

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

### INSIDE

Four pages on the  
USSR & Eastern  
Europe  
Soviet workers begin  
to move  
Bureaucrats turn  
capitalist  
Anti-semitism in  
USSR

# BANNED!

## Labour Party bans SO: but we vow to fight on!

**O**n 25 July, the Labour Party's National Executive Committee voted to ban *Socialist Organiser*.

It is no longer "legal" in the Labour Party to sell *Socialist Organiser* or to help produce it. Attempts to expel those who produce the paper are expected to follow in due course.

The ban on *Socialist Organiser* takes the Labour Party on to a new level of intolerance, and moves it a big step nearer to being an authoritarian one-faction party.

The imminent witch-burnings of those who produce and distribute *SO* are intended, among other things, to drive this lesson home to the rest of the Left, and thus to intimidate and inhibit them from challenging the duck-egg-blue faction of spineless careerists who now control the Labour Party.

And the way *SO* has been banned is a brutal assertion by the Labour Party leaders that they have the right to police the party and to do what they like, as they like. All the norms of justice have been trampled on in the scramble to burke *SO*.

A statement by Labour Party Socialists at a House of Commons press conference on 24 July summed it up like this:

1. The newspaper have not been told of the charges made against them.
2. There is to be no hearing of the case, and therefore no evidence can



SO supporters lobby the NEC on 25 July

be presented, or witnesses cross-examined.

3. No notice has been given of the NEC's case, and it is therefore not possible for the defendants to bring evidence or advance argument.

4. The NEC have published documents on this case which are grossly libellous and inaccurate, and no opportunity will present itself within the Labour Party's structures to challenge these crude assertions.

These breaches of natural justice are extremely serious for a progressive party which purports to favour the extension of civil liberties. Lord Gifford QC has stated that it is easier to obtain justice before the British courts than it is to obtain such justice before the NEC.

We got neither proper charges, nor even proper notification that there were any charges, and we were not allowed to reply to the charges or comment on the "evidence". What is this? A democratically-run, pluralistic working-class party, or one of the pseudo-"Leninist" sects

the Labour Party denounces (falsely alleging that *SO* is one of them)? Procedures with dissidents such as the Labour Party's procedures with *SO* were long typical of the most notorious of the quasi-religious anti-Leninist sects, Gerry Healy's WRP.

But the Labour Party leaders will learn that the NEC's decision is not the end of it. *SO* supporters will stay in the Labour Party. Others will join to replace those they expel, and more will join than they expel.

The fight against the ban is not over. The decision will have to go before the Labour Party conference in October. Between now and October we will be conducting a campaign in the Labour Party and the trade unions to get Conference to rescind the NEC's decision by referring back the relevant section of the NEC Report.

The would-be witch-hunters of Walworth Road will find that they have not destroyed *SO*.

*SO* has been a central part of the Labour Left for a dozen years. The

paper was set up in October 1978 after one of the most representative conferences ever of the Labour Left, to serve as the organ of the "Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory".

The SCLV set out to organise the Labour Left for a fight on two

fronts: against the Thatcher Tories driving for office, and intent on using governmental and state power to beat down the labour movement

Turn to page 3

## "A Colin Wallace job"

"A foul business" and "a Colin Wallace job", was how Tony Benn described the proceedings at the Labour National Executive meeting on 25 July at which *Socialist Organiser* was banned.

Only two people, Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner, voted even to give *Socialist Organiser* a hearing. By

that stage in the meeting some of the "soft lefts" had left, including David Blunkett, who had said he would try to insist that *SO* should have the right to hear Joyce Gould's case against us and be given a chance to reply.

A large new document was put before the NEC. Like the document presented to the NEC last month, it was not communicated to *SO*.

It was all done behind closed doors and in the dark. The next *SO* will comment in more detail.

## 2 INTERNATIONAL

# East German workers face sack

Alex Schubert is a nurse from Chemnitz (formerly Karl Marx Stadt) in the DDR. He is a member of the United Left (VL) and is an activist in the VL's Factory Committee in Chemnitz. Alex spoke to Jon Pike recently while on a tour of Britain.

### What's the situation in the factories in the DDR at the moment?

Since the changes early this year many factories have difficulty selling their products — the trade organisations that we have in the GDR will not buy goods from the GDR. Since July we have had a free market; products have come in and people don't want to buy goods from the GDR.

Another problem is that the factories are very old and they can't compete in the new market relations. Because of this, and to make the factories more competitive, many workers are being sacked or given much shorter shifts and pay cuts.

The most likely to be sacked or

made to work half a day are single mothers and older workers, and workers from Cuba and Vietnam are also under threat. We predict that in the autumn there will be unemployment of three million in the GDR.

### You're in the factory committee in Chemnitz; how will that and the VL respond to this crisis?

I can only speak for the factory committee and the Chemnitz group. We want to work inside the unions and with the unions and exchange information with different groups of workers. We want to share our experiences so that we can learn from each other.

In September we want to start a bulletin first for Chemnitz and then spread it through Dresden and Leipzig; the whole of Sachsen. We want the workers in the factories to be interested and involved in it. Also we want to work with union activists from West Germany — have contacts and work together. In September we are holding the first public meeting with class fighting union activists from West Germany.

### Unification is fast approaching. I know it's a complicated question, but what's your attitude?

Before the election I was against unification — we wanted a new GDR neither capitalist nor Stalinist. I thought unification would be a victory for West German im-



Anti-Kohl protestors in Leipzig

perialism and West German capital. In Chemnitz we reacted against German nationalism and we thought the people who were calling for reunification wanted a Fourth Reich.

After the elections there was a new situation. I think now we must accept that the people want reunification. Our task now is to make sure that that's not just reunification between East German bureaucrats and factory directors and Western capitalists, but also between the workers and the unions and union activists.

I think it's a bit difficult if the left today only says 'No Fourth Reich'.

### What do you think the prospects are for the VL after unification?

It's going to be difficult. One problem is that there are so many

different ideas in the VL. Also the left in the FRG is very fragmented. I think it's impossible for the VL to continue to be united in the East with so many left groups in the West. But there's also a chance for the left in the two parts of Germany.

I think there's a need to reassess our position and to have a discussion without prejudice and dogma. I think the perspective for the left in a united Germany must be orientated to the working class and class struggle. We must support the right of the workers against unemployment and against social deterioration.

### What do you make of the old Stalinist systems; they weren't socialist societies — what do you

think they were?

I think the Eastern Bloc states were anything but workers' states!

I would call the DDR some kind of state capitalism because the workers had no possibility of deciding on levels of production and the running of the factories. And the directors weren't controlled or elected by the workforce. The workers had no possibility of independent organisation — no right to strike and so on. I think unification is the unification of ruling classes in the DDR and the FRG.

On the Soviet Union, I'm not so sure. It's intrinsically more complicated. There's a ruling class of party bureaucrats, industrial and army bureaucrats, and I can't say it's state capitalism — that's too easy. I think maybe we need a more exact analysis.

## Greek government plans sell-offs and cuts

Ian Swindale reports from Greece

New austerity measures introduced by the right wing New Democracy government of Constantine Mitsotakis include massive price increases, a reduction of 6.5% in the partial compensation for inflation (now running at 17%) for 1990 and the abolition of the compensation system, known as ATA, from next year.

The government has also announced its intention of selling off most publicly-owned companies, if buyers can be found for them. Some of these companies, known here as "problem" companies, were heavily subsidised by the Pasok government of Andreas Papandreou. The national debt is one of the largest, as a percentage of national income, in Europe.

Mitsotakis has announced that 10,000 jobs will be lost in the "problem" industries alone, while the profitable subsidiaries of the banks will also be sold off.

Up to a further 90,000 government workers on temporary contracts will not have their contracts renewed. The government has announced that it will review its needs, which it estimates at 10,000 of the workers on temporary contracts and the present 100,000 temporary workers will have to compete for those jobs in a public examination.

Teachers have taken industrial action against the government's plans, and the Greek TUC (GSEE) has called one-day general strikes.

The teachers are demanding an 18,000 (£72) a month pay increase, the retention of wage indexing to compensate for inflation, the appointment of an extra 5,000

teachers, improvements in teacher training and a five year programme to solve the problems of school buildings.

The response of the government has been a hardline declaration that in the present economic climate it cannot concede any of the teachers' demands and that it would rather be defeated on its policies and go to fresh elections a hundred times than to give way to the teachers. Some members of the government are even talking of mobilising teachers into the army to break the strike.

While this would certainly signal the government's intention of enforcing its policies regardless of opposition, it would not guarantee the smooth running of the university entrance exams which could be nullified by teacher sabotage, so for the moment the teachers remain free to pursue their dispute. They do so, however, without the support, either of Pasok or of the Left Alliance (the Communist Party and the Greek Left).

Pasok seem to be banking on growing opposition to Mitsotakis developing into an "autumn of discontent" and early elections and Papandreou is consequently playing a waiting game. Moreover, he himself suffered at the hands of the teachers two summers ago when, then as now completely isolated, the teachers fought an industrial campaign right through the examination period, only to see the gains they had negotiated with the Pasok government largely denied them when schools opened for the new academic year in September 1988.

The Communist Party leader Grigoris Frakos not only spoke out against strike action during the examination period, but mobilised the parents' organisation against the strike. He also has a score to settle with the teachers, having himself also suffered the embarrassment of CP teachers defying the party line in 1988 and supporting the strike.

The industrialists' organisation, SEV, has, meanwhile, submitted its

own demands to Mitsotakis. They want the top rate of tax reduced to 40%, a reduction of tax on non-distributed profits from 40% to 23%, a reduction of 10% in the number of workers in the public sector, wages in the private sector linked to productivity agreements,

the abolition of inflation compensation and the freedom to dismiss workers at will. They also want private enterprise to be allowed to invest in health, education, transport, communications and energy.

The most important task facing

Greek workers today is to give their full support to the teachers and make sure that they, and then other workers, are not picked off one section at a time by Mitsotakis, in the way that Thatcher was able to pick off sections of the British trade unions throughout the 1980s.

## From Thatcher to Thailand

### WOMEN'S EYE

By Liz Millward

Press event of the week, overshadowing even a 'firebomb' attack on Princess Di, was the arrest of two young women for drug smuggling in Thailand.

In a way, the case says more about the 'British Family' than Thatcher's latest family policy speech.

Thatcher says she believes that the family is the bedrock of 'our society'. She says she believes it is the best environment in which to bring up children. Her approach is classical — she notes that the family provides sustenance, education, social training, company, childcare, nurture.

What she doesn't say is that all these things are provided at no direct cost to either the state or industry — which is of course the key point. Families are primarily an economic convenience for capitalism — the ideology comes after.

Marxists do not oppose family ideology simply because it props up capitalism. We know that it can be

replaced with something better. For though the family can be a 'haven' from the outside world, it also represents female drudgery and a set of power relations which blight many lives. The economics of family life are wasteful, primitive and divisive.

The two young women who look set to spend the next 20 years in Thai jails are a case in point. Their actions were, it seems, partly (if not wholly) prompted by a desire to get away from their families.

The women wanted travel, excitement, adventure. They probably had an idea of what they were getting into, but they went ahead anyway. Ordinary life could not offer any of the excitement they craved. Apparently their parents "couldn't do a thing with them". Family life was the problem for the two.

Both families had provided everything Thatcher favours. Yet both the accused women turned into "bad 'uns".

The problem is not family life, it is society. The problem was not with the young women's expectations, it was with the society which could only fulfil those expectations through crime.

Options for young women, even from wealthy families, are limited. The 'biological clock' is a restriction on how much can be achieved even by the most determined women. The pressure is always on

to get married and have kids, despite recent changes in the way 'society' thinks. Until then, young women are expected to get a nice job and be good. Only the most privileged girls are encouraged to experiment, to have adventures, and see the world.

Thatcher's ideas about family life are flawed through and through. They are motivated by employers who won't pay the price for liberating ordinary women from the drudgery of family life. The claustrophobia of family life produces alienation in millions of young people, and offers a horrible vision of the future for thousands of girls.

A society based on 'family values' is acceptable when the alternative is chaos. The sight of tens of thousands of hopeless and abandoned Rumanian or Brazilian children shows what can happen when the family breaks down. But Britain is one of the world's richest nations. In the Western world it is possible to move away from the claustrophobia and drudgery of the family, while ensuring that there will always be enough to eat. Britain (and the rest of the world for that matter) has the resources to give every person a safe, well fed, loving upbringing with the opportunity to have a fulfilling life after childhood.

All it needs is organising differently.

# Labour Party bans SO

## EDITORIAL

### From page 1

— and against the disgraceful right wing Labour government then in office.

Socialists had to do everything in their power to stop the Tories, and at the same time organise the fight to cleanse the labour movement of the right wing policies whose operation by the Callaghan government was opening the way to a Tory victory in the 1979 election. The SCLV organised the left to run what was in effect an independent election campaign, using our own literature. *SO* was central to that work.

Nevertheless, the right wing lost the election for Labour. And then all hell broke loose in the Labour Party.

The overwhelming majority of activists in the Constituency Labour Parties came out in support of renewing the Labour Party, making it into a fighting working-class party. They expressed a determination that when Labour next took office it would be a radically different party, with slogans like "Never Again" — never again a right wing Labour government that would disgrace the labour movement and once again open the way for a Tory return.

For a while the left seemed unstoppable. A section of the hard-core ruling-class supporters in the party — David Owen, Roy Jenkins, Shirley Williams, and others — felt that the best thing they could do was split the Labour Party.

In 1981 they formed the SDP. With vast media support, it mushroomed into what looked for a while like a powerful national party. That frightened a lot of people in the Labour Party.

Nevertheless, the prospect still seemed real that the left could reconstruct the Labour Party into a fighting, campaigning party which could then go out and win back lost ground with the electorate. Even Michael Foot, who succeeded James Callaghan as Party leader in 1981, talked about drumming up "a storm of protest" against the Tory government, seeming to commit himself to an attempt by Labour to resist Thatcher's onslaught on the labour movement and the welfare state.

The left had won a series of important victories for Labour Party democracy. When Tony Benn stood for deputy leader against Dennis Healey in 1981, he got 83 per cent of the Constituency Labour Party vote, losing narrowly overall because of the trade union block vote.

What went wrong?

Trying to reorganise the Labour Party immediately after the 1979 election defeat, the Left was like a man trying to build a lifeboat when the waves were already swamping the ship. Almost immediately an economic slump undermined the fighting strength of the trade unions — and the Tories did their best to make it worse, deliberately using the slump to smash up the militancy of the working class.

Within 18 months hundreds of thousands of workers had been thrown out of the factories onto the streets. The dole queues became

enormous. The strength and militancy of the '70s was savagely undercut. The whole social and economic terrain had turned hostile to the organised labour movement.

Labour could have resisted these developments had the trade union leaders been fighters, and not over-paid office boys and girls. But resistance was not centrally organised. It was chopped up and defeated piece by piece.

Steel workers were left to fight alone, then the miners were isolated in their great year-long strike. There were other struggles, too. All were defeated or contained.

As the labour movement weakened, the Tories took the chance to put on the shackles. They pushed through a series of anti-union laws which made the sort of solidarity action that had been typical in the '60s and '70s illegal, thereby hamstringing the working class in a legal framework more authoritarian than in any other West European country.

Unavoidably, Labour's attempts to sort itself out threw the party into disarray, making it unattractive or repulsive to some of the electorate. The SDP cashed in on that, and was able for a while to rocket upwards in the polls.

People began to panic — including leftists who had shouted "Never Again" in 1979. The labour movement was being bashed by the slump and the Tories. The Labour Party was in disarray, and seemed to be under threat of being pushed back to third-party status behind the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

Many of the socialist warriors of 1979-80 began to scale down their demands, hopes and expectations. Rocking the boat, they decided, was too dangerous in these circumstances. They resolved to settle for a "slightly improved" Labour Party, led by "soft leftists" like Michael Foot, and then, from 1983, Neil Kinnock.

The "soft" or "cuddly" left began to differentiate from the "hard" left. This was not a matter of reformists and revolutionaries identifying themselves to each other and regrouping accordingly, for the "hard" left was and is also led by reformists — but by serious reformists like Tony Benn. The others — Neil Kinnock is a good example — who presented themselves as also "lefts", have more and more ceased even to be reformists, and dare not now even commit themselves to undoing what the Tories have done, for example, on trade union law.

*Militant*, which then had two or three thousand supporters, had largely stayed aloof from the broad left coalition which shook the Labour Party in 1979 and after. But the witch-hunt against *Militant*, starting in 1981, was used to pressurise and bludgeon the left, and to separate out the "softs" from the "hards".

Initially that was an openly bourgeois enterprise, organised by the media. Then it was taken up by those at the top of the Labour Party intent on remoulding the Labour Party so as once again to make it acceptable to the bourgeoisie as a sure-safe alternative government.

One other central factor helped to destroy the potential that the big left wing of 1979-81 seemed to have. Sections of the left took power in local government, in Lon-



We protested — but still no charges, no evidence, no hearing, no justice! Photo: Geoff Ward.

don, Sheffield, etc.

They took power under the guns of a very hostile and ruthless central government. They had the choice either of using local government positions to mobilise mass resistance to the cuts the Tories were imposing, or of trying to run local government and make the best of the rotten choices the Tories left them with.

The dominant left wing leaders decided that it would be business as usual — plus fantastic, and ultimately silly, socialist rhetoric which pretended that what was really happening was that the Left was taking local "power".

Leftists who had angrily denounced the Callaghan government for accepting the dictates of the International Monetary Fund instead of mobilising the working class to fight back now found themselves using the self-same arguments for making the best of the choices left in local government after Thatcher's dictats had been bowed to.

Those people set up a vigorous new school of class collaborationist supine reformism in the heart of the left which had set out with such brave hopes and pretensions in 1979. By their failure to give a positive lead in a real fight, and by their arguments, the leaders of the local government left played a malign role. Though some of them have not gone all the way personally, they prepared the way for Kinnockism. All you had to do to appreciate and love Kinnock for what he was trying to do, was to remember the arguments of the local government left and apply them to national politics.

So the working class reeled under the blows of the slump and the Tory government, and the left squandered its chances and split up. A soft-left/right-wing coalition took control of the Labour Party, and in the last seven years it has evolved steadily to the right until today David Owen can plausibly say that Neil Kinnock is doing what Owen and his friends set up the SDP to do.

One reason why *SO* is expelled now is that the Labour leaders fear the demands of the rank and file of the movement especially should Labour win the next general election. They want to sterilise and cauterise the party so that it will be a docile instrument for a new right

wing Labour government.

Neil Kinnock was one of those who shouted "Never Again" in 1979. He has now taken the Labour Party so far to the right that in some respects what the Wilson/Callaghan governments tried to do puts them far to his left. "Never Again" has now taken on a quite special meaning for Kinnock and his friends.

*SO* as it is today is a product of the fights which shaped the left in the '80s. We resisted the political suicide — that is what it was — of those who settled in to local government administration, consoling themselves with fantasies about local "power". We parted company with many who helped set up the paper, over the questions like policy for local government.

We have consistently advocated class struggle politics, but we were never strong enough to determine events at the crucial turning points.

Naturally we are disappointed by the series of defeats that now have added to them the banning of *SO* by the leaders of the Labour Party. But we are not dismayed.

The work of transforming the mass labour movement, of winning it for socialism, is an immense work: when we have won the labour movement for class-struggle socialism, then we will be close to the socialist revolution. Defeats and setbacks in this work are to be expected.

In trying to change the Labour Party in 1979 and after, the left came up against the entrenched power of the ruling class, expressed in its media, and in the work of its supporters and agents within the labour movement. It is bitter truth that many of the setbacks we have suffered were avoidable: the policies we advocated would have avoided those defeats.

A writer in *Workers' Action* (the newspaper whose supporters took the initiative to set up the SCLV and *SO*) clearly defined the alternatives facing the left at the beginning of the upsurge in 1979.

**"If the proposals [for Labour Party democracy] get through it will be the beginning of a major left/right struggle. The outcome will probably determine the character of the Labour Party for decades.**

**Either the left will go on from a victory on democracy at Brighton**

**to consolidate the Labour Party as a genuinely socialist party seeking to overthrow capitalism on the basis of the class struggle of the working class, and build up a mass membership around such policies.**

**Or the left will be purged and the Labour Party transformed from its present ramshackle self into a tight and intolerant party modelled on the West German, Swedish and other Social Democracies".**

We understood the choices and we fought for the class struggle alternative at every turn. We were not strong enough: but we have grown stronger in the course of those struggles, and we will therefore be better able to affect similar events in the future. The struggle goes on.

Despite what some of the faint-hearted and deserters say now, the struggle will *always* go on, as long as there is capital and wage slavery! The job of Marxists is to learn the lessons of the struggle, and to bring those lessons and experiences to new struggles. That is what *SO* exists to do.

The argument why socialists should be in the Labour Party, and why they should resist being pushed out of it, was never that the Labour Party is a socialist party. Despite the party's acceptance of the distant goal of socialism, it has never been an effective class-struggle socialist party. At its best it has been a party of serious reforms negotiated from the ruling class.

The argument why socialists should be in the Labour Party and stay there despite bans and proscriptions is that Labour is the mass party of the working class, based on the bedrock organs of the working class, the trade unions. Labour remains that despite the recent changes, and despite the readjustments of the weight of union power (or union leaders' power) in the affairs of the Labour Party.

Nothing fundamental has changed here. *SO* will continue in the Labour Party. Between now and the Party conference in October — and, whatever happens in October, in the years ahead — we will give Kinnock and his friends reason to know we are still around.

Working class militancy has begun to revive. We have won unspectacular but nourishing victories in the last year. The left will revive too. We are preparing for it.

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

Karl Marx

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## 4 LETTERS

# The lessons of the Budchenko affair

### GRAFFITI

Mark Osborn, National Secretary of the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc (CSWEB) writes a personal comment on the reaction on the left to the visit of Soviet miners' representative Yuri Budchenko who, while in Britain, sided with the scab UDM against the NUM

Last time I wrote to Socialist Worker, my letter was so badly doctored the only possible sense which could be made of it was the opposite to the one I intended.

So, I will not be replying in the SW letters page to their recent remarks about Yuri Budchenko.

Budchenko is the Soviet independent union representative who recently appeared on TV alongside UDM-er, Roy Lynk.

Budchenko went to the British press to demand the return of money taken from Soviet miners by official "unions" for the welfare of British miners during the 1984-85 strike. He was incensed that the money ended up with the IMO, which includes many of the Stalinist state "unions", which he and other Eastern Bloc workers know to be fakes and to be the tools of management and the anti-working class Stalinist states.

Budchenko's claims were used in the press witch-hunt of Scargill.

It would seem that the left's denunciations of Yuri Budchenko are motivated by two factors: his association with scab leader Roy Lynk and his association with the claims that Scargill is corrupt.

In addition, the British labour movement is riddled with Stalinist sympathisers, and many activists are searching for faults. Is Budchenko "pro-capitalist"? Has he got horns?

Socialist Worker ought to know better. But they will do anything to get a few recruits. If it means avoiding a difficult argument about Stalinism's effects on the emerging Russian labour movement, so be it.

SW claim that Budchenko "denounced the strike committees formed during last year's strikes" and "made no criticism of the official trade unions".

An independent observer might think this a little careless — for the representative of an independent union based on the strike committees of last year's miners' strikes, which was set up in opposition to and in order to replace the official unions.

And SW goes on: Budchenko "condemned" the socialist union Sotsprof. In fact, Budchenko said Sotsprof was largely irrelevant to the miners' struggles. The number of workers Sotsprof organises is small; they give protection to co-ops who are seen to be profiteers.

I am not pro-Lynk or pro-Budchenko as an individual. I am pro-Sotsprof and have helped to raise money and support for them (despite the SWP's bureaucratic shielding of Sotsprof from other socialists in the British labour movement).

But one thing is clear — Budchenko should be heard out, and reported accurately. If they really want to get rid of Stalinism, SW should stop adopting its methods, and stop lying about people for factional reasons.

Finally, the SWP imply Budchenko is pro-Yeltsin. Certainly

that is what SWP members have been saying. He told me the opposite.

It is true that many Soviet workers are influenced by Yeltsin and representatives of the new miners' union (not, as SW states, the Kuzbass Workers Union) met Yeltsin, who tried to persuade them not to strike. However, Yuri Budchenko left Britain before the strikes of 11 July saying he was going back to help organise them.

Is Budchenko a scab? He spent 9 years in a labour camp for giving out leaflets, and has been a leader of independent, militant unions. He is no scab on Soviet workers' struggles.

Is Budchenko a scab for meeting the UDM? Even assuming Budchenko is a cynic and a fake, what he says has some force. It is what other Soviet workers are saying, and will say.

He has lived under totalitarianism and been put in a labour camp. He wants democracy. He wants to hear everyone's viewpoint, and decide for himself. He does not want to take anyone's word for anything. He does not want to be "given a line".

The UDM sent the striking miners in the USSR a message of support and have presumably given them "practical" help, too. On the evidence before them, Soviet miners see the UDM as their friends.

Arthur Scargill is a friend of the anti-working class Soviet state and their fake miners' "union". Scargill was a guest at the official miners' conference held in Moscow over the winter.

The 20% minority of worker delegates at that conference walked out in disgust. Scargill has denounced the independent union.

To a Soviet worker, Scargill looks like a scab; Lynk looks like a friend.

On top of Scargill's basic attitude to the "socialist states" is the Soviet miners' money which now rests with the IMO. The basic issue here is: don't you think Budchenko has a right to be angry that funds donated for the miners' strike have gone to a Stalinist union international? The leaders of the Soviet official miners' "union" are members of the ruling class who have oppressed Soviet miners for decades.

Finally, Budchenko has a lot less information about the UDM/NUM than Scargill has about the Soviet scab-state unions.

The British labour movement needs to understand that these are the reasons that Soviet workers will meet the UDM. If we abandon them because they do so, the right will have an easy monopoly.

Budchenko is not "untypical". Socialist views are isolated. I do not like it, but for the moment it is true.

If the workers' movement is pro-Yeltsin or pro-capitalist do we support it? Yes, of course we do! The independent workers' movement is flexing its muscles. In recent weeks miners and other workers have struck for improvements in living standards. Some workers have also demanded such things as the resignation of the government and further democratic rights.

These organisations are emerging from the Stalinist ice-age, so they may well be confused.

It's a pity that Socialist Worker, which prides itself on its anti-Stalinist record, should add its voice to the confusion over here.

# The workers' alternative in Eastern Europe

The chaos and crisis created by the bureaucrats' plan in the East European economies is clearly illustrated by Xenia Suchova (SO 453).

For workers to obtain basic day to day goods they must become hunters of goods, spending many hours queuing. It is no wonder in such circumstances that the Western market system has had a new lease of popularity among Eastern Bloc workers.

Will the market reforms and privatisation plans gear production to human need? No, my letter (SO 449) attempted to show why the reforms won't deliver the goods.

The Eastern Bloc economies are dominated by state monopolies. Privatising these monopolies will result in the domination by privately owned monopolies. An increased role for the market in such circumstances will and has led to rising prices.

How should socialists respond? Duncan Chapple (SO 450) — "socialists oppose the re-introduction of the market...defend the nationalised economies against the imperialist profiteers". Does this mean a united front with Ligachev to defend the "plan" against the USSR market reformers?

The problem for the Stalinist planned industries is that workers are now voting against them with their feet.

In East Germany the shoe industry faces collapse. Is this because the "imperialist profiteers" are asset stripping? No, it is because East German workers want to buy West German shoes and not the inferior, unpopular models produced by the East German state factories.

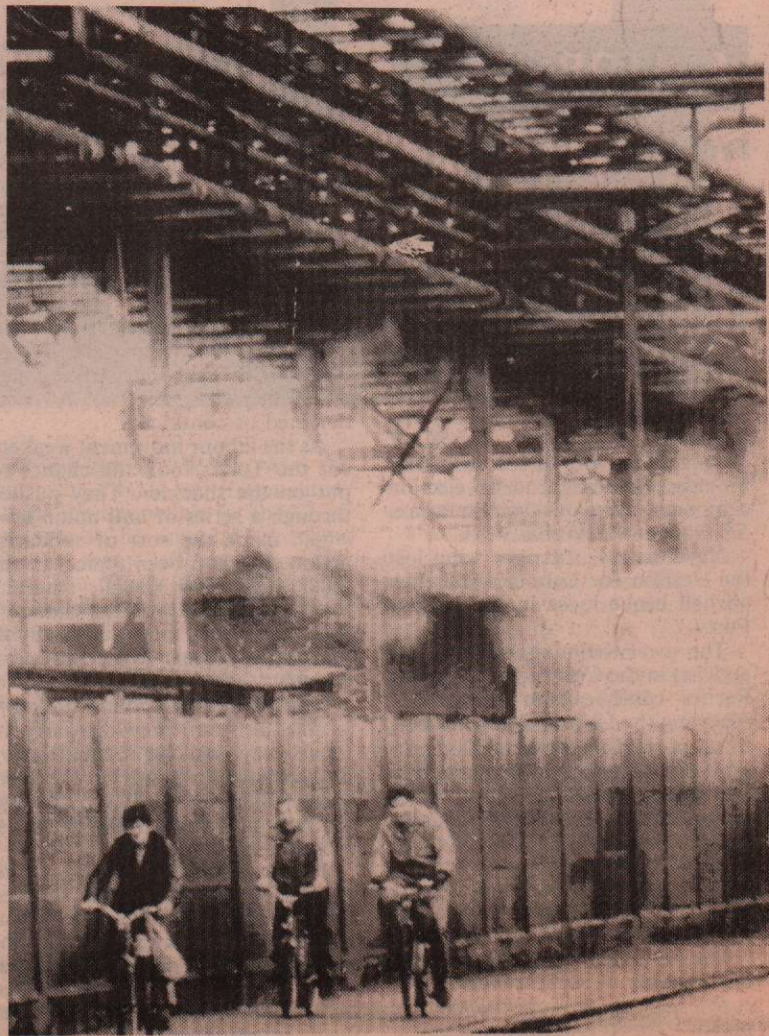
Now, the 40,000 East German shoe workers are facing an uncertain future. It is not primarily monetary union and market competition but mismanagement by state bureaucrats which threaten their future. The state bosses failed to gear production to what consumers wanted — now the workers may have to pay for it with their jobs.

How should socialists respond? Duncan Chapple concludes his letter with a call to "defend and control the planned economy".

The first question to be asked is whose "planned economy". By implication Duncan clearly means the already existing planned economy which produces shoes no-one wants.

Obviously, Duncan calls for democratic reforms. Maybe he would agree with Ernest Mandel's model for how shoe production would be organised by a democratic workers' plan: "the product mix would flow from previous consultation between the workers' councils and consumers' conferences elected by the mass of the citizens. Various models, for example, different fashions in shoes would be submitted to them which the consumers could test and criticise and replace by others. Showrooms and publicity sheets would be the main instruments of that testing. The latter could play the role of a 'referendum'. A consumer, having the right to receive six pairs of footwear a year, would cross six samples in a sheet containing a hundred or two hundred. The model mix would then be determined by the outcome of such a referendum." (*New Left Review*).

This scenario is an unworkable pipedream. The picture it paints is not a liberating socialism from below but a bureaucratic administrative nightmare. Under socialism, surely we will still go to the market to try one shoe against another, one colour against another, one size against another before we finally decide which pair



East German industry faces a crisis

to buy.

We will need some form of planning to direct resources and decide on society-wide priorities. But the plan would not cover the myriad of details envisaged by Ernest Mandel. There must be room for some market mechanisms.

Do we support the state bureaucrats' economic reforms? No. The reforms are aimed at making workers pay for the bureaucrats' mismanagement of the economy. Their goal is the wholesale privatisation of major enterprises. The privatisation plans should be opposed. The bureaucrats' rule in the economy must be ended — but by workers' control through workers' self-management.

In addressing ourselves to the East German shoe workers do we say defend jobs by ending market competition from West German imports? This would seem to be the logical position of the "defenders of the planned economy" who blame the market for all the ills facing the East European economies.

Our response instead should be no job losses, rights to redeployment and retraining on full pay, sliding scale of wages, and a shorter

working week.

Articulating workers' demands and helping them organise must be the starting point for a programme of genuine socialism. The strikes which have swept the USSR, East Germany and Poland indicate that workers are fighting back to defend their interests as workers; workers should not have to pay for the bureaucrats' economic crisis.

We need to look at how we can help the emerging independent workers' movement develop. A movement is needed which can struggle for workers' interests on the political as well as the economic front.

Workers' self-management must be posed as the alternative to the economic rule of state and private bosses. The demand for workers' self-management must be broadened from individual factories and industries.

Our goal has to be workers' self-management on a society-wide level. Through this a movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority can be created.

Tony Dale  
Manchester

## Mark Lindsay

first met Mark Lindsay at last year's Labour Party conference.

A number of non-delegates who were *Socialist Organiser* supporters, including myself, were helping the *Socialist Organiser* supporters who were delegates prepare for the conference debates by going through the composites and drafting some notes on the motions for the delegates.

Speaking at Labour Party conference is a nerve-wracking experience; it takes a lot of courage for a new delegate to get up and speak.

Mark had a speech impediment; he wasn't the world's most ac-

complished public speaker, but what I will never forget is that his hand was always the first in the air in every debate. Despite all the problems he faced, he spoke at least four times during the week. I'm convinced his actions convinced our other delegates to attempt to enter the debates more often.

Mark was a fine comrade and a credit to *Socialist Organiser*. He will be sorely missed. However, while we should mourn his tragic death we should continue to organise for the socialist future Mark dedicated his life to.

I enclose a cheque to SO in his memory.

Steve Battlemuch  
Nottingham

# New purge on Merseyside

By Stan Crooke

This week's meeting of the Labour Party National Executive Committee, apart from taking a decision on the proscription of *Socialist Organiser*, will vote upon (and doubtless endorse) a report from Joyce Gould recommending that another 14 Labour councillors in Liverpool be suspended, and that Liverpool District Labour Party be suspended (again).

16 Labour councillors were suspended in the run-up to the local elections in May for voting at a council meeting against implementation of the poll tax. The 14 now facing suspension voted against a rent rise of £3 a week for Liverpool council tenants which the right-wing leadership of the Labour Group wanted to impose.

In both cases the councillors broke the Labour whip. However, only two members of the entire membership of the Labour Group have not broken the whip — one is the former leader of the Labour Group, the other is the Chief Whip himself. But only the left-wingers are suspended for breaking the whip.

Moreover, the suspensions have not been imposed or approved by the local District Labour Party, which would be the normal procedure. The suspensions are decreed by Walworth Road — so much for the Labour leadership's promises that it is committed to a restoration of local government democracy!

The recent controversy over the Labour Group leadership's attempt to railroad through a rent increase some four months into the financial

year is a measure of its disgraceful politics.

In the May elections no Labour candidate had referred to the possibility of a rent increase. The District Labour Party policy is for a maintenance of the existing rent freeze. And the right-wing clique in the leading positions in the Group did not even dare to discuss the proposed increase with other members of the Labour Group.

The purpose of the rent rise was not to improve services for council tenants. It was to cover interest payments on money which the council has borrowed because of the high level of poll tax non-payment in Liverpool. Screwing the tenants was a preferable option to challenging the government, as far as the Group leadership was concerned. In fact, as far as the latter is concerned, not only is challenging the government a non-starter, but also the much vaunted "dented shield" approach. As one member of the ruling clique put it in the debate on the rent rises: "It is not the job of a Labour council to protect the people of Liverpool from the worst excesses of the Tory government".

A second wave of suspensions would leave a total of 29 Labour councillors suspended (one of the initial 16 councillors did not stand for re-election in May). This is the only way the right-wingers in the Labour Group can stay in power. If all suspended councillors were reinstated, then the right wing would lose control straight away.

The suspension of the Liverpool District Labour Party which is to accompany the suspension of the councillors is a measure of how serious the Party leadership is about giving Party members a greater say in the running of the Party.

The DLP was suspended in the



mid-'80s at the time of the *Militant* witch-hunt. When it was re-constituted, the quorum was raised to 100 to try to make sure that it did not function.

The District Party managed to start meeting again earlier this year. It opposed implementation of the poll tax, condemned the suspension of the 16 councillors, opposed the rent increase, and called for the leadership of the Labour Group to step down. Hence the entry of Joyce Gould, stage right, to have the District Party suspended, for no other reason than that it has the "wrong" politics.

Under Gould's plan, the local Labour Party full-timers, instead of the District Party, will select candidates for next year's local elections. Since the unelected full-timers can be counted on to select right-wingers, this will help rebuild the forces of the right wing in the Labour Group — and make it even less accountable to the Party membership and electorate in Liverpool.

The attacks on Labour councillors and the District Party in Liverpool need to be seen in the context of other witch-hunting

moves on Merseyside, especially in the Wirral and St Helens, and should be fought in conjunction with the latter.

The Liverpool group of Labour Party Socialists has called a meeting for Wednesday 8 August (7.30pm, Merseyside Trade Union Centre, Hardman St, room F38) open to Labour Party members throughout Merseyside to discuss the witch-hunt. The meeting should be used as the opportunity to launch a "Merseyside Against the Witch-hunt" campaign to ensure a non-sectarian and co-ordinated response to the witch-hunt.

## A majority for socialism

There is a majority in Britain for the general idea of socialism, according to a recent opinion survey.

In their new book *We British* Eric Jacobs and Robert Worcester report that "we asked whether people favoured 'a mainly capitalist society in which private interests and free enterprise are more important', or 'a mainly socialist society in which public interests and a more

controlled economy are most important".

"The socialist society beat the capitalist by an outright eight points, 47% to 39%: by three points with men, but twelve with women; by only two points with those over 55 years, but by twelve with those between 15 and 34; by two with home owners but by thirty-one with council tenants; by two with non trade unionists but by thirty-one with trade unionists."

The researchers checked to see if this response was a quirk of the way the question had been asked. Such quirks certainly exist. The book reports that 60% of people believe in heaven, but only 49% in life after death. 92% say they belong to one religion or another, but only 75% believe in god.

On a more directly comparable issue, asking whether "we should reduce pay differentials as much as possible" produced a different result from asking whether people preferred "a society which emphasises similar incomes and rewards for everyone" to one "which allows people to make and keep as much money as they can". The first question showed a 49% to 24% majority for equality, the second a 52%-40% majority against.

The poll majority for socialism against capitalism was, however, confirmed by other questions. Clear and often big majorities preferred "a society in which the caring for others is more highly regarded" to one "in which the creation of wealth is more highly regarded", and one "which emphasises the social and collective provision of welfare" to one "where the individual is encouraged to look after himself".

They favoured higher taxes to pay for better welfare, protection of the environment at the expense of economic growth, and general education to education geared to what employers want.

Classifying people as "Thatcherists" (ie. supporters of Thatcher's social philosophy, though not necessarily of her personally) or "socialists", Jacobs and Worcester find a 54% to 34% majority of socialists over Thatcherists.

Socialists are a 64%-24% majority in the manual working class, and a 54%-42% majority among routine non-manual workers; but a 42%-49% minority in the petty bourgeoisie.

Another finding by Jacobs and Worcester is equally startling for these days when socialism and the working class are supposed to belong with the dinosaurs. 67 per cent of people describe themselves as "working class". In 1949, only 43% would so describe themselves.

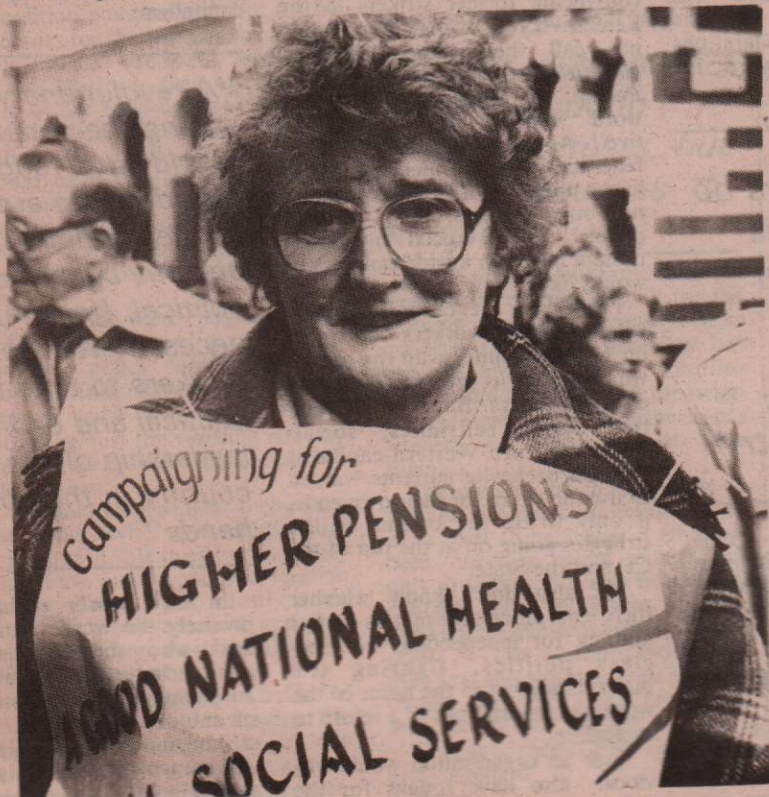
This result is less solid than the others, because today's question was not exactly the same as 1949's.

If class identification and support for socialist values (however vaguely conceived) are so widespread, why isn't the left stronger? One figure poses the question very sharply: twenty-six per cent of Tory

voters said they preferred socialism to capitalism. Why do they vote Tory?

Other opinion poll evidence, and everyday experience of election canvassing, indicate an answer. Large majorities favour the general values which they associate with Labour and socialism over the general values which they associate with the Tories and capitalism. But equally large majorities believe that Labour is vague, ineffectual, and untrustworthy, whereas the Tories at least know what they're doing.

The Labour leaders' panic-stricken retreat to a stance where their most daring social criticism is a jibe about the Tories being disunited or incompetent is not a necessary accommodation to public opinion. It helps to dissipate support for Labour.



### Dewsbury 82 Innocent National Demo Against Racist Attacks and Police Brutality

Saturday 1 September, Leeds

Assemble 1.00pm, Leeds Trades Union Council Club, Chapeltown Road, Leeds 7

Speakers include: Dewsbury 82 defendants; Unmesh Desai — Newham Monitoring Group; Birmingham 6/Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign; Pakistani Workers Association; Indian Workers Association

Self-defence is no offence

# The Soviet workers begin to move

By Patrick Laffont

**O**n 11 July a 24 hour strike paralysed all the coalfields of the USSR.

Around the same time last year, a strike which started in some pits in the Kuzbass (western Siberia) spread to the whole of that region and from there to the Donbass coalfield in the Ukraine. Faced with 200,000 strikers, the government had seemed to concede most of the strike committees' demands — better supplies, better conditions of work, more money for mining regions, wage rises.

Distrusting the government, the miners did not demobilise. In a number of places, they decided to maintain the strike committees to check on the carrying out of the agreements which had been signed. They were right to do so because, once work had restarted, the authorities were in no hurry to keep their promises.

*"This miners' general strike had an openly political character. It was indeed organised to come bang in the middle of the 28th Congress of the CP, and demanded the resignation of the government..."*

Last autumn, in Vorkuta, the miners of the North went on strike again, accusing the government of continuing the anti-working-class policy started by Stalin. But the other coalfields did not join the Vorkuta miners.

Was it because they feared that the public would not understand, with the authorities and the press accusing the strikers of creating difficulties with heating in the middle of winter? Or because some strike committee leaders in the Donbass and the Kuzbass distrusted what the press called the political extremism of Vorkuta? Such factors probably worked against the extension of the movement.

A little over a month ago, rumours of a strike began circulating yet again. This time it started in the Kuzbass. In *Pravda* of 4 June, a CP official in that region, A. Melnikov attributed the strike rumours to the lack of supplies in that region (almost no eggs, cooked meat, or poultry, and no fresh meat in the State shops), and blamed it on the authorities of the agricultural regions, who were supposed to supply the Kuzbass but were conducting a "delivery strike".

In the end there was no strike, because no agreement could be reached between the representatives of the Kuzbass miners and the Donbass, who seemed to be waiting for the CP congress.

But discontent remained everywhere, for as regards supplies the North and the East were even worse off than Kuzbass. As for the conditions of work in the mines, they are horrific. A recent issue of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* puts the figure of workers who have died in mine accidents in the last nine years at 10,000 — almost as many as the number of soldiers who died in nine years of war in Afghanistan!

The strike on 11 July drew in many more coalfields than last year's. According to the authorities, the call by the Donbass strike committees had a massive response.

Out of 250 pits in the Donbass, 140 were halted for 24 hours and 110 for varying lengths of time. Around Kemerovo, in the Kuzbass, 66 mines stopped for 24 hours, and 11 other enterprises also struck. In the Vorkuta coalfield, 11 mines out of 13 were shut down, and some factories and one state farm did the same.

In the Karagana coalfield, in Kazakhstan, 11 pits were totally shut down, 26 were stopped for several hours, and workers in other workplaces showed their solidarity by striking.

Other regions which did not strike last year were also affected. In the Far East, on Sakhalin island, 8 mines and about ten factories struck. There were also strikes in Magadan and Norilsk, in eastern Siberia, and in Novosibirsk, in western Siberia.

This miners' general strike had an openly political character. It was indeed organised to come bang in the middle of the 28th Congress of the CP, and demanded the resignation of the government, and especially of the prime minister, Ryzhkov, who had not honoured the agreements of 1989.

Shortly before 11 July, appeals were published which were said to come from the strike committees. An "appeal to the Soviet people and leadership" from the Donbass strike committee, which had initiated the movement, declared that "in the face of reaction... we can no longer wait while the government and the Party apparatus which dictates to it... lead us into hunger, poverty and ruin".

A communique signed by three leaders of the Donetsk strike committee and sent to Moscow "to be read at the 28th Congress" demanded the resignation of the government and the formation of a "government of national unity, which is the only way... to get the country out of its crisis".

It continued: "The political struggle between conservatives and reformists, which has gone on for 5 years... is leading the country to economic and political bankruptcy. We can no longer content ourselves with the half-measures of the government and of the Supreme Soviet, which are under the dictat of the party apparatus". It called for the nationalisation of the CP's property, and the suppression of the party in the workplaces, the army, the KGB and the police "in order to rule out the possibility of a coup d'etat organised by the party and the generals".

It is difficult to know how far the strikers identified with these declarations. But it is clear that they chime in with themes pushed at the 28th Congress of the CP by the "radicals" round Boris Yeltsin and, to a lesser extent, by Gorbachev's



supporters. And that is not surprising.

In the Donbass, many leaders of the 1989 strike committees were elected to parliament last spring, under the auspices of the Gorbachevites or Yeltsinists. It was the same in the Kuzbass, and there too a Confederation of Labour was created, whose slogans for the strike took up the declarations quoted above almost word for word.

*"Clearly workers do identify with this Confederation of Labour, since it claims almost a million members across the country"*

Officially constituted this spring, this is a sort of trade union independent from the official unions, led, among others, by members of the Democratic Union (an organisation which makes no secret about fighting for the restoration of capitalism), by activists from organisations close to Yeltsin, who openly asserts his desire to see "the market" and "private property" restored, and by Gorbachev supporters.

Clearly workers do identify with this Confederation of Labour, since it claims almost a million members across the country. But its members do not in any way represent the interests of the Soviet working class.

It is revealing that in summer 1989 they threw all their weight into convincing former strikers in the Kemerovo region that they should not call their paper *Workers' Gazette* but *Gazette of the Working People*, on the grounds that the word "worker" was too "restrictive". At the founding of the Confederation, its president explained in the press that it brought together not only workers, but "working people" of all social categories, though not such a wide range as he would like.

From here we cannot judge to what extent the workers who struck on 11 July identify with the groups which the Soviet press has presented as their leaders. But it seems clear that these Yeltsinists, social-democrat, pro-Western-capitalist and Gorbachevite currents wanted to use the strike for their own ends, if only to tip the balance in the struggles going on at the top of the CP and the State.

We also don't know whether there exist among the miners groups arguing for independent working-class politics, fighting the bureaucracy but in the name of the working class and not of a return to capitalism.

Such an organisation would obviously also have fought for the strike to be "political" (besides, what strike of that size in the Soviet

Union could not be political?) But would have fought for the miners to put forward a policy corresponding to the interests of the working class, not a policy which put the miners to this or that faction of the bureaucracy, least of all those who openly demand a return to capitalism.

*"A revolutionary current among the miners would have fought for that de facto autonomy of the striking miners to become conscious and political, [for the] necessity for the workers to take the political and economic leadership of the country in their own hands"*

In last year's strike, it was precisely the workers of the Kuzbass who showed the working class's immense possibilities for an autonomous organisation, if not of autonomous politics. Then, the striking miners practically took control of the region. They themselves took after supplies and even police duties. The police were practi-

## Bureaucrats turn capitalist

By Harry Mol

**O**ne of the most surprising aspects of the revolutions in Eastern Europe is how easily the bureaucrats gave up their monopoly of power and their political privileges.

True, some of them played with the idea of sending in the troops and the security forces to "re-establish order". But, all except Ceausescu, they saw reason and did not do it.

One of the reasons for this new behaviour is that many of the bureaucrats were convinced that they could save themselves individually by finding a niche in the new regime. And for some careerists, the "free market" has advantages: no more need to hide when opening a bank account abroad, no more need of special shops for the "nomenklatura" — everything can be done openly.

A bureaucrat can adopt to the new situation in many ways. Where possible, he tries to go over to the camp of the winners. He can also, as in Bulgaria and in Romania, change the name and flag of his organisation. He can speculate with state or party property. He can become a businessman.

These possibilities have been tried out in Poland since the end of 1981. After Jaruzelski's military coup, demoralised citizens tried to find individual solutions to their everyday problems. The whole society was converted to self-help. For the majority of Poles, it was a matter of surviving, but for various sections of the nomenklatura, it was a new opportunity to build up real capitalist fortunes alongside their privileges of office.

Often they already had a rich experience of corruption, in the form of bribes, extracted, for example, in return for pushing people forward on the housing list. Under martial law, speculation on provisions gave them new chances to "accumulate capital".

Poland is not an isolated case: in the Soviet Union, too, bureaucrats have built up secret stocks of consumer goods in order to make fortunes on the black market.

But all that is small beer in comparison to the opportunities for enrichment opened up today by the "free market". The East European bureaucrats have not failed to notice that their Chinese colleagues, by playing the capitalist game, have managed to accumulate considerable wealth for themselves and their families over the last ten years.

Obviously, China's new rich have the advantage of a highly-placed patron, while the East European bureaucrats have lost their positions of power. But they still hold other trump cards: connections (including abroad), know-how, and a total absence of ideological scruples for, outside their own interests, these people have no ideology at all.

The apparatchiks of the Czechoslovak CP are in the process of trying out the various possibilities. Of the 11 CP ministers in the coalition government at the end of last year, six left the party at the beginning of this year to put themselves in the ranks of the future rulers, that is, Civic Forum and Public Against Violence.

The ex-prime minister Calfa was a candidate of Public Against Violence in the recent elections; vice

prime minister Komarek was a candidate of the Civic Forum; and young Dlouhy, formerly a minister and chief of the State Planning Commission, is considered today to be a rising star of Civic Forum.

Not everyone, of course, is as lucky as that. The middle layers of the bureaucracy are trying to base their survival on the extensive property owned by the party.

It is not straightforward, because the CP leaders considered the State as the property of the party to such an extent that they did not even take the trouble to put the State property which they used for their own benefit under the party's name.

Despite that lack of foresight, a government commission estimates the value of the party's property at about 20 billion crowns (about £3.6 billion). Some party cadres have abandoned their dangerous jobs to set up cooperatives which, as if by magic, have bought buildings and equipment from the CP for peanuts.

In other words, these rogues have set up businesses with CP funds which were acquired by the "confusion" of party and state.

Thousands of apparatchiks are thus ready to find a comfortable place in the sun in the privatised economy. In Czechoslovakia as in Poland, this situation causes resentment in the working class. But a Civic Forum sociologist responds: "Why not let them do what they're capable of?"

In Poland, Walesa and his advisers are consciously playing on the great discontent aroused among the workers by the spectacle of the nomenklatura enriching itself for all to see. While the population will see its standard of living go down by an average of 40 per cent this year, tens of thousands of Polish bureaucrats are in the process of laundering funds previously acquired through corruption and speculation into new sectors. And these are not small sums.

In Hungary, the bureaucrats had already, since 1968, been experimenting with a "new economic mechanism" which got into full sw-

ing in the '80s. Following the Chinese example, tens of thousands of bureaucrats have got rich by "supplementary" activities in commercial or service sectors, or by transforming themselves or members of their families into business people. This social group constitutes the base of the Entrepreneurs' Party, which stood in the recent elections and got good scores in the chic areas of Budapest.

The young guard of the Hungarian nomenklatura is discovering a whole series of new possibilities for getting rich: the wife of a top official in the Foreign Ministry has set up a language laboratory for candidate diplomats, top managers in State enterprises are establishing consultancies, and so on.

What particularly irritates people is the way in which those State enterprises which are doing well are sold to foreign companies by bureaucrats who save their jobs as part of the deal. The Tungram electrical goods company, for example, was sold for peanuts, via a banking manoeuvre, to the multinational General Electric. The managers of the best public hotel chain, Hungarhotels, have offered the 50 hotels of the group to a Swedish company at a derisory price... on condition that their jobs are guaranteed!

The Soviet Union is no exception to this tendency for the apparatchiks to profit from the new situation. There too, they try to safeguard their privileges with new tricks.

Moscow had three polyclinics and eleven thermal stations reserved for Party officials. The new city administration just elected in March has decided to open them to the whole population.

But the management still reserves a third of the places for people who have a voucher from the City or party authorities. The only differences is that now these bodies have to pay for a privilege which before they took for free.

Translated from the French socialist weekly Rouge.



unable to operate in the region.

A revolutionary current among the miners would have fought for that de facto autonomy of the striking miners to become conscious and political. It would have fought against the present government and its policy, not in the name of a "coalition government" but of the necessity for the workers to take the political and economic leadership of the country in their own hands.

It would have opposed the propagation of illusions about what the police, the KGB and the army would be if they were just rid of their party cells. It would have fought for the workers themselves to take over the duties of the police — as they did to a certain extent last year.

It would have argued that, against the danger of a coup d'etat, the only policy corresponding to workers' interests was to render the general staff incapable of any moves against the working class by splitting away its base, the rank and file soldiers.

It would have sought to convince the miners who were rightly concerned with this question that they must have a class policy in relation to the soldiers, who mostly come from the working class, and that they must use their numbers to build links with them.

And such a group would, of course, have fought among the miners against any idea of the restoration of capitalism, against any idea of the private appropriation of the factories and the miners, and for the replacement of the

domination of the economy by the bureaucrats with the running of the economy under the democratic control of the working people.

*"...most of those who intervene and try to channel the struggle represent not the working class's interests, but those of its class enemies"*

In the present situation, these objectives are clearly difficult for the working class. Not because it lacks initiative and human resources, but because most of those who intervene and try to channel the struggle represent not the working class's interests but those of its class enemies.

The concern of those people to pull the working class behind them, or at least to neutralise it (this has been visible in recent months not only in strikes, but also in national conflicts, and, in filigree, in elections and in numerous articles in the press) — that concern shows that they fear the working class may intervene on the political and social scene on its own account.

That fear should give confidence and strength to Soviet revolutionaries.

Translated from the French Socialist weekly Lutte Ouvrière.



Chinese bureaucrats are prepared to use market mechanisms to discipline workers

# Anti-semitism under Stalin

**One of the most frightening by-products of the disintegration of totalitarian one-party rule in the USSR has been the growth of virulent anti-semitism.**

**Stan Crooke takes a look at the history of Russian anti-semitism.**

**Part 2 next week**

**The current wave of anti-semitism in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and other republics belonging to the Soviet Union continues a centuries-long tradition.**

Until the latter part of the 18th century, Jews were forbidden to take up residence in Russia, even temporarily. In the 19th century most Jews remained banned from Russia proper (where the main industrial and cultural centres emerged) and were confined to the Pale of Settlement, one of the poorest parts of Russia.

Waves of murderous anti-Jewish pogroms swept through the Tsarist Empire on more than one occasion, especially in the opening years of the 20th century, when the government encouraged the formation of the Union of the Russian People (popularly known as the Black Hundreds).

The opening years of the century also saw the production in Russia of the most notorious anti-semitic publication of the 20th century: the forged "Protocols of the Elders of

Zion", supposedly the records of the first World Zionist Congress of 1897 in which Jews were portrayed as mapping out their plans for world domination.

In the First World War Jews were held responsible for the early military defeats suffered by Russia. Correspondence and publications in Yiddish and Hebrew were banned. Jewish community leaders were falsely accused of aiding and abetting the enemy and summarily executed.

In the aftermath of the February and October Revolutions of 1917 there was a new upsurge of anti-semitism. The "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" were re-published by the Whites, who claimed that the Bolshevik Revolution had been financed by a Jewish banking firm acting on behalf of world Jewry. Anti-semitic pogroms, costing the lives of between 180,000 and 200,000 Jews, were systematically carried out by the Whites.

Popular anti-semitism remained a powerful force throughout the 1920s. New laws introduced by the post-1917 government scrapped all discriminatory legislation against Jews. Professions and occupations from which Jews had formerly been barred were opened up to them. For the anti-semites this was "proof" that a Jewish takeover was under way in line with the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion".

The New Economic Policy of the early '20s likewise generated anti-semitism for the same reason: it benefitted those social groups in which Jews had been concentrated in pre-revolutionary times as a result of Tsarist discriminatory legislation. It was interpreted as further "evidence" of a Jewish takeover.

Anti-semitism in the Soviet Union today continues such a tradition. Nothing could be further from the truth than to suggest that recent years have seen a sudden resurgence of anti-semitism in the Soviet Union after decades in which it had been virtually non-existent: under Stalin and his successors anti-semitism was a state-sanctioned policy just as much as it had been under the Tsars.

Socialists in this country need to acquaint themselves with that tradi-

tion of anti-semitism under Stalin and with the manifestations of anti-semitism in the Soviet Union today. As Soviet society continues its spiral of decline, the ground is becoming increasingly fertile for the politics of anti-semitism and outright fascism of a Western European variety.

Labour movements are not immune to anti-semitism — in the opening years of the century sections of the British labour movement campaigned for immigration controls to exclude Jews. It would be a tragedy if the labour and trade union movement now re-emerging in the Soviet Union from the shadow of Stalinism were to fail to challenge this powerful tradition of anti-semitism head on.

Socialists in this country must provide support for the victims of anti-semitism in the Soviet Union today, and support those fighting to eradicate anti-semitism from the new Soviet workers' movement and from Soviet society as a whole.

**Anti-semitism flourished in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s. Communist Party agit-prop workers cited as typical questions with which they were confronted: "Is it true that Jews avoid physical labour?", "Is it true that there are no Jews at the Unemployment Exchanges?", "Is it true that there are excessive numbers of Jews in educational institutions?", "Do Jews avoid military service?" and "Do Jews govern the Soviet Union?"**

In 'Jews and Anti-Semitism in the USSR' published in 1929, typical questions which had been raised in discussions with members and sympathisers of the Communist Party included: "Won't Jews be traitors in the event of war, and don't Jews avoid military service?", "Why did Jews lead an easy life earlier on, and still do now?", "Why did Jews constitute 76% of the party opposition?", and "Why do Stalin, Bukharin, and other members of the Politbureau never write in *Pravda* about anti-semitism?"

One reason why Stalin failed to write in the Soviet press in opposition to anti-semitism was that he was anti-semitic himself, and became increasingly so as time went on. As Khrushchev recalled in his memoirs: "Stalin also cultivated this anti-semitic 'bacteria' and did not set an example of how to liquidate it. Within himself Stalin was unconditionally subject to that shameful inadequacy which bears the name 'anti-semitism'."

When Stalin's eldest son, Yakov, married a Jewess, "that displeased my father," recalled Stalin's daughters in her memoirs, "he never liked Jews, though in those days he was not yet as blatant about expressing his hatred for them as he was after the war." And when Stalin's daughter married a Jew herself, her father's response was equally hostile: "He was Jewish, and my father did not like that."

In public Stalin formally condemned anti-semitism, in line with the official tenets of the Communist Party. In an interview of 1931 with a correspondent of the Jewish Telegraph Agency, Stalin described anti-semitism as "an extreme form of racial chauvinism and the most dangerous survival of cannibalism". It was "a phenomenon profoundly hostile to the Soviet regime and is sternly repressed in the USSR." In practice, however, Stalin's politics were riddled with anti-semitism.

In the faction fight in the Com-

munist Party in the mid-1920s, Stalin appealed to anti-semitic prejudice. Initially he did so cautiously and covertly, referring to his opponents as "small-town petty bourgeoisie", a social grouping in which Jews had traditionally been well represented. But when Zinoviev and Kamenev left Stalin's faction and openly lined up with Trotsky, Stalin took this as an opportunity to denounce his opponents as "dissatisfied Jewish intellectuals".

In the later stages of the faction fight Stalin's use of anti-semitism became even more overt: "Not only in the countryside but even in Moscow factories the baiting of the Opposition back in 1926 often assumed a thoroughly obvious anti-semitic character. Many agitators spoke brazenly: 'The Jews are rioting'. I received hundreds of letters deploring the anti-semitic methods employed in the struggle with the Opposition... In the second half of 1927 the anti-semitic agitation assumed a thoroughly unbridled character. The slogan 'Beat the Opposition' often took on the complexion of the old slogan 'Beat the Jews and save Russia' (slogan of the Tsarist Black Hundreds)," wrote Trotsky.

*"In the course of the 1930s Jews were removed by one means or another from the Communist Party Central Committee, higher governmental organs, the army, and other leading bodies in the Party and state."*

As Stalin consolidated his grip on Soviet society, the level of repression of Jews and Jewish organisations and institutions rose in tandem. In the late 1920s a wave of persecution of rabbis and 'magids' (travelling preachers) was unleashed, while synagogues were closed down en masse after they had been portrayed in anti-religious propaganda as meeting places for 'profiteers' and 'parasitical anti-Soviet elements'.

In 1930 the Communist Party 'Yevsektii' (Jewish Sections, set up in 1918 within the framework of the Bolshevik Party in order to promote the struggle against anti-semitism and to increase Jewish recruitment to the Party) were shut down, although they were already defunct in reality; they had not been able to hold a conference since 1924.

In the course of the 1930s Jews were removed by one means or another from the Communist Party Central Committee, higher governmental organs, the army, and other leading bodies in the Party and state. The Stalinist purges of the mid-1930s took a particularly heavy toll amongst Jews, who formed a disproportionately large percentage of the Old Bolsheviks and the higher army ranks. The 'fact' that so many Jews were among the 'saboteurs' intent upon overthrowing Soviet power reinforced popular anti-semitism.

Jewish cultural institutions and schools began to be shut down throughout the country in the late 1930s. The persecution of rabbis was stepped up; just at a time when the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany was about to reach its peak, the Soviet authorities hunted down rabbis as alleged spies for the fascist secret services. The Soviet Jewish press (what was left of it) reported a growing number of incidents of anti-semitic violence and discrimination in jobs.

Although such incidents continued to be officially condemned, this did not prevent an article in the Soviet *Atheist* newspaper, written just after the signing of the Stalin-Hitler Pact, arguing that the Nazi attack on the Jewish religion was the principal achievement of the Third Reich, and that it was the duty of Soviet atheists to assist their "allies" in the fight against religion.

With the invasion of the Soviet Union by Hitler in 1941 the Soviet government adopted, on the surface, a more conciliatory attitude towards Jews, anxious to mobilise them, like every other national minority of the Soviet Union, in the "Great Patriotic War": in August of 1941 Moscow Radio broadcast an appeal to "Briders Yiden" (Brother Jews) calling for a united struggle against fascism in order to defeat the threat to Jews posed by fascism.

Erlich and Alter, two leaders of the Polish Bund awaiting execution in the Soviet Union, were selected by one of Beria's henchmen to head a "Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee". But Stalin remembered the two as Mensheviks who had opposed the October Revolution and had them shot before they could play their allotted role. Their place was taken by Solomon Mikhoels, a leading Jewish actor, and Izik Feffer, a Red Army colonel and poet laureate who had glorified in verse the attacks of the Mufti in Jerusalem on Jews in Palestine.

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee was never anything other than a small group of selected people acting as a public relations agency for the Soviet government. Although it published a Yiddish periodical and its leaders (ie. its only members) toured the allied countries to make the appropriate noises (on one such trip to London Mikhoels described Zionism as a "great idea", though, of course, entirely irrelevant to Soviet Jewry, given its deep attachment to the Soviet Union), it was never anything other than a mouthpiece for the propaganda of the Soviet government.

In areas of the Soviet Union occupied by the Nazis in the early 1940s, Jews were rounded up and deported to concentration camps or killed on the spot. Sections of the local population, influenced by the older tradition of Tsarist anti-semitism or the more recent Stalinist Jew-baiting, co-operated with the Nazis in such activities or even staged their own pogroms before the arrival of the Nazis.

In the non-occupied areas of the Soviet Union, and also amongst the Red Army in the front line, anti-semitism continued to thrive. In hospitals, labour camps, jails and the army, anti-semitic expressions and comments were common, as too were the traditional anti-semitic accusations: Jews were avoiding the call-up, they were afraid of hard work, they were cowards, they were making a living by exploiting the wartime shortages, etc.

Jews returning to their homes in the closing period of the war after the Nazis had begun to retreat faced continuing anti-semitic persecution. In Ukraine in particular, where anti-semitism had been especially virulent for centuries, returning Jews were often treated with open animosity. In Kharkov Jews had to stay indoors at night for fear of attack. In Kiev a series of attacks, including one virtual pogrom in which 16 Jews were killed, was carried out against returning Jews.

The authorities remained largely indifferent to such events, attributing them to the local population having been infected by the anti-semitism of the Nazis and declaring that such a disposition could be eliminated only gradually. In any case, the authorities pandered to popular anti-semitism



Igor Sychov, leader of the anti-semitic organisation, Pamyat





An anti-semitic White Russian poster depicting Trotsky as the ogre of the Kremlin. The Soviet bureaucracy later revived these traditional themes.

and were anxious not to be seen as responsible for "bringing back the Jews". As Khrushchev, then First Secretary of the Communist Party in Ukraine, put it: "It is not in our interest that the Ukrainians should associate the return of Soviet power with the return of the Jews."

"In 1948 the infamous 'anti-cosmopolitan' campaign was launched. This was straightforward anti-semitism, albeit with the word 'cosmopolitan' serving as a substitute for 'Jew'. The campaign began with the publication of an article in Pravda and, on the eve of its demise, in the paper of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee denying the existence of a Jewish people..."

With the war over, the Soviet government quickly forgot about the contribution of "Briders Yiden" to the wartime mobilisation. In the official histories of the war, especially the definitively official *History of the Great Patriotic War in the Soviet Union*, the Jewish contribution to the Soviet war effort and the atrocities committed against Jews in the Soviet Union during the war were largely passed over in silence.

Between 1945 and 1948 a mere four to seven books per year dealing with the heroism and suffering of Soviet Jews during the war were published. In 1949 just one book on this theme, itself a reprint of an already published book, appeared. None of the books were ever reprinted again. In the period 1950-55 not a single book on the theme of Jews and the war was published.

Government statistics on the victims of the war defined them as Soviet, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, etc, but not Jewish. In Babi Yar, where 33,000 Jews were massacred, the monument erected at the scene of the massacre was dedicated to "Soviet citizens". Attempts by Jews to erect their own monuments to the memory of Jews murdered during the war were frustrated by popular anti-semitism and the authorities.

Jews were effectively imprisoned within the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet government had officially welcomed the creation of the state of Israel ("Hearty good wishes on the establishment of the Jewish state...With all our hearts we wish you and the working people in the state of Israel a victory over the aggressors" read the telegram from the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee to Weizmann, the first Israeli President), it was certainly not prepared to allow its Jewish citizens to emigrate there (or anywhere else); between May of 1948 and the close of 1951 only four elderly people and one disabled ex-serviceman were permitted to emigrate to Israel.

Jews now faced a mounting tide of anti-semitism, instigated, sanctioned and encouraged by the government. Amongst its first victims were the members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee.

In 1948 Mikhoels was killed by the Soviet secret police. The official version of his death claimed that he

had been killed in a traffic accident. But Stalin's daughter wrote in her memoirs: "He was assassinated, there was no accident. The traffic accident was an official version suggested by my father when told of the execution."

Her version of events was endorsed by Khrushchev: "To kill him [Mikhoels] brutally, to kill him in secret, and then to decorate his killer and bury the victim with honour — this is intellectually inconceivable! They said that he had fallen under a car and been killed by a lorry, but he was thrown under a lorry. It was an artistic performance. But who did this? Stalin did this, this was done at his command."

A wave of arrests of the other figureheads of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee followed. Most of them, including Lozovsky, the chairperson of the committee and former head of the Profintern, were shot. Zhemchuzhina, another leading member of the committee, and also the wife of Molotov, was sentenced to exile, but not before Stalin had circulated a document alleging that she had been unfaithful to her husband and listing her alleged lovers. In 1948 the Committee itself was formally dissolved and its paper ceased publication.

Government departments dealing with foreign governments were emptied of Jewish officials, especially in the Foreign Office. The Communist Party in Birobidzhan (supposedly a "national homeland" for Jews in the Soviet Union) was purged. Leading Yiddish writers were executed. The Moscow State Theatre was closed down, along with all Jewish publishing houses, magazine, schools, and other educational and social institutions. Jews working in the "Stalin" car factory were arrested and charged with being "Zionist agents" of American imperialism.

In 1948 the infamous "anti-cosmopolitan" campaign was launched. This was straightforward anti-semitism, albeit with the word "cosmopolitan" serving as a substitute for "Jew". The campaign began with the publication of an article in *Pravda* and, on the eve of its demise, in the paper of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, denying the existence of a Jewish people, condemning Jewish na-

tionalism, and describing Israel as a bourgeois state which was a tool in the hands of Anglo-American capitalism.

By January of 1949 the campaign was fully underway. *Pravda* carried a major article entitled 'A Certain Anti-Patriotic Group of Theatre Critics' which attacked a group of predominantly Jewish theatre critics allegedly guilty of "cosmopolitanism": "Shameless cosmopolitanism is not only anti-social but also sterile. It is as harmful as the parasites that gnaw at the roots of useful grains. It is a conductor of reactionary bourgeois influences hostile to us. An anti-patriotic group of followers of bourgeois aestheticism has arisen in theatre criticism."

An article in *Izvestia* the following month ('Wipe Out the Anti-Patriotic Group of Drama Critics') continued in the same vein. The article "exposed" the "anti-patriotic activity in the Leningrad chapter of the All-Russian Theatrical Society of S Dreiden, I Schneiderman, I Berzark, M Yankovsky, S Tsimbal, and other rootless cosmopolitans, conscious followers of the Yuzovskys and Gurviches."

"For many years," *Izvestia* suddenly discovered, "these rootless cosmopolitans have disseminated deleterious bourgeois ideas, while sharply criticising everything new, everything Soviet...Dreiden, Schneiderman, and their fellow cosmopolitans heaped slander and abuse on Soviet plays, besmirched our art and socialist realism. Spiritually wasted, hostile to the Soviet people and homeland, these cosmopolitan devotees of aestheticism enjoy reviling Soviet plays."

"...state anti-semitism continued...with the execution of Yiddish writers and the closure of Jewish cultural institutions..."

The campaign was still in full flight in March. According to an article in *Vechernaya Moskva*, "it is a well known fact that the 'Soviet Writer' Publishing House has harboured people without kith or kin, anti-patriotic Levins, Danins, and the like...In his so-called book

Isbakh openly propagandises for Zionism, writes about the Zionist organisation...and even reproduces the words of the Zionist anthem... Aleksandr Isbakh wrote a loathsome book indeed! And who helped him publish it if not the already denounced rootless cosmopolitan F Levin, who appears as the editor of the book."

Cosmopolitans were discovered everywhere — in the theatre, in the cinema, in literature, in art, in publishing houses, in historical science, hydraulics, the economy, architecture, pedagogy, and physiology. Piatokov and Trotsky were posthumously declared a cosmopolitan spy and a notorious cosmopolitan respectively. Sergei Vasiliev gave a poetic dimension to the campaign, listing the social spheres into which the rootless cosmopolitans had "wormed" themselves:

"In science, in philosophy,  
In the radio and in art,  
In music and in sport,  
Gurewitz after Sutyurin,  
Cherniak after Hoffensheffer,  
Smulson after Katsnelson,  
They follow their brothers,  
Abraham and Elijah."

(Without Whom It Is Good To Live in Russia)

New editions of earlier literary works were appropriately expurgated. Lev Kassil's *The Land of Shvambriani* was re-published with all references deleted to the author's childhood refusal to read Gogol's *Taras Bulba* because of its anti-semitic stereotyping. Aleksei Svirski's *The Story of My Life* appeared in a new edition minus its monologues of an Odessa Jew after a pogrom. And the re-published version of Bill-Belotserkovsky's *The Frontier Guards* lacked its earlier references to the hero of the work being a Jew.

Although the anti-cosmopolitan campaign itself had abated by the close of 1949, state anti-semitism continued throughout the following years with the execution of Yiddish writers and the closure of Jewish cultural institutions, and then ran rampant again in the "Doctors' Plot" of 1953.

At the centre of the Doctors' Plot was the accusation that a number of Jewish doctors had plotted, in some cases already successfully, to kill leading members of the Soviet elite. "Among the members of this

odious gang of murderers are professors of medicine Vovsi, Vinogradov, M Kogan, Yegorev, Feldman, Etinger, and Greenstein, and the physician Mayorov. Comrades AA Zhdanov and AS Shcherbakov died at the hands of these cruel monsters disguised as doctors and scientists...These villains and wreckers tried their hardest to undermine the health of leading military cadres, to put them out of action and weaken the country's defences," claimed *Pravda* in January 1953.

The doctors were denounced as agents of British and American imperialism. According to *Izvestia*, "most of the terrorist group were connected with the internationalist Jewish bourgeois-nationalist organisation, the 'Joint', created by American intelligence... (which) under the guidance of American intelligence, conducts extensive espionage, terrorist, and similar subversive activities in a number of countries... Other members of the terrorist group were long-standing members of the British intelligence service."

Various described as "monsters of mankind", "hired agents of foreign intelligence services", "villains and wreckers", "monstrous poisoners", and "contemptible hirelings of foreign intelligence services who sold out for dollars and pounds sterling", the doctors had "under the cover of the noble medical profession trampled the sacred banner of science underfoot and defiled the honour of science".

*Novoye Vremya* (a political magazine launched just after the war by Stalin, and also the name of a well-known anti-semitic paper published for several decades in Tsarist Russia) denounced the doctors as "Zionist hirelings of American imperialism" and took the opportunity to answer the question which it claimed public opinion was now asking — "What do Zionism and its organisations represent? What part do they play in the warmongers' plans?"

Its answer was: "Zionism is a bourgeois-nationalist movement... Present-day Zionism is at the service of American aggression and the imperialists in preparing for a new world war. Zionist propaganda serves the same interests. Specifically, the Zionist organisations are a breeding ground for corrupt cosmopolitan ideas...The Zionists reveal themselves not only as enemies of peace and democracy, but also as enemies of the Jewish working classes."

The attacks of the Soviet press broadened out from the doctors themselves to other Jews, variously accused of divulging state secrets, embezzlement, fraud, falsification of state records, dissipation of state funds, and a range of other crimes. Like the "cosmopolitans" of 1948, these "hidden enemies" were discovered everywhere.

The ground was being prepared, as Khrushchev later revealed, for the mass deportation of Soviet Jews to Siberia and Kazakhstan. At the close of the war a number of national minorities had been uprooted from their homelands and scattered across the Soviet Union, accused of collective collaboration with the Nazis. Now Soviet Jews too were being fitted up for the same fate, accused of disloyalty to the Soviet Union, and of being agents of American and British imperialism via the medium of Zionism.

How many tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of lives such a mass deportation would have cost remains a matter for speculation. Stalin died in 1953, and his successors dropped both the propaganda campaign centred on the spurious Doctors' Plot and also the plans for the mass deportation of Soviet Jews.

# Prisoners of the past

## CINEMA

**Belinda Weaver reviews 'Fools of Fortune'**

**F**ools of Fortune' is a failure, but an interesting one, since its main problem is its reach exceeding its grasp. At least it's trying for something.

Set in the south of Ireland, the story begins in 1920 at Kilneagh, the home of the Quintons, a well-to-do Protestant family. Young Willy and his two sisters live an idyllic childhood, where the biggest excitement is the arrival of a new maid. These family scenes are drawn fairly conventionally: afternoon teas on the lawn in summer, the elegant mother, Evie (Julie Christie), at the piano.

Less usual is the late night visit of an IRA group seeking funds and assistance. Unusually, perhaps, the Protestant Quinton agrees to give money, but then he's a man who does what he likes, regardless of people's opinions. Against all advice, he has given a job to Doyle, a former employee returned from the war. Doyle is outcast by the other workers for his friendship with Rudkin, one of the Black and Tans, the British bands now seeking to crush Irish nationalists.

When Doyle is found hanged on Quinton's land, Rudkin extracts a bloody revenge.

Quinton had tried to live outside of politics, to live and let live. In Ireland in the twenties, this was not really possible, just as it's impossible in Northern Ireland now. Sides are taken for you, whether you like it or not.

As Willy grows up to manhood he cannot escape the past. His mother cannot forget, and she does not suffer in silence. Her bitter memories are brought out again

and again, still fresh in their horror and injustice. There is no forgive and forget. As the defrocked priest Father Kilgareth says, "The past is always there in the present. That's something we all learn in time". Willy learns that not even a love affair with the lovely Marianne can free him from his memories. He is a prisoner of the past.

The film is on the side of the Irish nationalists, not from any romantic ideal, but purely as a way of ending the spiral of violence the Black and Tans have unleashed. Though quite bloody in parts, the film conveys a hatred of violence, not just for its own ugliness and waste, but also for the devastation it inflicts on the living.

It is a plea for an end to violence, not in the name of Catholic or Protestant, but in the name of humanity. Kindness and mercy, pleads Father Kilgareth, kindness and mercy instead of suffering and death.

Though it deals with violent and emotional events, the film is strangely static, more like a series of tableaux than a narrative. The child actors who play the young Willy and Imelda, Willy's daughter, engage us more closely than the adults, with the exception of Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio who is utterly convincing as Marianne. Christie's performance is a nightmare. Early on, she's quiet and lovely (her speciality) but when she tries to convey the drunken ruin Evie has become, her performance is so strident and busy that she's unwatchable.

The worst though is Iain Glenn's Willy. The boy Willy was someone we connected with, but the adult Willy is remote, too closed off from us. Glenn's performance is all tics; he's as skittish and jumpy as an overbred racehorse. There's no heart in his acting; it's technique with nothing behind it. We need to care for Willy if we're to be drawn into this story. Glenn keeps us at arm's length.



Iain Glenn as Willy

For all that, and even allowing for the slightly mawkish spirituality that closes the film, 'Fools of Fortune' is probably worth seeing, especially by people who find the current situation in Northern

Ireland incomprehensible. Ireland's history is a patchwork of private tragedies like this, where no escape from violence seems possible, but where violence only results in stalemate.

# Yes, it was capitalism

## TV

**By Martin Thomas**

**T**his wasn't capitalism," protested Stephen Pizzo, co-author of a book about America's Savings and Loans scandal.

He told Channel 4 TV ('A Whale of a Mess', Tuesday 24 July) that capitalism was about people putting their savings into starting a business, building it up, and then, when they retire with the profits they've drawn in return for their risk and effort, leaving a productive enterprise behind them.

"But Charles Keating" — boss of one of the most notorious S&Ls, Lincoln Savings — "just left a \$2.5 billion smoking hole behind him."

The S&L scandal is by far the biggest financial swindle in history. The South Sea Bubble, the Florida land scams before the Great Crash of 1929, all were tiny by comparison.

Sorting it out will cost the US government maybe \$500 billion. That's fifty times as much as the total of Marshall Aid; or four times as much as the total money cost to the US of the Vietnam War.

But it's capitalism all right. Pizzo's world of thrifty small businesses has about the same relation to modern capitalism as kids kicking a ball in the back alley have to the World Cup.

Capitalism is no longer, if it ever was, about individual reward for individual efforts. It's about the rewards to be gained by ripping off other people's labour.

And, these days, the richest rewards of that sort are to be got not in direct productive enterprise but in the sphere of high finance where the profits of that enterprise are lent, borrowed, and sluiced around. The S&L bosses just followed the cardinal rule of capitalism: go for the biggest profits.

The scandal was a product of the Reagan enthusiasm for "deregulation". "Deregulation" was Regan's equivalent of Thatcher's "privatisation", in an economy with very little nationalised industry. It meant abolishing government controls on business to give the free market more scope.

The S&Ls are America's equivalent of Britain's building societies. Unlike British building societies, they had mostly stayed small and local, taking deposits from small savers and making small loans for house-buyers.

The US government guaranteed the small savers their money back if an S&L went broke, and supervised the S&Ls fairly closely.

Then, in 1982, most of the controls were scrapped, but the guarantee for depositors remained. The S&L bosses went on a spree, lending cash for vast speculative property developments and borrowing more at high rates of interest.

They took huge salaries and bonuses for themselves, too. Charles Keating of Lincoln Savings, for example, together with his family, took \$42 million from the company in just two years.

In order to keep the few government officials still with some powers to regulate the industry off their backs, the S&Ls bribed Congressmen lavishly. As one Congressman ruefully told us, the problem with the US Congress these days is not that Congressmen break their promises, but that they keep their promises — to the people who provide cash for their election campaigns, not to the voters.

But the bubble eventually burst. The US government is left with the obligation to pay off the small savers, and also holding a vast collection of white-elephant office blocks, shopping malls, luxury hotels, etc, and worthless "junk bonds".

The US taxpayer will pay — at least \$2000 for every child, woman and man in the country — and most of the S&L bosses will get off scot free.

The fiasco may have implications on the world scale, too. It has vastly increased the US government's problems with its budget deficit, confronting it with a sharp choice: raise taxes and risk sending the economy into a downturn, or see the balance-of-payments deficit spiral out of control and risk the dollar slumping in the foreign exchange markets. Either way it gravely weakens the US in the scramble for position in the new international capitalist order now taking shape after the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe.

# Out of sight, out of mind!

## LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

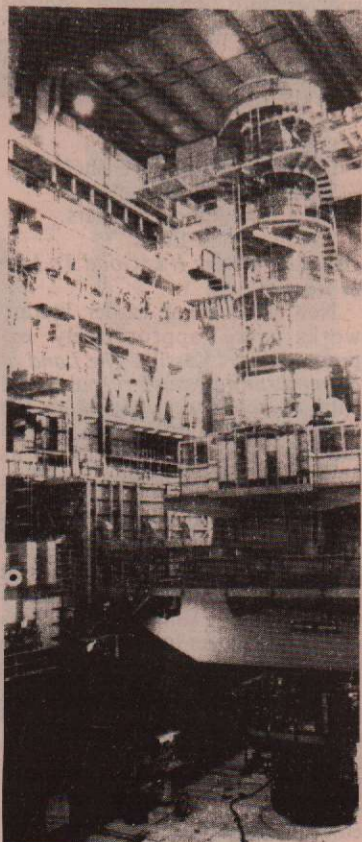
**T**he final boot in the gut for the privatisation of nuclear power in Britain was probably the calculation by City analysts of the costs of "decommissioning", or shutting down and disposing of, old nuclear power stations.

This is certain to run into billions, if not tens of billions, of pounds, though there are suggestions of ways to save some of this money.

At present, the state-owned Nuclear Electric plans a three stage decommissioning process. In Stage 1, all the fuel is removed from the core of the reactor. This could take five years from the date the plant ceases to generate electricity.

In Stage 2, the parts of the station outside of the reactor block will be removed piecemeal. Some of these parts will be radioactive. This could also take five years.

The third stage, dismantling the reactor block inside its massive concrete "biological" shield, would be delayed for up to 100 years, during which time the block would have to be guarded and monitored. This would allow some of the more short-lived radioactive products of nuclear fission to decay, thus reduc-



Hinkley nuclear power station ing the exposure of workers to radiation. Finally, the reactor block would be cut up and cleared away (though where to remains an unanswered question at present). Decommissioning has just started on the Berkeley Magnox reactor in

Gloucestershire and Bradwell in Essex will probably be the next. By 2020, Nuclear Electric must begin decommissioning eight Magnox reactors (the oldest design) and five Advanced Gas-cooled Reactors (a later design which was dogged with difficulties and cost over-runs). The total cost of this may (and therefore probably will) exceed £7.5 billion.

Not surprisingly, Nuclear Electric are looking at alternatives that could save them some of this politically embarrassing cost. One possibility is simply to delay the stages, thus allowing the cost to be spread out over more years. NE are considering delaying Stage 2 by 30 and Stage 3 by 130 years!

Another alternative, called "safestore", is to clear part of the plant and construct a "box" around the reactor.

The third, perhaps the most interesting and controversial, is to "simply" bury the whole lot under a huge mound and leave it. This is euphemistically termed "in situ decommissioning".

According to the manager of waste and decommissioning for NE, studies show that sand could be pumped from nearby sea or river beds, and shaped into a stable mound over the reactor and other buildings. The buildings would have to be filled with sand, too, to avoid subsidence, and the whole lot could then be landscaped.

Friends of the Earth regard this as a "picnic site approach" which does not answer the problems of long-term safety of radioactive remains. The Countryside Commis-

sion, however, believe there are many sites where an additional hill could blend in quite nicely, though perhaps not in the flat lands around the Bradwell station.

It seems to me that the burial mound approach is just another form of the type of long-term surface storage of nuclear waste called for by groups such as FoE. It would have the important advantage of reducing to a minimum the exposure of workers to radiation.

It is perhaps little different to the practice of abandoning worked-out or "uneconomic" coal mines, except that these are not filled up and cause problems of subsidence for decades after.

We would not be the first society to leave mysterious mounds for future societies to puzzle over. Of course, these would be somewhat more dangerous to interfere with and this is a factor that should be considered. Perhaps the mounds should be made of concrete to discourage 25th century uranium diggers.

### Mark Lindsay

**I** was very sad to learn of the untimely death of Mark Lindsay recently. He was very interested in science and was particularly keen to gain science qualifications and work in a science or health environment.

We had many conversations on a wide range of scientific topics during which he suggested several topics for Science Column articles. I shall miss his lively mind.

# Union sweethearts on parade

## INSIDE THE UNIONS

By Sleeper

For the past four or five years the British trade union movement has been gripped by merger mania. Every one of the largest 20 TUC affiliates has recently discussed betrothal or been a'courting with one or more partners. The behaviour of certain unions has been downright promiscuous.

So far, however, the urge to merge has resulted in remarkably few marriages. ASTMS and TASS got together, becoming MSF in early 1988; the GMB and Apex tied the knot in 1989; the NUS and NUR followed suit the same year — though that was something of a shotgun wedding brought about by the seafarers' bankruptcy following the Dover dispute.

But the long-running courtship between the AEU and the EETPU came to nothing after rank and file engineers

persuaded their national committee to call the whole thing off — for the time being at least.

Presently, romance is in the air between the civil service unions CPSA and NUCPS, the print unions SOGAT and the NGA, and the National Communications Union still has an ambition to get together with ACTT to form a telecommunications union. Meanwhile, NALGO, NUPE and CoHSE are busily engaged in a three-way liaison with a view to forming a giant 1.5 million-member public sector union.

Most of the prospective mergers make a lot of sense, on paper at least. The creation of a single big union in each industry has always been something socialists are, in principle, in favour of. The problem is that in practice, union amalgamations are usually thoroughly bureaucratic affairs that further weaken the influence of the rank and file and give the top brass the opportunity to cobble together new rule-books that combine all the worst aspects of the old, separate ones.

Even the ASTMS/Tass merger, which was conducted relatively democratically and with quite a high degree of rank and file involvement (on the ASTMS side, anyway) has almost inevitably, it seems, resulted in a structure that owes much more to the bureaucratic, Stalinist-

dominated traditions of Tass than to the relatively open, branch-based ASTMS.

Exactly the same process was underway in the EETPU/AEU merger, with Bill Jordan taking the opportunity to jettison his union's highly democratic structure in favour of a new rule book much more closely based on the electricians' police-state constitution — which was why the AEU National Committee called a halt.

All the above examples have at least involved some rank and file involvement and discussion. But recently a furtive little game of footsie has begun between the leaders of the TGWU and MSF that, so far, hasn't involved any rank and file consultation whatsoever, on either side.

"Exploratory discussions" are known to have taken place; Ron Todd and Ken Gill (or, rather, their respective research departments) have joined forces to produce a glossy pamphlet called 'Making Our Future' which argues for a sort of watered-down latter-day Alternative Economic Strategy; but even activists in the two unions don't know any more about



Will Ron and Ken get it together?



what's going on...except that something is going on...

Politically, an MSF/TGWU wedding would make a lot of sense for the semi-Stalinist 'Broad Left' current within the TUC, especially as the AEU is once again talking about approaching "kindred unions" for amalgamation, putting the prospect of a powerful new right-wing bloc within the TUC back on

the agenda. Industrially, an MSF/TGWU merger would also make a lot of sense. But neither union is exactly noted for the democratic nature of its rule book or for encouraging rank and file participation.

T&G members should tell Ron Todd to keep the relationship with MSF strictly platonic.

## Sectarian whining

### 'Embarassing' resolution

This year's TUC Congress could have a few surprises in store for Norman Willis.

It looks like the General Secretary and his friends are going to face some difficulty in rubber-stamping the Labour front bench's stance on trade union law.

A resolution tabled by NALGO goes much further than Kinnock would want.

This is the crucial section: "Congress therefore reasserts the principles of free trade unionism, which should include:

(a) the right of members to determine and enforce union rules and constitutions through their own democratic procedures, including the right to discipline

strike breakers;

(b) the right of unions to organise, to represent their members and to bargain collectively with employers;

(c) the right of unions and their members to strike, to picket peacefully and to take solidarity action without fear of dismissal or legal attacks on union funds.

Congress expresses its strong belief that any future Labour government must repeal all the government anti-union legislation and restore rights and immunities in line with existing policy."

Activists in the Labour Party will be heartened by this move. Although the NALGO resolution is vague it will still increase the pressure on Kinnock and friends.

### LEFT PRESS

By Tom Rigby

Supporters of *Socialist Outlook* love to present themselves as ever-so-reasonable and non-sectarian people.

The also try to present *Socialist Organiser* as a bitter and sectarian publication.

The reality, of course, is very different. Take the following gem from this summer's *Outlook*:

"It slipped through on the nod: the right wing press will go wild when they see what it says!" exclaimed a jubilant *Socialist Organiser* supporter, after their 'Workers' Rights Charter' slipped through the NALGO conference.

I hope he didn't hold his breath waiting for the furore. The Charter's generalised formulations against sin and for democratic rights (including unionisation of police and armed forces) have not been the cause of much concern among the ruling class or the labour movement bureaucracy.

It was not so much that it went through on the nod: it just had everyone nodding off!"

So, according to *Outlook*, the campaign for a charter of workers' rights is a boring waste of time. If this is what *Outlook* really think about the campaign for a workers' rights charter then a few things need explaining.

Why did *Outlook* supporters unanimously endorse the charter at the Socialist Movement Trade Union conference last November and agree to campaign for it in their unions?

Why have *Outlook* supporters shown so much interest in the campaign in Labour Party Socialists co-ordinating work around the workers' charter?

It's difficult to fathom what's going on. It seems that some people in *Outlook* have at least some feel for the real labour movement and the real balance of class forces and thus understand the value of fighting to change the law to enshrine certain positive rights for workers.

Others in *Socialist Outlook*, notably industrial 'expert' Alan Thornett and John Lister (whose euphemism is 'Harry Sloan'),

author of the above quoted diatribe, are incapable of assessing any proposal from *Socialist Organiser* objectively.

For instance, Thornett originally opposed the idea of the Socialist Movement campaigning for a charter of workers' rights on the absurd grounds that "we don't put demands on Kinnock" and that "strike action was the only way to deal with the law". Wiser counsels than his must have prevailed and Thornett eventually, though grudgingly, came round to backing the workers' charter.

In a similar vein Alan Thornett also opposed as "sectarian" a programme for trade union democracy, including the annual election of officials, put forward by *Socialist Organiser* supporters at the Socialist Movement Trade Union conference. This was despite the fact that the proposals had come from a charter that he had helped to draw up in the early 1980s!

It seems that Thornett's only response to *Socialist Organiser* is blind factional opposition. He works out the "theoretical" justifications later.

Are the rest of *Outlook* going to follow him down this road or be more constructive?

The issue is where does *Outlook* stand in the campaign for a charter of workers' rights? Are they for it or against it?

Those in *Outlook* who are serious about fighting for trade union rights should say clearly and openly that they do not agree with the Thornett/Lister line and that they are prepared to call them to order and to co-operate with *Socialist Organiser* in a labour movement campaign around the issue.

Finally, if there was no press 'furore' over the NALGO conference decision on the anti-union laws, then why did the *Guardian* comment "NALGO yesterday drove a wedge between Labour and the trade unions"?

## Haringey lobby

### TOWN HALLS ROUNDUP

By Mick O'Sullivan

Last Monday Haringey councillors were met by a lobby of over 500 protesting at the setting of a new budget.

The budget "forced on the Labour council by poll tax capping" includes major job losses — over 800 and major cutbacks in services.

The main focus of protest was not, however, the council chamber but a one-day strike by NALGO. A measure of support for their action was seen with the 100% response among the usually conservative membership in finance.

The strike was the first of a series in support of the demand from all the borough's unions for no compulsory redundancies.

Croydon social work staff have returned to work after a 12-week strike.

The dispute was sparked by the sacking of George Wright, a social work manager.

The strike by 71 NALGO members forced Croydon council to offer George Wright a job for 12 months as a research and development officer on his old salary. Unfortunately, demands for his full reinstatement were not conceded — the job offer is only a 12-month temporary post.

Greenwich housing strikers have won their claim for increased pay for workers who have to collect the Poll Tax.

The 11 week strike involving 160 NALGO members in the Housing Department won a pay

increase of £1,000 for cashiers.

The London-wide disputes committee which ruled in NALGO's favour also instructed Greenwich Council not to change the job descriptions of other housing workers.

Council workers are not happy about the Poll Tax and are willing to take action. The Greenwich strike is not an isolated dispute, but the tip of an iceberg.

Despite the decision in favour of the strikers Greenwich Council have thrown up obstacles to a final settlement.

Management are still trying to force through changes in job descriptions. These changes would involve widespread "flexibility".

These attempts to erode job descriptions have lengthened the dispute. However, union officials are confident that management will be forced to back down.

### IN BRIEF

24,000 manual workers at ICI have voted to reject the company's 'final' offer of a 9.8% pay rise.

The workers are demanding a 14% rise and 2½ hours off the working week.

Teachers in Barnsley marked the last week of term with a strike by over 600 in protest at the council sacking 22 music teachers as a result of poll tax capping. Action will start again in September.

# SOCIALIST

## ORGANISER

### More like the Tories

By Tony Benn MP

The Labour Party is getting more and more like the Tory Party, where everything is decided at the top,

and the members are just expected to toe the line.

This trend has been noticeable for some time, but few have spoken out against it, for fear of incurring the displeasure of the leadership, which has enormous patronage at its disposal.

Most of the key decisions on both policy and organisation are now being taken secretly, behind closed doors, and then announced to the media to pre-empt serious discussion.

For example, the decisions to accept nuclear weapons; support British membership of the Exchange Rate Mechanism; to abandon the closed shop; and now to replace the Poll Tax by a modified rating system, were all the subject of detailed, and expert, press briefing, long before these issues had been properly discussed by the NEC.

The press has now been told that the Liverpool District Labour Party is to be suspended, and that certain members of the Party face expulsion, just days before the NEC is due to discuss these questions, which is also a complete denial of the most elementary rules of natural justice.

By systematic leaking, well in advance, the policies and decisions that the leadership wants, all genuine discussion is effectively prevented, and anyone who dares to question such decisions runs the risk of themselves being denounced to the press as disloyal.

Most members of the party — left, right and centre — at every level, know perfectly well this is going on, many dislike it intensely, but are afraid that if they voice their criticism they too might be accused of being divisive.

If Labour hopes to win the confidence of the people at the next general election, everyone in the Party must be actively encouraged to discuss, quite openly, all the many alternatives that are opening up for Britain, at this time of rapid political change and unprecedented opportunity.

# Hands off the NUM!

The witch-hunt of Arthur Scargill by papers like Robert Maxwell's *Daily Mirror* continues unabated.

They are still out for revenge for the 1984-5 miners' strike. They are still out for Scargill's blood.

Thus the *Mirror* of 25 July — the organ of that same Robert Maxwell who made millions out of publishing lying Stalinist propaganda in the West — is still pursuing Scargill over his alleged use of Libyan money during the strike.

It would have been right to take and use the devil's money if it could be had, to help the miners in their great year-long battle against Thatcher and Thatcherism!

Last week for a while it looked as if the witch-hunters had dealt Scargill a serious and maybe fatal blow, when the NUM Executive decided unanimously to sue Arthur Scargill and the International Miners' Organisation (of which

Scargill is president, as he is also of the NUM) for possession of the more than £1 million which passed from the Soviet Union to the IMO during the miners' strike and which may have been intended for the NUM strike fund.

As we go to press, it is announced that the NUM and IMO are reaching an agreement — details undisclosed — which may avert a battle in the courts. That is the better course of action.

One thing the witch-hunters have achieved is to make discussion of the IMO on its merits impossible.

Militant miners have rightly rallied round Scargill against the Maxwells and their hiring journalists. The important question of whether or not the money should have come to the NUM obscures the basic political issue involved here for socialists: the association of the NUM, a great working class organisation, in a so-called international with the police-state unions



Arthur Scargill

of the Stalinist states.

Before the IMO was set up in 1985, Alain Simon, now the secretary of the IMO and Arthur Scargill's close colleague in the affairs of the IMO, used to head the international association made up mainly from the miners' "unions" of the Stalinist states. Those "unions" were in fact state organisations whose job was to act not for the working-class interest but to police and discipline the workers for the Stalinist boss class. The NUM should not be in any

way associated with such organisations.

There are in the IMO also some other real unions like the NUM. Unity with those unions is good. But the genuine unions should break immediately with the pseudo-unions of Eastern Europe and the USSR, or what's left of them.

That is the political questions miners should address themselves to when the howling of the witch-hunters dies down enough to give them a chance to hear themselves think.

## Film ban is wrong

The banned film about Salman Rushdie, in which he is portrayed as a greedy, homicidal playboy eventually struck down by a bolt of lightning directed at him by an enraged Deity, is undoubtedly both a grotesque incitement on the author's life and a hideous bit of reactionary propaganda: Rushdie is protected, apparently, by Jews...who are saved by converting to Islam.

Probably many Muslims around the world who have seen or will see the film, who have no knowledge of Rushdie or his work, will believe the fictional version of him to be at least partly based on truth.

Given the threats on his life, the making of such a film can only be regarded as one of the most incredibly irresponsible acts in the history of cinema.

Any direct comparison between the right of film-makers to make such a film, and the right of Rushdie to publish *The Satanic Verses*, is impossible to take seriously. In one case you have a work that, in part, is critical of a particular religion, on the other a film which not only libels an individual, but inflames the passions of those who may seriously intend to kill him.

Any film so blatantly fabricating the life of a living person, even if



that person were given a false name, would face heavy scrutiny both from film censors and lawyers. Duncan Campbell recently won such a libel case.

Nevertheless, the film censors were wrong to ban it.

It would surely be the case that if Rushdie sued for libel he would be awarded considerable damages. It would be a pretty cut and dried case. But that is not a matter for censors to decide. Individuals decide whether to sue for libel; courts decide if they have, in fact, been defamed.

Censorship of this kind could set a nasty precedent. Whatever the merits of Duncan Campbell's recent libel suit, against a TV play which he claimed portrayed him as a screwed up homosexual without principles, it would be bad news if the programme had been banned, or if similar films were banned.

And banning the Rushdie film plays into the hands of the fundamentalists. Inevitably, it can be used to suggest hypocrisy on the part of their critics.

It is to Rushdie's considerable credit that he has opposed the ban.

Socialists should in general oppose the banning of films, unless there are very good grounds not to do so. The grounds here are not sufficient.

## Socialists slam injustice

Labour Party Socialists has denounced the NEC's procedure against *Socialist Organiser* as a gross denial of natural justice.

LPS states: "In the next General Election, which will be close fought, no-one will believe the Labour Party when it says that it will protect citizens from the over-

weening power of the state when it treats its own members in this disgraceful way."

The Labour Party Policy Review, 'Looking to the Future', also states that "Britain has been condemned by the Council of Europe for allowing the security services to invade people's privacy without justification. We will introduce a security services act which will make MI5 and MI6 accountable to the House

of Commons." LPS calls on the National Executive Committee to state that it will not accept information gathered by the security services in respect of its own members, and refuse to use such information in internal disputes.

LPS calls on the NEC to act fairly and refuse to endorse reports which breach all the rules of natural justice.

## The witch-hunt has to stop

### WHETTON'S WEEK

#### A miner's diary

It's appalling, at a time when the Tories are on the run, that the Labour Party should spend time turning inwards.

Although I have disagreements with *Militant*, they've got a role to play and should be allowed to continue.

The talk about banning *Socialist Organiser*, who have done tremendous work for miners and other workers in struggle, shows crass stupidity.

Why don't they just say they are more interested in yuppies and floating Tories than in having working class people in the Labour Party? It is appalling that they spend time, effort and money in witch-hunting within the Party when there is much more to gain by going for the Tories.

First *Militant* then *Socialist Organiser* — who next? There has to be a major campaign to tell the leadership to stop this. They are creating a monster that could be totally out of control. Who will the monster turn on next? The Party and trade union rank and file must say, enough, it has to stop.

At our NUM branch last Saturday, a resolution was passed unanimously calling for an immediate end of all talk of going to the courts. Any problems following the Lightman report are miners' problems, and we should solve them ourselves without bringing in the courts — they've never been our friends.

The Area Council are considering sitting round the table to negotiate on differences. I would hope there is going to be a satisfactory outcome.

In view of the gutter press tactics and character assassinations, all part of the same struggle in 1984-85 to smash the miners' organisation, the NUM, we should refuse to play

along with the bloody stupid game of the media, the government and the Coal Board and not oblige them with the spectacle of mineworkers leaving their own organisations.

If there are any problems, and I don't believe there are, we can sort them out without resorting to the courts.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire

## Meeting to set up a united campaign against the witch-hunt

Wednesday 1 August 7.30pm

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square