the past year, the Youth Committee has been involved in building links with the Black community. We have taken an active part in a number of defence campaigns including Broadwater Farm, Cynthia Jarret, Cherry Groce and the Justice for the Pryces Campaign. Black Sections youth went down to Waltham Forest College to help the Black youth there in their fight against a racist head-teacher.

We have also been working with Black youth in Tower Hamlets who have been struggling against the most reactionary Labour-controlled council in London. A major part of our campaign over this year has been to take the message of Black self-organisation into the colleges, polytechnics and universities.

The Black Sections Youth Committee has embarked on a major campaign within the LPYS. Kingsley Abrams, Youth Organiser, is standing as the Black Sections candidate for the LPYS seat on the NEC. This campaign raises serious questions of how the LPYS could recruit Black youth to the Labour Party, and tackle the problem of racism on the Labour Party and in society as a whole.

It is also highly relevant to for the whole Left. It is for this reason that the campaign is supported by groups such as the majority of organisations in the LC, CLPD, LCI, WAC, Youth Action, International, Chartist, NOLS and LCC.

It is vitally important that the Black Section movement do realise the importance and significance of this campaign in regard to recruiting Black youth to the Labour Party.

## Youth Fightback splits

**YOUTH FIGHTBACK**, an LPYS newspaper set up last summer and supported by Socialist Organiser and International supporters in the LPYS, has split over the issue of whether to support Kingsley Abrams, who is black sections candidate for the LPYS place on the Labour Party National Executive Committee.

After 12 votes from Socialist Organiser were cast to oppose his campaign against nine in his support at their 23 February editorial meeting, the minority has decided to 'look into other ways of organising'.

The response to Kingley's campaign has revealed the actual commitment of the left to black sections. Militant's response was to stand a black woman on an anti-black sections, anti-women's self-organisation ticket. This, however, does have the merit of electing the first ever black woman to the NEC of the British Labour Party!

Socialist Organiser has responded by standing a candidate of their own against Kingsley Abrams on the sectarian grounds that only supporters of Socialist Organiser's programme can defeat Militant.

• There will be a campaign meeting to coordinate the activity of all taking part in this campaign on Sunday 15 March at 2pm in Birmingham Civic Hall.

# Black women in black sections

THE LATEST black sections bulletin is just out. **LINDA BELLOS'** article, which we reproduce from it, talks about women in black sections and their plan of action for the national black sections conference, which took place this weekend.

FROM THE first national conference of black sections of the Labour Party in Birmingham in June 1984, black women raised a central issue to the campaign, the need to ensure that all black people were represented by black sections. When many of us looked at the platform arranged by the steering committee we saw only men. Black women as usual were left off the agenda. As individuals, and collectively.

When the 2nd national conference was held in London in March 1985, an important constitutional change was made to ensure that 50 per cent of national committee members should be black women.

Another step forward

was the election of a woman chair and vice-chair. But behind what some men felt at the time was a piece of sheer chicanery, lies an important issue, not so much about representation, but more importantly about politics.

How can black sections ensure that the traditional sexism of political organisations, and the Labour Party in particular, can be challenged and reversed?

How can we ensure that the experience of black women is integral to our analysis of black peoples' experience in this country? I believe that the only answer to this issue is to ensure that women have

an organised voice within black sections where we can articulate our experience.

As a national committee we have developed policies on a wide range of issues, many of these have included black women's perspectives. But not all. As more and more of us become active as black women, rather than simply as black people within the campaign, it will be less a matter of chance whether our ideas are included in our policies.

This last point is of crucial importance. Black people, or black men and women? Many men and women have argued that it is divisive for women to separate as women, and not see themselves as just people. But bitter experience has also taught us to be wary of this reductionist approach. The white left are frequently encouraging us to forget race and think only of ourselves as working class.

The same is often the case in the question of gender.

While we clearly acknowledge that our collective interests as black people lies in building unity, we must not sweep under the carpet, the fact that race, gender and indeed sexuality can be opposed to each other. This does not mean that distinctive groups within the struggle cannot ever work together.

On the contrary, the brief history of black sections has demonstrated that men and women, peo-

ple of African and Asian descent, can and do work together successfully. But this does not mean that we have to reduce our experience to 'sameness'. We are united by our common experience of racism, and our collective and individual commitment to fight it, but we still need to recognise and respect the differences that exist between us.

As white members of the Labour Party have begun to respect, and sometimes fear, black sections, there has been the growing use by the white male left in particular, to play off black women against black men. When positions within the party structure are being fought over we are increasingly seeing women versus blacks, in other words,

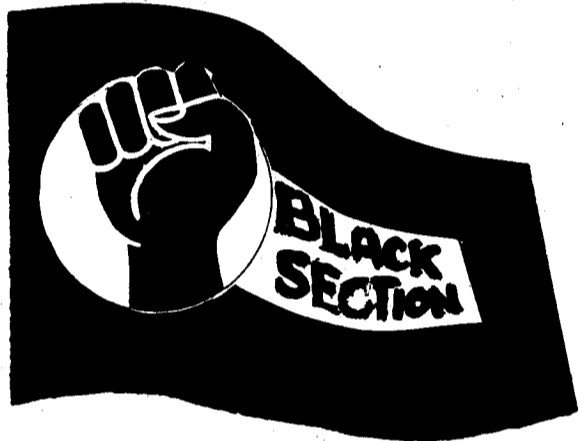
white women versus black people.

This comes about because the white male left reluctantly recognise that equal opportunities within the party should exist but then seek to retain their own monopoly of power by pitting black candidates (usually men) against white women, to compete for one place.

As black people we can only guard against this practice by ensuring that we do not replicate the sexism in the wider party, and as black women by ensuring that our voice is heard within the ranks of 'women' in the Labour Party, so that we do not allow ourselves to be used by white men in their power games to retain control of the Labour Party, by divide and rule.

## Plan of action: Black Women in Black Sections

- 1) To ensure that the black women's caucus elect two representatives annually to ensure that black women's view are represented on the national committee of black sections.
- 2) These two reps. to have the following functions:
  - a. Liaison on national committee.
  - b. National organiser of black women in black sections.
- 3) To draw up a programme of action to ensure a high profile of issues of relevance to black women, such as health, childcare, employment and housing, and to ensure that these issues are taken up by the national committee.
- 4) To draw up a programme of action for intervention within the women's section of the Labour Party, at an individual and collective level.



## A different reality

Two reports on the causes of the Handsworth riots have recently hit the headlines and embarrassed the local Chief Constable, who is trying to get hold of plastic bullets against the wishes of the West Midlands Police Committee — to be abolished on 1 April along with the West Midlands County Council.

Both reports refute police claims that 'drug-pushers and criminals' were behind the riot. Birmingham City Council's report, published by Julius Silberman, blames unemployment. West Midlands County Council's (WMCC) report, *A Different Reality*, places further blame squarely on institutionalised racism.

**MICK ARCHER** examines the different reality behind the latest clashes over inner-city police.

The great virtue of both reports is that they nail the lie, assiduously cultivated by the Tories and police, that 'barbarous criminality' was responsible for the events of last September. They ask 'Why did Handsworth happen?'

Part of the answer is given in the detailed social indices in both reports. These show that:

- In January 1985 unemployment in the Lozells Road area stood at 41.1 per cent with over half of these having been unemployed for more than a year.

- Of the 1,434 school-leavers in Handsworth in 1984 only 99 found jobs.

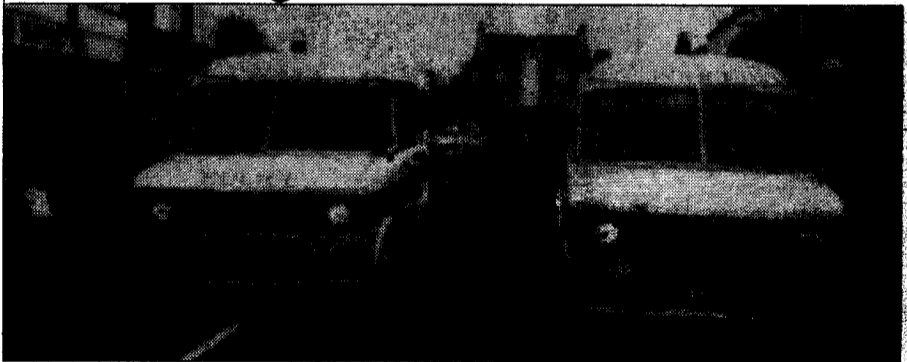
- Statistics supplied by Handsworth Job Centre showed that on average there were 35 people chasing every vacancy.

- According to the 1981 Census 88 per cent of all households had to share a kitchen and 60 per cent had no bathroom.

ditions, 18 per cent were pensioners living alone, 65 per cent had no access to a car and 5 per cent were single parent families.

But this is only part of the story. The WMCC report, at least, goes one stage further and asks why deprivation is so concentrated in one area. The answer it gives is that the majority of the people who live there are black.

The facts are stark. black people (black Asians and black Afro-Caribbeans) are 58 per cent of the population in the Handsworth, Soho and Lozells area compared with 11 per cent for the West Midlands county and 4 per cent for the U.K. But unlike the poor whites they have to confront systematic discrimination in employment, housing, training and welfare provision. According to the Policy Studies Institute's report *Racial Discrimination 17 Years After The*...



Police in Handsworth

were over seven times more likely to be discriminated against than white job applicants, and black Afro-Caribbeans were over six times more likely to be discriminated against than white job applicants.

Even on YTS black youth find it more difficult to get on to Mode A schemes, with good chance of permanent employment at the end, than they do onto Mode B schemes with little or no permanent employment opportunities. It is this that explains the existence of inner city ghettos which are overwhelmingly unemployed and black. In these circumstances revolts like that of 9/10 September are inevitable.

Of course the Tories are the first to understand this. That's why alongside such cuts we see increased expenditure on the police and increased discussion about 'riot control'. Through criminalising black youth and depicting them as lawless rioters...

support for the use of plastic bullets and worse.

As the *Daily Mail* on 8 October put it: 'Either they forgo the anarchic luxury of these origies of arson, looting and murderous assaults against the men and women whose task it is to uphold the laws of this land or they will provoke a paramilitary reaction unknown to mainland Britain'.

Questioned on local radio in Birmingham Douglas Hurd explained that the police having plastic bullets was better than their only resort being to 'call in the Army with live ammunition'.

Already of the 43 forces in England and Wales 15 possess plastic bullets. In other cases, such as Greater Manchester, the force has arranged to loan baton rounds and riot guns from the Met to circumvent decisions by the local police authority not to stock them.

Under the Mutual Aid Arrangements forces possessing plastic bullets

can also be called upon to use them in neighbouring areas.

People in Handsworth know what is at stake. As one black youth explained to the *Guardian* last November 'There is close co-operation between black youths and we have discussed the issue of plastic bullets. We are prepared to tackle any such moves by the government and the police to suppress our grievances. It's not just unemployment. We're regarded as third class citizens and we're not prepared to be treated like that any longer'.

• The review 'A Different Reality' was commissioned by the Race Relations & Equal Opportunities Committee of the WMCC. It was prepared by Reena Bhaynami, Juliet Coke, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Herman Ouseley and Keith Vaz.

The report of the independent enquiry commissioned by Birmingham city council was prepared by Julius Silberman.

## Scotland: 500 at Campaign Group meeting

THE 1986 Scottish Labour Party conference, held in Perth on 7-9 March, saw a continued attack on the left, and on some of the Labour Party's existing policies, from the leadership of the Scottish Labour Party and from Kinnock and Larry Whitty. This assault was particularly suicidal given the gains that the Scottish National Party (SNP) has been making from Labour in recent local government by elections.

By Neil Cruickshank

Neil Kinnock gave a pledge to the conference that devolution for Scotland would be implemented by the next Labour Government. He spoke of how Scotland had been singled out for another Thatcher experiment with a 'genuine medieval poll tax to be called a Community Service charge.' But he gave no support whatever to those presently engaged in struggle with Thatcher.

The Scottish party leadership won a victory on Friday when the conference rejected calls for support for councils in legal conflict with the government. Alex Wood, leader of Edinburgh district council pointed to the disastrous consequences of the path being pursued by the party leadership. He declared his council 'expected and demanded support of the entire movement for Labour authorities who defended their people.'

Referring to the recent by election losses to the SNP Wood warned: 'if we have learned anything from the last two months it is that councils that do not fight for the people are treated with contempt by the people who elected them in the first place.'

'If we do not lead the working class resistance there are others who will lead the Scottish resistance to Toryism.'

Wood's warning was ignored by the party leadership who maintained a tightly controlled agenda which kept off all controversial items challenging the right wing drift.

Larry Whitty, speaking to the conference, condemned the use of the courts and the law to remove elected councillors from office. But he launched an open attack on the leadership of Liverpool Labour Party which made it clear that he was going to give no backing in reality to those who actually did fight for the policies voted for by Labour Party. Whitty called for 'discipline mixed with tolerance' within the party and said nothing about actually fighting Tory policies.



Tony Benn

In sharp contrast to the right wing shift represented by the conference itself was the extremely successful fringe meeting 'Winning with Socialist Policies', which was organised by the Campaign group, CLPD, and



Fight to defend Scottish victimised miners goes on

Labour Left Coordination on Saturday night. The meeting was attended by 500 people — a number having come to Perth just for the meeting. They heard Tony Benn point out that, 'there is an analogy to be made between those Victorian clergy who advocated that everything would be alright if the poor kept their heads down and the rich were kind, and present leadership which is telling everyone to keep their heads down and this in itself can lead to a Labour government being elected.'

He said, 'Thatcher's policy is not get on your bike but get on your knees.

We have to show that we can fight back now.'

'Greenham women have taught us that we don't have to ask for permission to defend our rights. The miners strike saw a decisive role by the women's support groups.' He said that the miners strike had also shown how to involve black people and youth. It had shown that struggle is truly international with the worldwide support it had pulled in.

Benn stated that 'Coalition politics won't solve a single problem facing working people because full employment can't be achieved through coalition. This goal must mean

taking on the banks, the IMF, and the Treaty of Rome.'

The meeting began with Bob Young a sacked miner from Comrie colliery being invited on to the platform where he called for justice for sacked miners. Gavin Strang, speaking as a member of CLPD, spoke of the need for accountability of the parliamentary party, and the party in government, to members of the party. Strang said that a more decisive leadership was needed in the Labour Party during the miners strike. He condemned as nonsense any idea that all Militant supporters in

the party could be expelled. He asked 'Did the leadership really think that if Militant are expelled Fleet Street would start to call for a vote for Labour?'

Cheryl Varley, one of the Liverpool party members under threat of expulsion was invited to address the meeting, and won resounding applause when she condemned the Labour Party leadership for backing the courts and not those fighting for better conditions for working class people

Ann Henderson, executive member of the Women's Action Commit-

tee, spoke of the need for the right for women to decide themselves which policies they put before the Labour Party. She won loud applause when she called for support for the shadow elections being conducted by WAC for the five women's places on the NEC.

Eric Clarke, general secretary of the Scottish NUM, urged everyone to get out and talk fundamental policy, to tell people that there is a real alternative.

Although the conference was a shift to the right the attendance at the fringe meeting was a major success for the left in the party in Scotland.

## Labour Left Coordination at crossroads

LAST SUNDAY'S meeting of the Labour Left Coordination (LLC) saw a crisis in that organisation over its structure and functioning. The next monthly meeting will probably decide its future. REDMOND O'NEILL and JOHN ROSS look at the choices facing the LLC.

The colossal social forces that the miners strike brought into motion have begun to totally transform the map of left wing British politics. This process, which started in the strike around the simple axis of for or against the NUM and its struggles, has developed and deepened since the strike's end.

The left in the Labour Party, under the impact of events, has been resolved into essentially into three components

- The 'realigned left' which stood against Scargill in the strike and have now aligned with Kinnock.

- The class struggle left which stood with Scargill in the strike and championed the social alliances the strike created. Since then, particularly led by figures in the Campaign group, black section, NUM, and parts of the women's movement these forces have deepened their course to the left.

- An ultra left which sup-

ported the miners but considered that Scargill failed to confront the bureaucracy and so contributed to the strikes defeat.

The second of these forces, the class struggle left, is particularly important because it is a potentially hegemonic left. It is defined not by what it is against but what it is for — the miners strike, championing self-organisation of the oppressed, building a popular majority for socialism. Precisely because it is a potentially hegemonic force it is capable, over a prolonged period of struggle, of defeating both Thatcher in society and Kinnock and the right wing in the party.

### Activists

The ultra-left in contrast is a 'corporate' subordinate force defined by what it is against, not what it is for. It is by its

nature 'oppositional', not hegemonic, it is therefore incapable of setting the terrain of debate inside either society or the party. It terms itself an 'anti-Kinnock left' and tries to constitute itself as an 'ultra-radical' left conscience of more serious forces engaged in class struggle.

The chief representative of this ultra-left current has today crystallised as *Labour Briefing*. This is now planning to launch a national newspaper.

### Political

*Briefing* represents a definite, legitimate, minority point of view. *Briefing* should be incorporated as a definite viewpoint in the organisations of the Labour left.

What has brought Labour Left Coordination to a crisis however is the attempt by *Briefing* to impose its views by undemocratic organisational means rejecting the real majorities that exist on the left.

Labour Left Coordination is composed of two types of organisation. The first are those formed on the most important

issues confronting the party's members. On these, therefore, authoritative organisations have developed.

This is obviously the case, for example, with the black section, the Women's Action Committee, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the Labour Committee on Ireland, Labour CND, the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights and others. These have membership and support ranging into the hundreds and in some case thousands. They are universally regarded as the authoritative organisations on the issues on which they are constituted.

### Defence

The basis for cooperation of these campaigns, which would form the basis for a powerful left within the party, flows from their nature. It must be based on their autonomy.

This means that work within the Labour Left Coordination must be based on agreement. This requires the LLC has a

thoroughly democratic structure which respects the independence and autonomy of the campaigns and organisations which make it up. Action by the LLC can only be by agreement of its major constituents. It must include in its steering committee all major forces within it. The main organisations and campaigns within the LLC — CLPD, WAC, the black section and others — must be the leadership and core of the LLC.

### Problems

This is the direction now being urged on the LLC by a number of its affiliates. It is reflected in the proposals for restructuring the LLC which the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy presented to the last LLC meeting. These proposals for respecting the autonomy of the campaigns, and establishing functioning only by agreement, were supported by other organisations.

The alternative course to this is defended essentially by the supporters of *London Labour Briefing*

within the LLC. This view sees the LLC as somehow standing above the autonomous campaigns and taking majority votes. *Briefing's* views were very much a minority in terms of the real forces represented.

### Decisive

However the present structure of the LLC is being utilised to prevent that real relation of forces, and the right way forward for the LLC expressing itself.

The present structure of LLC is based on one vote for each organisation or newspaper within it. This means that an organisation or newspaper supported by 10 people, for example, has the same vote as CLPD, WAC or the black section, who represent thousands of people.

Votes were pushed through the LLC meetings where a number of small groups band together to outvote forces with infinitely more weight in the world outside the LLC's meetings. *Briefing* takes two out of the four places on the LLC steering group

which also excludes WAC, the black section, and other forces with weight on the socialist left such as Socialist Action.

Its next meeting will decide the direction and future of the LLC. The LLC now has the possibility of fulfilling a useful function in coordinating and initiating united action by quite substantial forces on the left wing of the Labour Party. Around individual issues like support for the black section, support for WAC's campaign for the Labour Women's Conference to elect the women's section of the NEC, building on the opposition to witch hunts, and other issues the LLC can help reach out to much wider sections of the labour movement.

But to achieve this requires restructuring and democratising the LLC on three clear bases. *Firstly* functioning by agreement and therefore respect for the autonomy of the campaigns. *Secondly* the LLC and its steering group being based on the most authoritative issues and campaigns in the LLC. *Thirdly* an inclusive and not exclusionary method of functioning.



# y of struggle



Huks. As Huk leader Luis Taruc noted in his 1953 autobiography *Born of the People*, 'throughout the war we had nothing but praise for the Americans, and had done everything possible to bring about a pro-American feeling... We had always referred to the Americans as our allies and had sincerely believed that under the leadership of Roosevelt the American nation would help usher in a new era of world peace and democracy.'

Recalling reassessments made later in prison, Taruc concluded that the biggest shortcoming 'had been our failure to emphasize and to clarify the true meaning of imperialism to the people. We had neglected to point out that imperialism was the same whether Japanese, American, British or Dutch. In so doing we had narrowed down and weakened the basic issue of World War II.'

Because of this policy, even in the wartime Huk strongholds the peasant masses looked to the returning U.S. Army as liberators and were unprepared for the repression that soon followed.

The PKP and the Huks emerged from World War II with greater influence than when they entered it. In 1945 the PKP organized a powerful National Peasants Union as well as a Congress of Labour Organisations, which controlled the unions in most of the industries in Manila.

In April 1946, the PKP-controlled Democratic Alliance elected six congressmen from Luzon to the first post-independence legislature.

The Democratic Alliance candidates, however, were not allowed to take their seats. They were excluded in order to insure passage by the Philippine Congress of the Parity Amendment to the Philippine Constitution, which gave U.S. citizens identical rights with Philippine citizens in all spheres of the country's economic life.



Reagan

In addition to robbing the Democratic Alliance of its seats in congress, the new Filipino government launched an offensive against the Huk strongholds of central Luzon. During the war, many of the landlords had fled to Manila and collaborated with the Japanese occupation. Now they wanted their land back and were determined to roll back Huk agrarian reforms limiting rents.

The Pedro Castro leadership of the PKP favoured focusing on legal and parliamentary struggle. But by 1946 many Huk veterans had already taken up arms to defend themselves from the army and landlords.

At a 1947 meeting of the PKP Political Bureau, Pedro Castro was removed from the leadership. Jose Lava, who favoured more emphasis on armed struggle, soon became de facto head of the party.

In 1948, the PKP decided that armed struggle should be the central focus, and the old Huk forces were reorganized into the National Liberation Army (HMB).

The HMB guerrillas scored many early successes against the undisciplined and demoralized troops, who were no match for the Huk veterans.

In January 1950, the PKP leader-

ship announced that the next two years 'would be decisive for the preparations for the seizure of power' On 29 March of the year — the eighth anniversary of the founding of the Huks — the HMB launched simultaneous attacks on 15 points in the island of Luzon. On 26 August, the 54th anniversary of the start of the war for independence was marked by attacks on 11 towns.

With this new orientation, the PKP virtually abandoned all legal work and pulled its cadres out of the mass organizations in order to bolster the guerrilla struggle.

Jose Lava called for a massive recruitment drive to the PKP and HMB. Through 'geometric expansion' the PKP was predicted to grow from 3,500 members in July 1950 to 50,000 members by September 1951, while the HMB would expand from 10,800 fighters to 172,000.

The PKP's plans, however suffered a grievous setback on 18 October 1950, when raids on 22 places in Manila resulted in the capture of the entire Political Bureau as well as five truckloads of documents outlining plans for the military campaigns.

The capture of the Political Bureau, together with expanded U.S. participation in the anti-Huk struggle, reversed the tide of the fighting. A combination of military and political campaigns designed by the CIA's Edward Lansdale, who later tried to duplicate his success in South Vietnam, dealt the HMB and PKP severe blows.

By 1954, the counterinsurgency campaign had broken the back of the HMB struggle although a few units would hold until 1968 when they formed the nucleus of the CPP's New People's Army (NPA).

Dr. Jesus Lava, who had replaced his brother Jose as leader of the PKP after Jose's arrest in the Manila raids, called for a shift from armed struggle to parliamentary struggle.

That shift to parliamentary struggle, however, was cut short by the outlawing of the PKP in 1957. The law contained a one-month grace period during which PKP and HMB members could register and avoid prosecution.

Jesus Lava urged party members to take advantage of the grace period to 'return to civilian life'.

Lava also disbanded the PKP's cell structure, a move that led the CPP a decade later to charge that the PKP had in effect been liquidated in 1957.

With the party structure disbanded, all individual members were urged to act on their own initiative on the basis of 'political transmissions' issued by Jesus Lava.

These 'transmissions' were passed along from individual party member to party member under what was described as a new 'single file policy.'

Jesus Lava himself was captured by the authorities in 1964. He remained in prison for more than a decade.

While the PKP had largely drifted into inactivity following 1957, a new

generation of activists came to the fore in the early 1960s, mainly around the University of the Philippines in Manila. They were inspired by international events such as the Chinese and Cuban revolutions, the rise of the Sukarno government in Indonesia, and the growing revolutionary struggle in Vietnam.

Some joined the PKP. One of them, Jose Maria Sison, an English literature instructor at the University of the Philippines, was commissioned by the PKP to write a history of the party and guide for future activity.

Sison's draft sharply criticized Vicente Lava for the wartime strategy of 'retreat for defence,' Jose Lava for the 1950 'early seizure of power' strategy, and Jesus Lava for his 'single-file' policy and liquidation of party cell structures.

Sison's criticisms of 'the Lava clique' led to his expulsion from the PKP in April 1967 and the subsequent formation of the CPP by those who agreed with his criticisms.

When Ferdinand Marcos imposed martial law in 1972, the reactions of the PKP and CPP were fundamentally different.

Two months after martial law was imposed, Jesus Lava, at that time still in prison, issued a 'political transmission' indicating that on balance martial law was not so bad because its main targets were Maoists and CIA-linked politicians like Benigno Aquino.

The PKP took a further step toward making peace with Marcos in October 1974, when members of its Political Bureau met with him at the presidential palace.

Felicisimo Macapagal, the PKP general secretary, told the Philippine dictator: 'Your excellency, you have called for national unity and we are here today in response to your call. We do so with an offer of patriotic and socially conscious participation in nation-building which has long been denied us.'

The PKP Political Bureau members symbolically turned over 19 weapons to Marcos to mark their commitment not to take up armed struggle. Since that time, PKP leaders continued to be invited to affairs at the presidential palace.

The CPP's reaction to martial law was very different. CPP activists from the Manila student network took to the mountains to join the small group of NPA members already waging armed struggle. The addition of these cadres enabled the CPP and NPA to build bases in a number of regions.

In fact, as the *Far Eastern Economic Review* noted on 21 Nov. 1985, 'they have succeeded in forging a nationwide cell structure, something no previous revolt had been able to accomplish.'

Although a number of central leaders of the CPP, including Sison, were captured in 1976 and 1977, this loss did not stem the growth of the CPP-led insurgency. Today, the CPP's struggle is the most advanced guerrilla war in the whole of Asia.



Philippine army units rally to Enrile

leaders of the PKP remained in the city to organize resistance. But barely three weeks later, the Japanese secret police captured the entire first-line leadership of the party.

The arrest of Evangelista, Abad Santos, and Capadocia was a severe blow to the PKP. Evangelista was executed by the Japanese, and Abad Santos died in 1944 from the effects of his imprisonment.

A second-line leadership, headed by Dr. Vicente Lava, took over the reins of the PKP. Vivente was the first of three Lava brothers to lead the party.

Because the PKP had already experienced a decade of underground and semi-underground existence by 1942, it was well-placed to lead the resistance to Japanese occupation.

On 29 March 1942, the People's Army Against Japan, usually called the Huks, was organised under the leadership of the PKP.

In keeping with its orientation toward an anti-Japanese alliance encompassing all classes, and its desire for a wartime alliance with the U.S. imperialists, the PKP put forward the slogan 'Anti-Japanese above all.' It dissolved the mass peasant unions under its control in order to avoid alienating the Filipino landowners.

The bulk of the Filipino landowners, however, actively cooperated with the Japanese occupation, as they had with the Spanish colonialists and the U.S. imperialists before.

Because of landlord collaboration with the Japanese, a form of class struggle continued to take place in Huk-controlled areas of the countryside — peasants refused to pay rents to landlords who collaborated with the Japanese authorities.

The Huks also tried to cooperate with the guerrilla organisations set up by U.S. officers who had been left behind in the Philippines to organise resistance to the Japanese. But in many

instances these U.S.-organised forces carried out military attacks against the Huks.

Despite the U.S. hostility, the PKP and the Huks grew rapidly in size and influence during the Japanese occupation.

For the first year of the struggle against the Japanese, the Huks waged a policy of continuous attacks. In March 1943, however, the Japanese launched a sustained military drive against Huk strongholds in central Luzon, the largest island in the Philippines.

The Huk leadership responded by breaking into small units and trying to slip through the Japanese encirclement. This policy, called 'retreat for defense,' was a disaster and led to the capture of many Huk troops and cadres.

In 1944, a PKP Central Committee meeting sharply criticized the 'retreat for defense' policy and removed Vicente Lava from the leadership. His place was taken by Pedro Castro, a leader of the tobacco workers' union.

During the war the Huks fought 1,200 engagements with Japanese and Filipino puppet troops and inflicted 25,000 casualties. By 1945 the Huks had grown to 20,000 regulars and 50,000 reservists.

The PKP leadership's policy of collaboration with U.S. forces against the Japanese occupation however had not prepared the ranks of the Huk guerrilla movement for the hostility with which they were treated by the returning U.S. military.

William Pomeroy, an American with long ties to the PKP, who subsequently took part in the Huk postwar uprising, points out that 'as soon as U.S. armed forces had begun the reconquest of Luzon, in early 1945, they arrested, on orders of General MacArthur, many top PKP and Huk leaders, sought to disarm Huk units, engineered the massacre of others, ousted provisional governments set up by the movement, and began terrorising the organised masses.'

This U.S. assault disoriented the

**LAST WEEK'S** Soviet Communist Party congress was dominated by debate on the USSR's economy. Major changes were announced for Soviet agriculture. In other countries with nationalised economies, notably China, there have been sharp moves in recent years in favour of introducing greater use of market mechanisms. A general awareness of the problems of the super-centralised economy is developing. **JOHN ROSS** looks at the background to Gorbachev's economic reforms — and to Marxism's attitude to markets and planning.

The economic crisis confronting the USSR today is undoubtedly the most serious, outside war, since the 1920s. For the first time since 1917 the USSR is actually falling behind the United States in terms of the relative growth of the size of their economies.

According to US estimates, which are not unreliable, the Soviet economy progressively narrowed the gap in production between itself and the US economy up until 1975. Soviet production of all types by that year reached 58 per cent of the size of the US economy. By 1983 it had declined to 56 per cent. Today it is probably less than 54 per cent.

On the measure of net material product, which is roughly equivalent to the economy minus the service sector, the USSR has stagnated at 67 per cent the size of the US economy since 1975.

Even given that the figures for the US economy contain a lot of double and fictitious accounting, which exaggerates the differences, the overall picture is clear. After five decades in which the Soviet economy progressively overtook its greatest capitalist rival a relative stagnation has set in. The USSR is no longer gaining in terms of economic size on the largest capitalist power.

But if there is a relative stagnation of the Soviet economy it is also necessary to be clear as to the nature of this slowdown and crisis.

The USSR does not suffer from — nor since the 1920s has it ever suffered from — a crisis of classic capitalist overproduction. It does not suffer from slumps caused by the decline in the rate of profit which affect western capitalism. There is no mass unemployment in the Soviet Union, no business cycles. All those who make analogies between the USSR and a capitalist economy totally misunderstand its nature — as well as the way out of its problems.

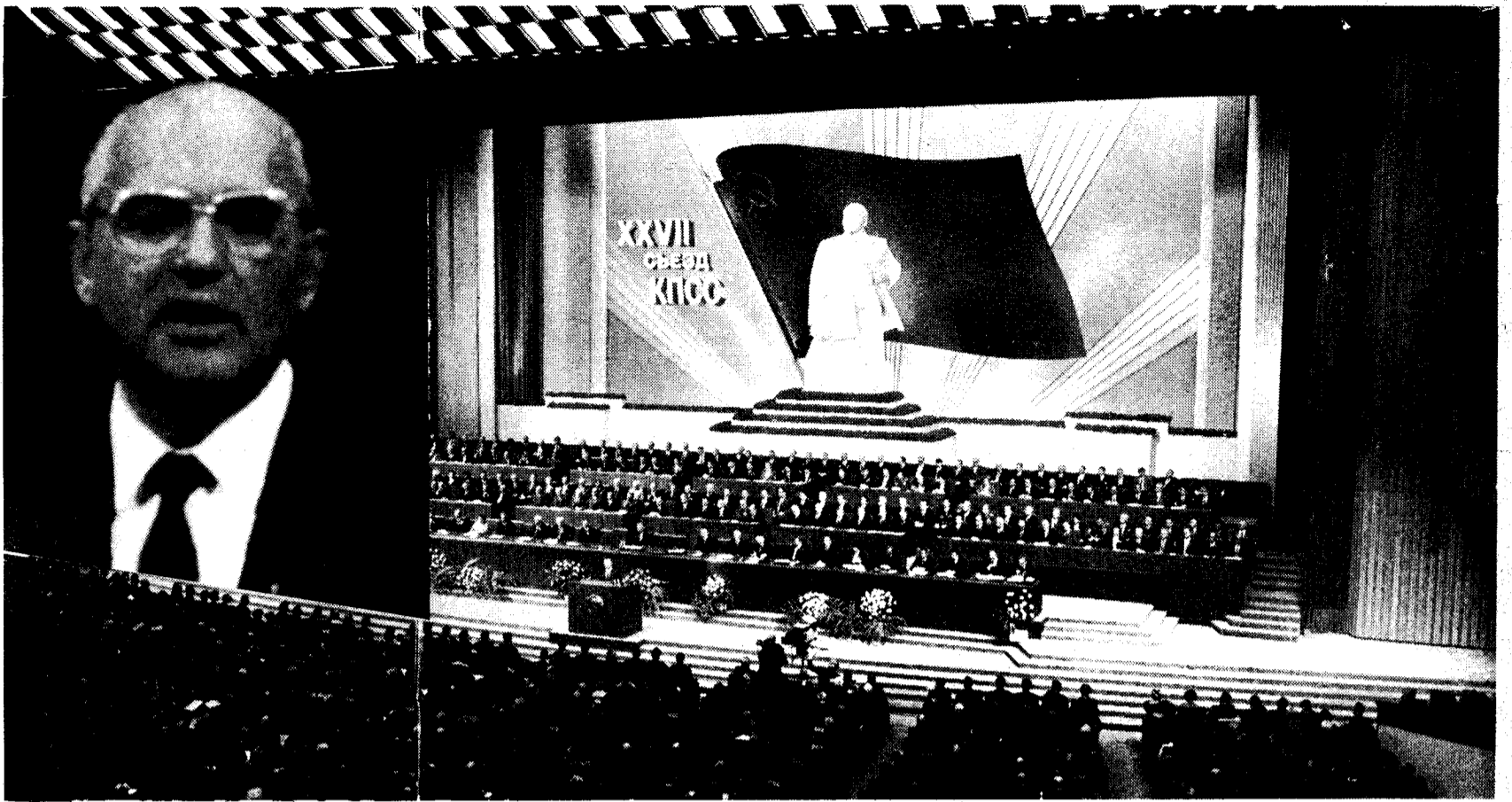
A move made by the Soviet Union in the direction of market mechanisms, of the type discussed to some limited degree at the Soviet party congress, does not mean the USSR is moving towards capitalism. This is important because there was a great deal of loose talk appeared in the western press around a year ago about how China was moving peacefully towards capitalism by re-introducing market mechanisms into its economy.



Trotsky: fought for workers' democracy

But the relations between the Chinese state and any capitalist forces within it were already outlined by Mao Tse-tung in June 1949 in an essay *On the People's Democratic Dictatorship*. He wrote: 'The people have a powerful state apparatus in their hands — there is no need to fear rebellion by the national bourgeoisie.'

The state apparatus of China



# Soviet economic reforms

established by the revolution of 1949 defends the nationalised property in China — not private capitalism. Equally in the USSR the entire state apparatus of the Soviet Union defends the nationalised property of that economy. It suppresses any major capitalist class from developing. The small traders and small capitalists which exist in some East European economies cannot dominate large scale nationalised production defended by the state, nor do they possess political power. There are no 'market' reforms which can be reintroduced into the USSR which will peacefully or gradually restore capitalism and a capitalist ruling class.

What exists in the USSR is an economic crisis of a different type to that of capitalism, and one that requires quite different solutions. It is a crisis of an economic system that is firstly totally bureaucratized and, linked to that, far too rigid and centralised. The USSR would benefit from moving to a less centralised and planned economy. In order to understand that it is worth placing the development of the Soviet economy, and Gorbachev's reforms, in an historical context.

The model which the majority of the left in Britain has always had of a planned economy is that of Stalin during the first Five Year Plan — a massive, ultra-centralised, completely nationalised, and super planned economy. The strong critiques made by Trotsky of the Five Year Plan at the time, its catastrophic consequences, still visible fifty years later, on Soviet agriculture and development are forgotten.

But in reality this model of an ultra-centralised economy, nationalised down to the lowest level, was an introduction of Stalin. Lenin himself always stressed that the almost complete nationalisation and centralisation of the Soviet economy which occurred during 1918, almost immediately after the October revolution in Russia, had been damaging and had been forced on the Bolsheviks by the political needs of the situation.

Marx had written in the *Communist Manifesto* that: 'The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie.' In Russia itself the Bolsheviks had put forward just such a

programme — proposing the establishment of the state power of the working class, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' which would initially not have nationalised but *controlled and regulated* the capitalist economy.

## Outbreak

But because of the political situation in Russia, the outbreak of civil war early in 1918, the dictatorship of the proletariat had not been able to pass through a phase of regulation and control of the capitalists in Russia. The Bolsheviks for political/military reasons had been forced to go on to nationalise and centralise virtually the entire economy — a move which was politically necessary in the situation but extremely damaging economically.

Lenin wrote in October 1921, in his report *The New Economic Policy*, that: 'At the beginning of 1918 we expected a period in which peaceful construction would be possible... But we were mistaken, because in 1918 a real military danger overtook us in the shape of the Czechoslovak mutiny and the outbreak of civil war, which dragged on until 1920. 'Partly owing to the war problems that overwhelmed us and partly owing to the desperate position in which the Republic found itself when the imperialist war ended — owing to these circumstances, and a number of others, we made the mistake of deciding to go over directly to communist production and distribution.'

'We thought that under the surplus-food appropriation system the peasants would provide us with the required quantity of grain, which we could distribute among the factories and thus achieve communist production and distribution.'

'I cannot say that we pictured this plan as definitely and as clearly as that; but we acted approximately on those lines. That, unfortunately, is a fact.'

'I say unfortunately, because brief experience convinced us that that line was wrong, that it ran counter to what we had previously written about the transition from capitalism to socialism, namely, that it would be impossible to bypass the period of socialist accounting and control in approaching even the lower stage of communism.'

'Ever since 1917, when the problem of taking power arose and the

Bolsheviks explained it to the whole people, our theoretical literature has been definitely stressing the necessity for a prolonged, complex transition through socialist accounting and control from capitalist society (and the less developed it is the longer the transition will take) to even one of the approaches to communist society.'

The extremely rapid nationalisations and centralisation undertaken after 1918 by the Bolsheviks led, as Lenin put it, to 'a very severe defeat on the economic front.' Starting in 1921, with the New Economic Policy (NEP), the Bolsheviks moved back drastically in favour of market mechanisms in the economy, allowed small scale capitalist enterprise to restart, and started making economic concessions to foreign capitalists.

These measures at the time, as with similar steps today, were hailed by those outside Russia as marking a shift of the USSR back to capitalism. In reality the NEP was a necessary shift on the economic field within the framework of the USSR remaining a state which prevented any systematic development of capitalism in the country.

## Destroy

As Lenin wrote: 'The capitalist class had adopted the tactics (in 1918) of forcing us into a desperate and relentless class struggle, and that compelled us to destroy the old relations to a far larger extent than we had a first intended.'

Instead Lenin argued that it had been correct that 'the state power — the proletariat — made an attempt to pass, as gradually as possible, breaking up as little of the old as possible, to the new social relations while adapting itself, as much as possible, one might say, to the conditions then prevailing.'

The extreme centralist command economy which was introduced in 1918 by the Bolsheviks because of the civil war, and was reimposed by Stalin in 1929 for his own bureaucratic purposes, does not provide a model which socialists are aiming at or should take as their own. Other countries in which capitalist political power has been overthrown, as in Nicaragua, have fortunately been able to avoid so far the extreme measures which the Bolsheviks were forced to take — not to mention

Stalin's 'unique' contribution.

Naturally reintroduction of greater market mechanisms into the USSR would have some undesirable consequences. It would produce at least frictional unemployment and increase a different type of inequality to that which exists. All these would require radical overhaul of the Soviet social security system.

## Society

But without some loosening of the ultra-centralised economy the USSR cannot resume its major economic advance. Such a loosening of the super-centralised economy would, incidentally and most importantly, also lead to greater areas of liberty in the Soviet Union and create better conditions for the political revival of the working class and weakening of the position of the bureaucracy.

It is precisely because he is totally opposed to any weakening of the bureaucracy that Gorbachev is attempting so far to keep the reforms limited. The problem for Gorbachev is that the change that is really necessary to revive the Soviet economy is the one he cannot contemplate — the removal of the bureaucracy whose spokesperson he is.

## Privileges

It is a fitting irony, and a comment on the nature of the two social systems, the types of changes which capitalism and the USSR require today to overcome their respective economic crisis. The only way out for *capitalism* is suppression of democracy, increasing dictatorship, radical inequality and all the measures made familiar by Reagan and Thatcher — not to mention the new dictators and Hitlers that lie further down the road, and which capitalism used in the 1930s to get out of its last crisis. The measures which the USSR needs to get out of its crisis are greater relaxation, greater liberty, and greater initiative of the working class.

Those two ways out of the crisis confirm once again that for all the disparities in their scales of development, the USSR, on a historic scale, is the bearer of a far superior social system to anything that exists in western capitalism.





International

# French elections: L'etat, c'est Mitterrand



Communist and Socialist party leaders in conference together in 1982.



Leaders of the RPR and the UDF, the two right wing blocs

On 16 March France goes to the polls. Short of a political earthquake, it will unseat the incumbent Socialist government. The Socialists' hope to keep 30 per cent and remain the largest party. The Communists are struggling to reach 10 per cent. It is not even certain they will defeat Le Pen's fascist National Front party.

The Gaullist RPR and the Giscardian UDF, the two party groupings of the right, stand poised to win a combined majority.

These bare facts, however, only tell half the story. The election campaign's closing months have been dominated, not by the crisis of the left — but by that of the right.

The dilemma racking the right does not concern policies. The RPR and the UDF have produced their own 'common programme', widely termed 'néolibéralisme musclé' — best translated as 'heavy Thatcherism'. They want to privatise the banks, insurance, television and the major industrial groups.

They want to scrap wealth tax and impose an income tax ceiling of 60 per cent. They want to remove

by Alan Freeman

much of the legal protection now available to French workers, curtail trade union rights, strengthen the police and security forces and beef up French colonialism in North Africa, New Caledonia and the Caribbean.

Their problem is, bluntly, that they will have a Socialist president. Under the constitution established after De Gaulle's coup d'état of 1958 which ushered in the so-called 'Fifth Republic',

the president has sweeping powers and is elected every seven years, unlike the assembly which is elected every five years. Mitterrand does not come up for reelection until 1988.

Traditional left policy has been against the president's arbitrary powers. They incorporate the strong, centralised state which De Gaulle imposed. In a sharp policy reversal — not his first — Mitterrand has followed in De Gaulle's footsteps by raising the office of president above the parliament. He had threatened the right-wing with political chaos unless they agree to a unique form of coalitionism which has become known as 'cohabitation': collaboration between a right-dominated parliament and a Socialist president.

This has split the right. Chirac of the ex-Gaullist

RPR wants cohabitation; Barre of the UDF is against it. Mitterrand wants to play on their rivalry ruthlessly: both are potential prime ministers, and both are aspiring presidents.

Mitterrand has further cleared a path for the Socialists to continue playing a dominant role by changing the election rules. Previously, there was a complicated two round system. This meant, for example, that the Communist Party could put candidates up in the first round of voting, but in the second round call for a vote for the socialists.

## Bar

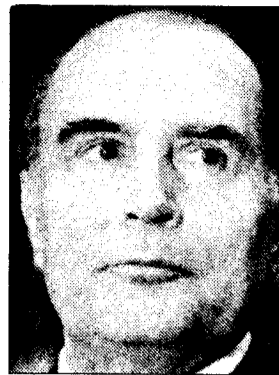
Mitterrand has introduced proportional representation with a 'bar' preventing small parties getting in. This helps marginalise the Communist Party. In theory it likewise limits the fascists, but in practice it means they will become the kite-flyers for policies the other right wing parties cannot 'respectably' endorse.

It also makes it far harder for alternative parties, like for example the German Greens, to arrive on the scene. It puts severe difficulties in the way of the far left, such as the Revolutionary Communist League, who have been trying to bring together a left alternative to Mitterrand.

## Bargain

The bargain Mitterrand offers the right is to accept their economic policies in return for protecting what he calls the 'social gains' of the Socialists. These include cheap abortion, a 39-hour week (the first step to a 35-hour week!), the abolition of the death penalty and the 'anti-hooligan' law directed against the right to demonstrate.

This demands few sacrifices for the right. Mitterrand has already helped dismantle many of these social gains in practice. He has introduced 'flexible hours' which



Mitterrand

wreck the 39-hour week, never mind the 35-hour week. Measures called 'TUC' (collectively useful works) allow employers to take on youth on a similar basis to YTS in Britain, in menial jobs and minimal rates.

He has 'stabilised' the French economy at the expense of 2½ million unemployed and heavy cuts in social spending. He has caved in to the right's campaign against state education and in favour of increased independence for private schools. He has imposed an absolute ban on immigration and has denied immigrant workers any extension of their rights, fuelling and legitimising a vicious and brutal rise in racism.

## Military

Above all he has launched France into the front rank of the world's military imperialist powers. France is now the third nuclear power in the world. It intervenes militarily in the Pacific (New Caledonia), in the Caribbean (the Antilles — still French colonies), and in North Africa, where it is leading an increasingly dirty counter-revolutionary war in Chad. It's rapidly becoming the focal point for the constitution of a unified, West European, interventionist military capacity. France blew up Greenpeace with casual disregard for law or morality.

One might be forgiven for imagining that the spirit of Charles de Gaulle has departed the graveyards of Colombey les Deux Eglises and once more stalks the world in Mitterrand's body. For French workers, the difference is increasingly hard to discern — which is why the left will suffer its defeat at the polls.

# NATO referendum has Gonzales on the run

THE NATO referendum set for March 12 is shaking Spanish society. For the first time since the decline in working-class struggles in the late '70s, the left can scent a possible victory, and that does wonders for energy and morale. At the major demonstration of half a million people in Madrid on 23 February we saw drummers, whistles, disguises, chants and giant papier-mache statues of Reagan and Felipe Gonzalez (dressed as Reagan's bride) gave a sense of joy and power to the march.

The PSOE Government however has great resources in its control of the media and of the referendum itself. The trick question on the ballot-paper asks people to approve the Atlantic Alliance (not NATO) in the national interest. Above the question are printed the Government's three main arguments.

The main opposition party AP (Popular Action), led by Manuel Fraga, ex-minister of France and guest of Thatcher at last year's Tory conference, is

against the referendum on the grounds that no conditions at all should be put

by Mike Eade from Barcelona

on Spain's NATO commitment. To the dismay of the NATO powers AP is calling for abstention in the referendum.

The British Labour Party has played an interesting role in the campaign. Kinnock came to Madrid in January and insisted it was perfectly possible to remain in NATO and remove the missiles — which would be

the programme of his Government. Tony Benn was invited by the campaign against NATO in February to explain it was illogical to pretend that you could be a non-nuclear power in a nuclear alliance. E.P. Thompson spoke from the platform of the 23 February demonstration on behalf of END and CND, and stressed the international importance of an anti-NATO victory in Spain.

Despite the strength of the anti-war movements in Germany, Holland and Britain, they have not succeeded in preventing the deployment of cruise missiles; victory in Spain would mark a turning-point against the arms race, a heavy defeat for Reagan, Kohl and Thatcher, and a boost for the anti-war movement.

Within the Spanish state, the left and mass

movement have been able to reorganise in the anti-NATO campaign after the bitter defeats of the late '70s. Winning this referendum will not stop there, but will open the possibility of actually leaving NATO and give con-

fidence to the fights against the American bases, the 20 per cent unemployment, for national autonomy, for land reform, for women's rights, for a proper pensions and social security system.



# Sanctions Now! March month of action

THROUGHOUT March into April the Anti Apartheid Movement is organising activities up and down the country. The highlight of the month is Saturday 22 March, with demonstrations, vigils, placard displays and other actions in many large towns. Key dates to watch:

Friday 21 March: Remember Langa, Remember Sharpeville Anniversaries of the massacres in South Africa in 1985 and 1960.

Saturday 22 March: FREE NAMIBIA! FREE SOUTH AFRICA! SANCTIONS NOW! Local marches and demonstrations throughout Britain. See below for regional and local contacts.

Monday 14 — Sunday 20 April: Week of trade union action against apartheid Details from Simon Sapper, 01-387 7966.

Wednesday 16 April: Protest against the Springboks, Cardiff Demonstration against South African participation in IRFU centenary match Cardiff Arms Park, kick-off 5pm. Details from Hanif Bhamjee, Cardiff (0222) 499769.

Saturday 19 April: Protest against the Springboks, Twickenham Demonstration at IRFU centenary match. Details from Karen Talbot, 01-387 7966.

For details of major regional activities contact:

London: Paul Annegarn, 883 1477  
Scotland: Paul Annegarn, 883 1477

South West: Bristol 40344

South Yorks: Paul Blomfield, Sheffield 862588

Wales: Hanif Bhamjee Cardiff 499769

Manchester: (061)-228 2028

Teeside: Middlesborough 227160/785914

Tyneside: Allison Barrett, 4 Ashfield Terrace, Springwell, Gateshead

● The AAM has set up an emergency South African Miners' Strike Fund which has raised £6000 to date. Contributions to AAM at 13 Mandela Street, London NW1



# Nicaragua solidarity campaign AGM

By Paul Atkin

OVER 100 people came to the AGM of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign at Lambeth Town Hall last weekend. This followed a year of dramatic growth with a sharp rise in affiliated local groups and the backing of nine national trade unions.

In the last two months an autonomous student group campaigning in support of Nicaragua has been set up with groups in 20 colleges already. They aim to commit the National Union of Students to tour Sandinista Youth nationally.

The meeting took place in the context of increasing US pressure on the Nicaraguan revolution. Patricio Cranshaw, first secretary at the Nicaraguan Embassy said the war with the Contras is not a civil war but a form of intervention by the USA. He agreed that there can be no peace agreement that does not include and bind the USA.

Reagan wants \$100 million of aid for the Contras which is vital for them to stay in operation.

Last year they were driven out of Nicaragua's northern provinces with heavy losses. They had 5,600 casualties last year alone.

If Reagan does not get his \$100 million ratified by Congress, his only options for intervention will be direct US military involvement. In the last five years, 60,000 US troops have been trained on manoeuvres in Central America to prepare for this.

The economic pressure from the US, the trade embargoes and attempts to strangle Nicaragua's credit, said Patricio meant that the task facing the Sandinista government is to enable Nicaragua to survive. There can be no economic recovery until the end of the war.

The NSC will be campaigning in that framework. It will further need to organise to counter the increasing ideological offensive from the US which alleges human rights abuses in Nicaragua. The purpose of this offensive is to isolate Nicaragua from the Contadora group and from European social democracy.

● For further information contact: NSC, 20-21 Compton Terrace, London N1.

# Reviews

## Kiss of the Spiderwoman - another view

ON 17 JANUARY, to begin our regular 'Reviews' feature, Socialist Action No 127 carried a review of *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* by Harry Ring. This week PETER PURTON, a member of the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, gives an alternative interpretation of the film.

THE FILM *Kiss of the Spider Woman* has been hailed as both a magnificent film and as a deep and serious study of human relations and of sexuality. Its central theme is the relationship which dev-

lops between Molina, an effeminate gay man, and Valentin, a very definitely straight revolutionary, as they share a Latin American prison cell. The staging, the drama and the acting (especially

William Hurt as Molina) are superb. But politically, *Spider Woman* is far from being as 'right on' as some have claimed.

If unity of the most extreme opposites was what Babenco wished to create, in order to explore an evolving relationship and to question the basis of male sexuality, then those extremes are certainly presented. The first problem is that they are demonstrably stereotypes of the most predictable form.

Valentin is strong, bearded, silent, wedded to the revolutionary cause. Human enough to show fear of torture, he nonetheless withholds the names of his comrades. For him, expressions of emotion such as love and affection are out of order.

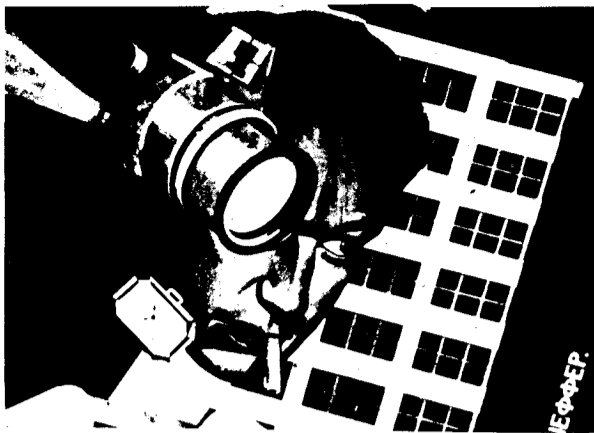
Molina is the full gay stereotype. A former shop window dresser, his public identity is with great film actresses. He camps everything up outrageously, from dress to speech, and dotes on his elderly mother. His dream is of meeting a 'real man' to whom he can be a passive 'wife'.

How do two such characters come together? The process is actually quite predictable. Through shared hardship and through heated arguments Valentin's cold exterior is broken down.

### Friend

Yes, he does know fear; yes, he has a girl friend, and she does matter to him; but his first girl friend still matters more. He recognises a deep human kindness in Molina which overcomes his prejudice, and he understands that it is not impossible to be a devoted revolutionary and a loving human being.

Molina's evolution is different. A running thread of the film is his recounting, as episodes between current events, a slushy romantic film he once saw, in which his identity is totally with a romantic, doomed heroine.



It soon transpires that the film was a wartime German propaganda exercise, to Valentin's (initial) fury. This is an occasion for more stereotypes: notably the attractiveness of 'blond young Nazis'.

Yet in dramatic contrast, it is Molina who first becomes the 'strong' man in this menage, taking his companion through his crises. Then, of course, the reverse occurs, and Valentin, having been converted from fanatic to human, comes to Molina's rescue as he movingly recounts the miserable tale of his own life, a tale of persecuted and unrequited love, of deep loneliness and an uncaring and superficial 'scene'.

The causes are thus levelled off: the selfless revolutionary (who just happens to be from a comfortable background...) sacrificing himself for the cause of humanity, and the self-centred, poor, homosexual, struggling in his own heroic way against a mighty oppression.

### Love

It is only to be expected, of course, that Molina falls in love with Valentin and that they end up in bed together - a scene touchingly and convincingly done. So what is wrong?

Stereotyped characters are never convincing, even when played as convincingly as they are in this film. And if the stereotype of Molina is a problem then so is that of Valentin, but made to seem less so, both because Hurt's performance is so overpowering, and because his stereotype is perhaps far closer to the real thing, and certainly far more 'acceptable'.

The fundamental problem is with the whole role that Molina has to play. He is throughout the receptacle of weakness and corruption. We find out well into the film that he is acting as an agent for the prison warden, trying to find out from Valentin

what the torturers cannot extract, in return for an early parole.

Soon, of course, by falling in love he becomes useless for this plan. So they let him out anyway, hoping that he will lead them to Valentin's associates. Of course, Valentin has indeed asked him to pass on a message. And so our poor, weak, helpless gay, having finally decided to take up just a small piece of the heroic revolutionary cause, dies in the process, running from the police and symbolically shot by Valentin's current girl friend.

### Dreams

In the final sequence, Valentin, in a morphine-induced sleep after another bout of brutal questioning, dreams. He dreams of being spirited out of prison by his first girl friend, his real 'true love', and of embarking on a little boat to row away into the moonlight.

So what have we proved? Valentin, through the medium of his gay friend, and briefly lover, has rediscovered his real love; he becomes the 'real man' of Molina's vain longings. Molina, in abandoning for once his self-centred search for beauty and affection in favour of the Cause, has lost his life. It is once again the gay as catalyst, the gay as victim.

### Liberation

There can be a connection between gays and revolution. It is a connection which comes about through lesbians and gay men fighting for their liberation and through socialists (from whatever part of the world) recognising that these causes are not contradictory but related.

*Kiss of the Spider Woman* does not make these connections. The cause of gay liberation has no need of more victims and martyrs or 'straight' liberal sympathy. And that, in the end and despite its pretensions, is what *Kiss of the Spider Woman* gives us.

# IRELAND UNFREE

## Sinn Fein on the Orange strike

WE REPRODUCE, from the front page of *Republican News/An Phoblacht*, the paper's comments on the role of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), which puts Thatcher's 'law and order' campaign in a somewhat different light.

THE ROLE of the RUC in refusing to confront loyalist strikers, who erected roadblocks and openly intimidated, threatened and assaulted nationalists going about their business during Monday's shut-down in the six counties, has confirmed what republicans have always known - that the RUC is an irremovable and unacceptable sectarian force.

Recent SDLP moves towards recognition and support for the RUC, including the appointment of members to the RUC Authority, have come unstuck for the time being following the behaviour of RUC personnel who, at roadblocks and pickets throughout the six counties, adopted an openly co-operative approach towards the loyalist bully-boys.

And in the exceptional cases where the RUC was forced into conflict with pickets, it showed a degree of reluctance and restraint which they have never demonstrated when confronting even peaceful nationalist demonstrations.

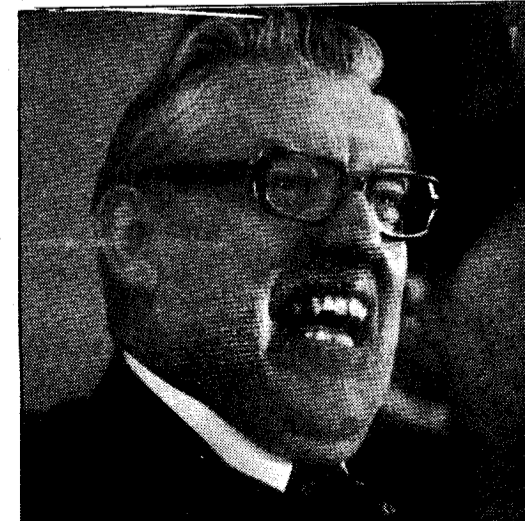
Exploding the impartiality myth, the RUC showed by its actions and its attitude on Monday, March 3rd, that it is part and parcel of the loyalist state and that, like other loyalists, its support for British law and British order is conditional on that law and order being directed solely against the nationalist community.

There is no indication, however, that this evidence of the RUC's irremovability will make the slightest difference to the Dublin government which regularly boasts that collaboration between the gardai and RUC is being increased substantially in the wake of the Hillsborough deal. Only a week earlier, when signing the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism in Strasbourg, the Coalition justice minister, Alan Dukes, encouraged Northern nationalists to join the RUC, saying that progress was being made in making that force more acceptable.

That 'progress' has involved a series of cosmetic exercises in the past year, including the re-routing of the July 12th Orange parade in Portadown, County Armagh. Such cosmetics could not hide for long the real sectarian face of the RUC, however, and it was hardly surprising that in Portadown and nearby Lurgan last Monday masked members of the loyalist Ulster Clubs were allowed to enforce their own version of law and order.

Alan Dukes, Garret FitzGerald, John Hume and all those who have been bending over backwards for the past four months to 'reassure' unionists and to persuade nationalists that they should abandon their support for the IRA and turn to the RUC for protection - all of those politicians were given their answer last Monday. By placating loyalism they have endangered entire nationalist communities and by soliciting support for the RUC, they have ignored the historical and contemporary role of that force as an integral part of the Orange state.

While establishment politicians in the SDLP and Dublin try to minimise the significance of RUC behaviour during the loyalist strike, and while RTE, through blatant self-censorship and distortion, fails to inform people in 'single-channel land' about the full extent of the loyalist bullying tactics and the RUC's acquiescence in those tactics, Northern nationalists will continue to face the vitriolic sectarian hatred of Orange mobs and their armed allies in the UDR and RUC.



## Other Books

The Other Book's mail order service offers a wide selection of socialist, anti-imperialist and radical literature. The following selection on and by women is available by post:

**Shifting Horizons: a testament to women in the miners' strike**  
Lynn Beaton, Canary Press, 265pp, £5.65 + 40p p&p

**Women Under Apartheid**  
International Defence and Aid Fund, 120pp black and white photographs plus text, £3.50 + 46p p&p

**For Their Triumphs and For Their Tears: Women in Apartheid South Africa**  
Hilda Bernstein, IDAF, 136pp, IDAF, £3.50 + 34p p&p

**Part of My Soul**  
Winnie Mandela, Penguin, 164pp, £2.95 + 28p p&p

**South Africa: The Struggle For A Birthright**  
Mary Benson, IDAF, 314pp, £4 + 59p p&p

**Women and the Cuban Revolution**  
Edited by Elizabeth Stone, Pathfinder Press, 156pp, £3.95 + 28p p&p

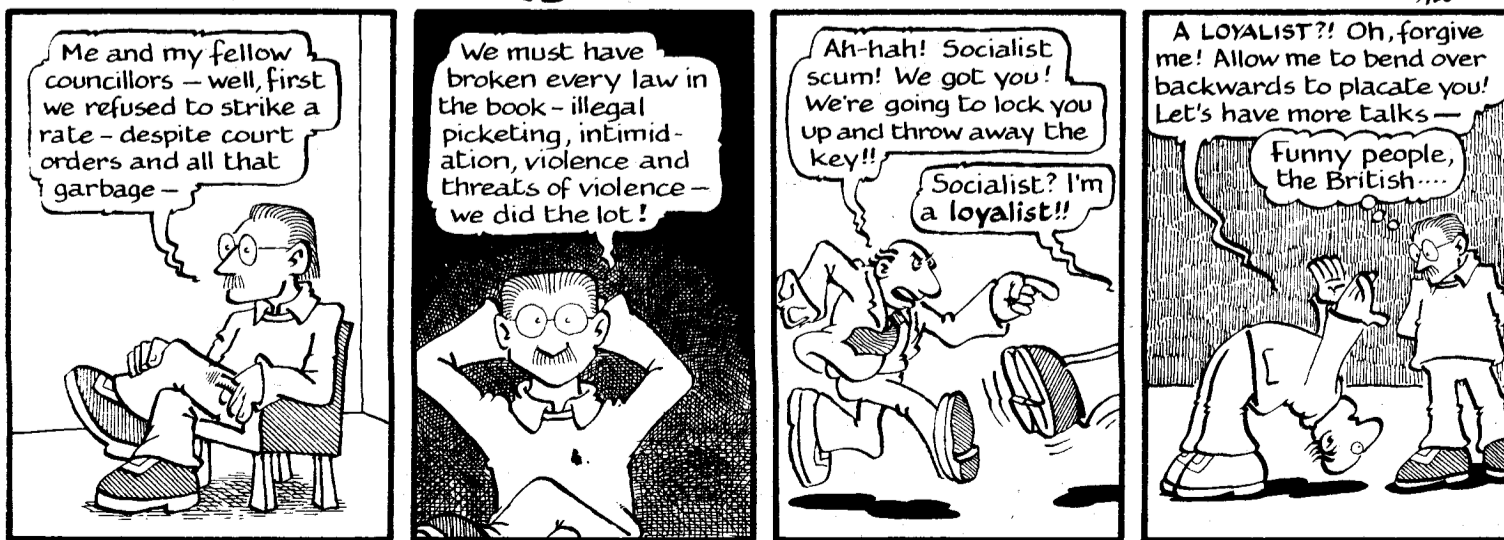
**Women and the Family**  
Leon Trotsky, Pathfinder Press, 78pp, £2.25 + 18p p&p

**The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**  
Frederick Engels, introduction by Evelyn Reed, Pathfinder Press, 190pp, £2.95 + 34p p&p

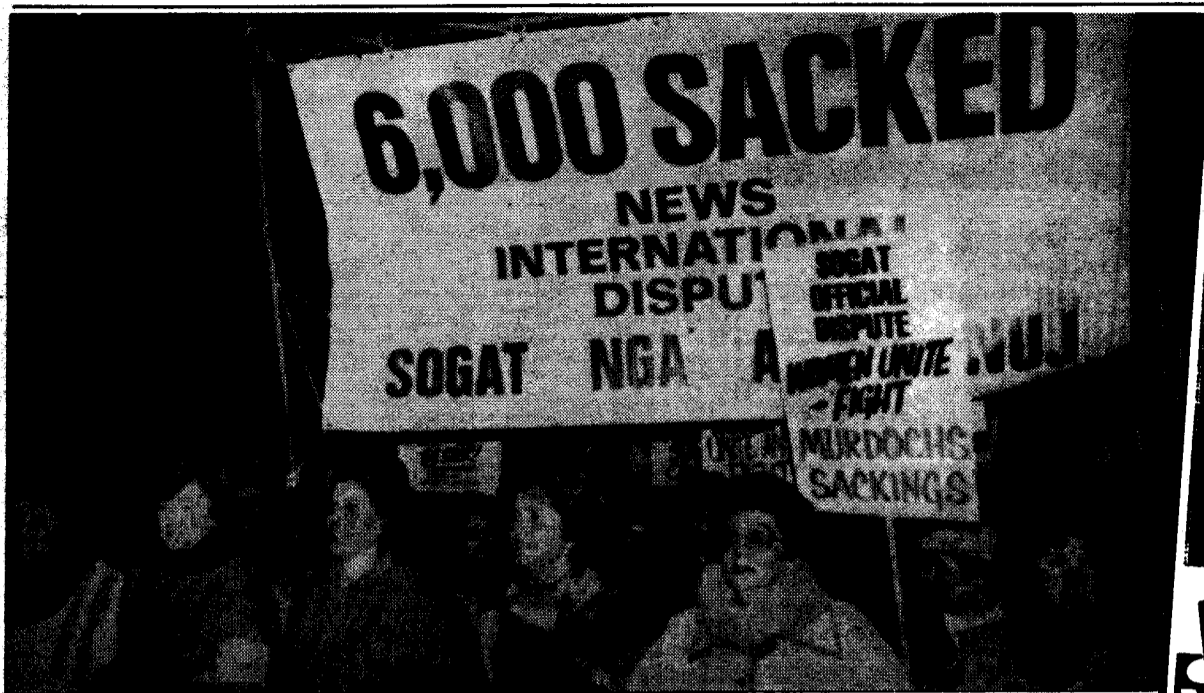
Make cheques or postal orders payable to IMRS. Orders with payment should be sent to: Other Books, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. If the total value of books ordered is over £10, then simply add 15 per cent for postage and packing.

These and other books, together with a wide selection of magazines, posters and postcards are also available from Birmingham's Other Bookshop, 137 Digbeth (just off the main shopping centre) (phone 021-643 5904)

## A PIECE OF THE ACTION



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**THE Sun NEWS WORLD THE TIMES THE SUNDAY TIMES**

## Women march on Wapping

LAST SATURDAY night at Wapping was very special. Two to three thousand women gathered in solidarity with the print workers and in celebration of International Women's Day.

I spoke to Pat, wife of a Sun machine shop worker, who said this was the biggest support she'd seen yet on a Saturday night. Of course women have been on the picket line — it was a miner's wife who saved Pat when she was running from the police the night they charged into the crowd on horseback. She told Pat to stay put and keep her head down: lessons learned on the miners picket lines.

By Jane Austin

The march from Tower Hill to Wapping was magnificent. There were women with banners and placards from all over the country: WAPC, women from Barking hospital, teachers, local government workers, all the print union banners, Labour Parties and LPYSs. There

was even a TGWU delegation of dockers from Merseyside at the picket. The mood was cheerful, with songs and chants against Murdoch from every side. As we approached Wapping, the route was lined with men supporting the march, cheering us on our way.

This strength and solidarity of women renewed the inspiration given by the women in the mining communities during their fight for work. The way women have continued to organise since, shows their commitment and wider political understanding.

The Barking women, though sacked, continue to support other struggles. Jill from Barking told me how she started up an anti apartheid group in her area.

The platform at Wapping included Ann Lilburn from WAPC, who pledged to return the support that SOGAT showed during the miners strike. Sue Carlisle, a councillor from Tower Hamlets, condemned the

police tactics in the area. Local people are constantly stopped and questioned in the streets. Even the local rag is forced to print accounts of police harassment.

We heard speeches from two sacked women members of SOGAT, from the wife of a sacked printer, and from striking Silentnight worker, who told us: 'You're where it counts — on the picket line.'

Brenda Dean came forward to report on the good news. She had just come from a trade union meeting in Leeds, where it was agreed to set up a fund for News International workers.

She told of the success of the boycott campaign.

Paper boys have been refusing to deliver the Sun and forcing newsagents to sell 'non-scab' alternatives. Returns of the Sun are 50 per cent in some areas, and the paper has lost 50 journalists.

Dean told of the growing international solidarity. Workers in the Finnish paper industry recently lobbied the British embassy in protest against the way British trade unionists are being treated. And there is to be an international trade union rally next week in Wembley, with Neil Kinnock on the platform. Brenda summed up 'they're not going to take our jobs. A negotiated settlement will have to be concluded.' She then called on five women

to accompany her to replace the six official pickets.

The evening continued with loud and angry shouts at the approach of scab lorries. Lots of Wapping songs keep the picket going.

The clearest sentiments throughout the march and speeches were about class solidarity and scabs. This was expressed by the wife of a sacked SOGAT worker whose husband, she said, had been loyal to The Times for 32 years, and whose father and grandfather had fought for the right to work.

Hammond and the electricians, she said, were not playing cricket. Her warning: 'You better be clear, you're not going to bowl this maiden over.'

## Wapping

Over 300 people attended the first East London public meeting on Tuesday 4 March, in support of the printer's strike. Held in Tower Hamlets, the borough where Fortress Wapping is the meeting adjourned to the picket line at the end.

The platform included miners leader Peter Heathfield, Fleet Street electricians leader Sean Geraghty, and transport union leader Bill Morris — as well as national leaders of the NGA, SOGAT and NUJ. In addition SOGAT sponsored MP Roy Leighton and black community leader Kumar Murshid from Tower Hamlets spoke.

Peter Heathfield's contribution was the highlight — bringing most applause from the main print workers audience. He reminded them that the miners strike 'was not an exclusive problem, but a general struggle facing a working people' and so too was the print strike. He pointed to the danger presented to unity by the EETPU leadership's support for scabs at Wapping and the UDM in Nottingham and by the stance of the Labour leadership.

'I get a little tired when we're seen to be turning inwards and attacking ourselves. I find distasteful', Heathfield told the rally in an obvious reference to the witch-hunting concerns of the Kinnock leadership.

Kumar Murshid brought home to the meeting the importance of the alliances the miners built during their struggle. He explained 'the reality which print workers face today are those black people have faced for a long time'. He reported how 30 per cent of black people in the area were unemployed with 'attacks from not only racists, but also the police'. Murshid reported to the meeting that black people were 'natural allies in the print battle, just as they had organised to back the miners.'

Finally, Bill Morris, TGWU leader, argued 'the dispute has to be fought industrially and politically inside and outside parliament. The message to the TUC must be that we need to mount a massive campaign to win reinstatement.'

## Teachers must prepare for new struggles

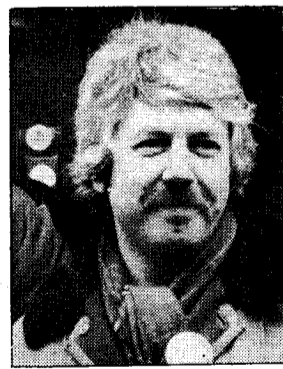
ON THURSDAY 6 March, the National Union of Teachers executive agreed to join the talks at ACAS set up as a result of the sell-out '85 pay deal struck by the other teacher organisations. The excuse used by the NUT leadership is that it is vital for the NUT to be in on these discussions to make sure no deals are struck on conditions which would worsen the job of teaching.

The employers' attitude is clear however. Following the agreement with the other teacher organisations to use 'their best endeavours' to achieve a return to 'normal duties' some local authorities are flexing their muscles and threatening to discipline teachers.

### Unfold

The Labour-led Inner London Education Authority, for example, has already passed a motion through one of its subcommittees which would give it the power to deduct pay from striking teachers on the basis of the effect it would have. This would particularly hit the guerilla strike action organised by NUT members in schools on the basis of half a day a month which has resulted in some schools being closed for up to 2 weeks. This threat is coupled with an ILEA statement that a teacher is obliged under their contract to cover classes of other absent teachers.

Cover is a highly contentious issue. After 12 months of no-cover action the majority of teachers



by Bernard Regan

are determined not to return to covering.

Teachers will be looking for the union to adopt at the Annual Conference the kind of lead put forward by Socialist Teachers Alliance members in the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA). They are calling for a simple declaration that teachers will never cover again.

### Attack

However, even this will not be enough. Teacher unions need to regain the initiative. Rather than get trapped into ACAS talks, the NUT leadership has to be pushed to recommence

strike action to win the £1700 flat rate increase for 1986 agreed in January.

Two tasks face the union. The first is to spell out a programme of strike action, including putting back on the agenda teachers refusing to invigilate examinations. The other is to wage a campaign designed to construct a series of alliances which are vital to teachers.

Despite the betrayal of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, over 30 per cent of their members were opposed to their leadership's line on the deal and must be drawn into action. A vital alliance is also that with parents, and the union must develop positive initiatives which will build an effective unity there.

Whilst teachers in England and Wales have been sold out, those in Scotland have been granted the independent review they have been fighting for over the last 18 months. It remains to be seen whether it will deliver the goods. STA members south of the border believe that it will be another opportunity for the government and local authorities to derail teachers action.

It is crucial that the temporary lull in the strike action does not become a real brake on the fight. The stakes are very high and the fight must be re-mounted swiftly.



## Notts Justice for Mineworkers formed

ONE WEEK after the concert at the Albert Hall, and the first demonstration of miners at a national level, the Notts regional Justice for Mineworkers campaign had its first meeting last Sunday. Following the decision of national Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) to affiliate to the campaign the Notts WAPC took the initiative to call the meeting.

Arthur Loxley from Durham NUM, and the National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, explained how the campaign started and its aims.

The meeting had 50 people attending with large delegations from WAPC, Notts 24 sacked miners group, Welbeck amnesty group, and NUM Notts area officials and members.

The NUM delegation was headed by Ray Chadburn who spoke of the importance of the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. He informed the meeting that the Notts NUM had already affiliated. In line with the national NUM the Notts NUM is urging all branches to affiliate.

Temporary officials were elected at the meeting and a publicity committee was established to work towards the next meeting and to campaign for affiliations from the labour

movement in Notts.

A discussion on the latest wave of sackings in Notts was taken — with WAPC reporting that they had already produced a leaflet and organised a rally on 13 April with the support of the Notts NUM.

By the end of the meeting the organisations present donated various sums of money to start the Notts Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. A real feeling of achievement in forming what is clearly going to be a major force in the Notts area was felt as the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign showed its importance in bringing together all those fighting to defend the NUM and its members.

## IRSF

Despite direct government intimidation the Inland Revenue Staff Federation (IRSF) has voted massively in favour of establishing a political fund. On a turnout of 70 per cent, 82 per cent of those voting were in favour of establishing a political fund. There were 39,700 votes in favour of the fund and 8,862 against.

This vote makes the IRSF the first white collar civil service union for six years to have a political fund. The IRSF is the first new union to establish a political fund under the 1984 Act. Every union voting has retained its existing fund.

# Socialist ACTION



## Black Sections hold AGM

**THE THIRD national conference of the black section which took place at Lambeth Town Hall last Saturday, registered some qualitative advances over the last year.**

**By Mike Wongsam, Black Section National Committee (personal capacity)**

The selection of six black prospective parliamentary candidates, all supporting black sections, and notable gains in the trade unions were affirmed to be major successes. Out-going chair councillor Sharon Atkins and

councillor Janet Boateng were commended for being among those councillors who stood firm throughout the local government dispute. They now face surcharges by the law courts, while the Labour Party leadership stand by in silence. An emergency resolution in support of the Liverpool and Lambeth councillors was passed unanimously.

Owing to over running on time some of the policy discussions couldn't be taken, but a shortened discussion on South Africa was addressed by a representative of the Pan African Congress (PAC).

A document submitted on behalf of the national committee outlining their

position on South Africa was adopted by an overwhelming majority.

Conference also voted on 20 other resolutions submitted by constituency black sections, and a report from the black section youth committee.

Delegates left the town hall determined to continue the struggle for self-organisation within the Labour Party with renewed vigour in the coming year.

• *The Black section newsletter, now out, 50p from 122a Ferndale Road, Brixton, London SW4*

*Socialist Action will be printing the black section resolution on South Africa in a forthcoming issue.*

# Resistance shakes Botha



**TWENTY-FOUR black people have been killed by police since South Africa's president magnanimously 'lifted' the state of emergency declared last year.**

But the rising confidence and determination of black people since COSATU was formed is more and more visible as strike action by gold miners escalates, and as the UDF scores significant advances in the townships.

Botha's announcement, on Tuesday 5 March, that he was lifting the state of emergency was greeted with cynicism. The state of emergency, the *Guardian* points out, was 'little more than a cosmetic exercise in view of the draconian powers already held by the security forces'.

Even as Botha lifted it he announced that existing legislation would be tightened 'to enable authorities to deal with continued incidents of unrest without subjecting the population to the inconvenience of a state of emergency'.

The majority black population, who have been subjected to the inconvenience of a racist state since the last century,

are showing increasing confidence in their confrontations with the regime. In the Vaal Reefs mine, owned by the 'progressive' Anglo-American company over 12,000 NUM members have resumed the strike which they started on 4 March and briefly suspended in protest at police detentions.

And a further 7-10,000 are striking in the Blyvooruitzicht mine, owned by the Rand Mines company, over bonus payments.

In several townships the population is clearly beginning to deprive the apartheid state of any effective authority. In Alexandra, the scene of huge uprisings the week before last, the stooge collabora-

tionist town council has been driven out and the resistance is taking over many of its functions — even collecting taxes for its own purposes.

In Bela Bela, a general strike against rent increases has almost paralysed the nearby white country town of Warmbaths. And the ANC has begun to organise bomb attacks on apartheid targets deep inside the country, which even the authorities admit could not have been carried out from across the borders with the front line states.

This resistance, and the nervousness it provokes among the apartheid regime's backers — the US and UK governments — has won one real concession: the release of some 700 detainees. The scale against which this action must be measured,

however, is made clear in a letter from Amnesty International to PW Botha just before his latest announcement.

It points out that several thousand people have been held, without trial, for political reasons; that the government is deliberately killing people for taking part in anti-apartheid demonstrations, and notes that 'abuses of human rights continue daily and have increased markedly over the past year.'

Torture, it says, is widespread and unchecked.

This horrific regime will not reform or voluntarily end its barbarous treatment of the black majority because its practices are rooted in the entire system of apartheid. The black people of South Africa have moved one step further towards overthrowing it.

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Harry Conroy NUJ Gen Sec  
Norman Willis TUC Gen Sec  
Chair: Ken Gill TUC Chairman

Other possible speakers:  
Ron Todd TGWU Gen Sec  
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