

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

The voice
Kinnock
wants to
silence

Unite against

this ban!

Socialist Organiser is refusing to "go quietly" from the Labour Party despite last week's National Executive decision to ban the weekly paper.

For 12 years now SO has represented a distinctive strand of Labour's left. When that Labour left was in the ascendant in the early '80s, SO played an important part in organising it. Now we are part of the socialist rearguard against the advance of the soulless Americanised advertising agencies policies represented by Neil Kinnock and his team.

We will try to get the Labour Party's Blackpool conference in October to reject the proscription of SO.

With others, we are calling a meeting on Wednesday 1 August to set up a broad campaign, and plan a series of public protest meetings.

The NEC's treatment of SO threatens every socialist in the Labour Party. If they can ban SO in this way, then no-one is safe.

Labour Party members and trade unionists from a broad range of opinion have rallied against the ban. Phil Kelly, editor of *Tribune*, says:

"I deplore the decision of the National Executive Committee to proscribe Socialist Organiser. I disagree strongly with the paper's political objectives, but I feel that its sup-

porters have a view which should be heard within the labour movement. By this decision and the manner in which it was taken, the NEC has raised unnecessary doubts about Labour's commitments to a pluralist society, freedom of speech and open government."

And Peter Hain, well-known anti-apartheid campaigner, and a prominent figure in the 'Time To Go' campaign on Ireland, says:

"I am opposed to the NEC's ban against Socialist Organiser. I think that the Party ought to be concentrating on broadening its base rather than narrowing it. In the past I have supported moves to expel people for flagrant rule breaking or corruption. But this is for overtly political reasons."

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"All the marks of the security services", says Tony Benn

By Tony Benn MP

The decision by the National Executive Committee to proscribe *Socialist Organiser* was done without any attempt to hear their response to the accusations made.

Moreover, the paper presented to the NEC about *Socialist Organiser* bore all the marks of a document written by the security services. It was almost as if Colin Wallace had been called back to duty for the purpose.

Socialist Organiser has long reflected a wide range of socialist opinion in scholarly articles that draw heavily on the sources of socialist ideas, and it has included contributions by people of differing opinions, including members of the NEC itself.

A Labour Party that cannot contain ideas of the kind that *Socialist Organiser* publishes is a party that will get narrower and narrower, will lose its sense of history, become separated from its ideological roots, and hence will offer no vision beyond the vision of a change of government in an election.

I hope that members of the Party go on reading the paper, because that is still not an offence, though I cannot be sure for how long even that will be true.

Ian Gow bombing —
see page 3

2 LABOUR PARTY

Kinnock will face challenge at Blackpool

By Martin Thomas

Neil Kinnock's plans to remould the Labour Party could well be upset at the Blackpool conference this October on the issue of mandatory reselection contests for MPs.

Mandatory reselection — compelling Labour MPs to submit to a democratic vote by their Constituency Labour Party for each general election, rather than giving them jobs for life — was one of the biggest and most hard-fought democratic reforms in the Labour Party in 1979-81.

Kinnock now wants reselection contests to take place only if a majority of all local Party members vote for it. Such a change would leave MPs even less accountable than they were before 1979, when

contests were difficult but not impossible to get.

Seven resolutions on the conference agenda oppose Kinnock's plans, and a number of trade unions are bound by their conference policies to back the opposition.

Other democratic issues on which strong resistance will be mounted in Blackpool are opposition to "sifting" of resolutions before they are allowed for debate, defence of the trade union vote in local Labour Parties (which Kinnock wants to scrap for parliamentary selections and for CLPs' decisions on who to support for the National Executive), and defence of the right of CLPs to amend resolutions.

Three other big debates look like being on trade union rights, military spending, and Black Sections.

21 resolutions have been put in on trade union rights, and seven of

them are on broadly the lines of the Workers' Charter which *Socialist Organiser* has argued for — upholding the right to strike, to take solidarity action, and to picket. The Labour leadership wants to keep almost all of the Tory anti-union laws.

Unfortunately, MSF, a union which has a strong conference policy for repeal of the Tory laws, has submitted a motion which sounds militant but fudges all the issues. The debate will depend on delegates' ability to construct a strong composite and get union delegations to vote for it in line with their union conferences' policy.

Military spending is the biggest section of the agenda, with 56 submissions. Almost all call for big cuts in military spending; some call for Labour to develop an arms conversion programme; only one calls for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Eight resolutions call for the im-



Don't let Kinnock get away with keeping Tory anti-union laws

plementation of the "compromise" proposed by an NEC working party in 1989, for a Black Socialist Society to be set up in the Labour Party.

Generally, however, the agenda reflects a weakening of the left. For the first time in many years there is no left-wing resolution on the economy, unless two calling for an Industry Bill count as such. Most CLPs have submitted resolutions

on issues where there will be little controversy at conference, or on an issue where the controversy is not left/right (electoral reform, which has attracted 30 resolutions, including one from the National Organisation of Labour Students).

There are 38 resolutions on the environment, 28 on housing, 27 on education, 25 on social security, and 22 on health.

Defend the union's voice

By Danny Nicol

"We don't need a post-mortem (on the 1979 election). We lost because the trade unions had too much power".

Jim Callaghan, answering Tony Benn in the Shadow Cabinet, 1979.

cy parties to decide who to vote for in the NEC constituency section through a system of 'One Member, One Vote' (OMOV). And the NEC will present another rule change whereby, in the words of the *Independent on Sunday* "Labour would finally embrace 'one member one vote' for parliamentary selec-

tion, which the SDP's founders urged unsuccessfully before leaving the party in 1981". Thus the trade union input in the selection procedure would be completely eliminated.

The proposals, both local and national have to be seen in the context of the 1989 Conference's decision

that CLPs are to vote in future leadership elections on the basis of OMOV. If the NEC has its way, it will have abolished the input of trade union branches in every important decision a CLP has to take. The only remaining liaison will be that at the top — tete a tete between the Party and the trade union

leaderships.

The parliamentary establishment must not be allowed to turn Labour into a US-style Democratic Party. It is the responsibility of Labour and trade union rank and file members to make sure the Party does not desert its working class base.

From CLPD Bulletin.

The Labour Party exists to further the interests of the working class, and was founded by the trade unions to do this.

During the Tory decade the unions have been under constant attack. The media have campaigned relentlessly to convince the electorate that Labour's link with the unions is an electoral liability. Unfortunately the parliamentary establishment and some trade union leaders have been taken in by this insidious propaganda.

Like most indoctrination, it has little basis in fact. Recent polls show that the trade unions have regained support — they are more popular than at any time since the 1950s.

But the parliamentary leadership's motives are not restricted to its electoral misconceptions. It doubtless foresees the likelihood that the next Labour government, like its predecessors, will seek to reduce workers' living standards. Anticipating this, it is determined to sever the constitutional link with the unions at rank and file level.

At national level, the block vote is under attack because it is allegedly undemocratic. In fact all organisations at Annual Conference vote by means of a block vote, constituencies as well as unions. The block vote simply means that affiliates cast their votes according to majority decisions.

It is really only the union votes which are under attack. This partly stems from the justified resentment of CLPs that they do not have a fair proportion of votes at Conference (they have just 10%, compared to the unions' 90%). But after this year's Conference this problem should hopefully disappear. Thanks to an 11 year campaign by CLPD for a more just distribution of votes, supported by unions like TGWU and NUPE, CLPs are likely to get 30-40% and unions get 60-70%.

At local level the threat is more imminent. The NEC intends to put to this year's Conference a constitutional amendment which will make it compulsory for constituen-

Model amendments for conference

Model amendment on witch-hunt

To resolution no.60 from Birkenhead CLP:

"This conference supports the right of the Birkenhead CLP to deselect or select its parliamentary candidate. We condemn the so-called 'Field dossier' and the National Executive Committee Inquiry launched in response to it, as a diversion from the central task of defeating the Tory government and ensuring the election of a Labour government. We further condemn the release of the dossier to the media, the unwarranted intrusion into people's lives contained in the document and the factual inaccuracies contained therein.

"Conference also condemns the

way the supposed investigation into Birkenhead CLP has taken place and demand any future investigations into activities of Constituency Labour Parties be conducted with the full consultation of the CLP concerned and that officers of that CLP be informed of any decisions made by the NEC.

"Conference instructs the NEC to immediately end the Inquiry and stop the unnecessary interference in the Wirral Labour Parties.

"Conference also rejects any proposal to expel members of the Wirral Labour Parties as a result of this Inquiry."

Add at end:

"Conference condemns the ban-

ning, without charges, evidence or a hearing, of the paper *Socialist*

Organiser, and instructs the NEC to rescind the ban."

Model motion on witch-hunt

This CLP:

1. Notes that the NEC of 25 July banned *Socialist Organiser* without charges, without evidence, without a hearing, and without any respect for norms of justice.
2. Condemns that ban.
3. Resolves:
 - (a) To mandate the CLP delegate to Annual Conference to support

reference back of that section of the NEC report which deals with the ban.

(b) Immediately, to write to the NEC protesting.

(c) To sponsor the broad campaign being set up against the ban, and to invite a speaker from that campaign.

Model amendment on 'sifting'

To resolution no.17 from Honiton CLP:

"This conference welcomes the proposal in the National Executive Committee consultative document 'Future of Labour Party Conference' to improve the time for consideration prior to Conference of NEC statements to Annual Conference, ie, to quote the document, 'NEC statements shall not — with the exception of emergency issues — be issued later than, say, the beginning of June'.

"Conference believes that CLPs and affiliated organisations should be able to use the improved time thus provided not only to consider the NEC statements but also to submit amendments to them in accordance with the present arrangements for compositing of Conference resolutions and their amendments. Conference believes such arrangements would adequately manage the number of amendments to NEC statements as amendments would only be put to Conference when there was at least a minimum, eg, ten,

submissions on the same topic and CLPs and affiliated organisations would have the choice of either amending an NEC statement or a Conference resolution.

"Conference instructs the NEC to prepare rule changes accordingly."

Add at end:

"In line with the above

proposals, Conference favours the retention of the present procedure whereby the business of Conference is set out in priority order for debate. Such an arrangement is preferable to the various methods of 'sifting' suggested in the document 'Future of Labour Party Conference'. The present procedure is easily

understood, simple to operate and above all fair because it results in the issues which CLPs and affiliated organisations feel most strongly about being assured of debate. Conference believes that the business prioritised for debate at Conference should therefore continue to reflect the number of submissions on each subject."

Model amendment on Workers' Charter

To resolution no.298 from Stoke on Trent Central CLP

"Conference notes: that one of the central planks of Tory policy since 1979 has been the erosion of trade union rights. Conference mandates the National Executive Committee to campaign on the following:

- (a) the right to belong to a trade union, to recruit fellow workers into trade unions and have your union recognised by the employer for collective bargaining;
- (b) the right to be active in

your union and to take industrial action without fear of any intimidation or pursuant persecution;

"(c) the right to strike, to picket effectively and to take industrial action in support of other groups of workers without fear of any intimidation or pursuant persecution;

"(d) the right of union members to determine their own rules in line with the ILO convention on freedom of association;

"(e) that the funds allocated to

the office of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union members be diverted to a new office set up to give similar assistance to workers who suffer dismissal or action short of dismissal as a result of trade union activities."

In line 9 (clause c), after "to picket effectively..." add "and without legal restrictions on numbers."

Amendments must be submitted by 17 August.

16 pages from September

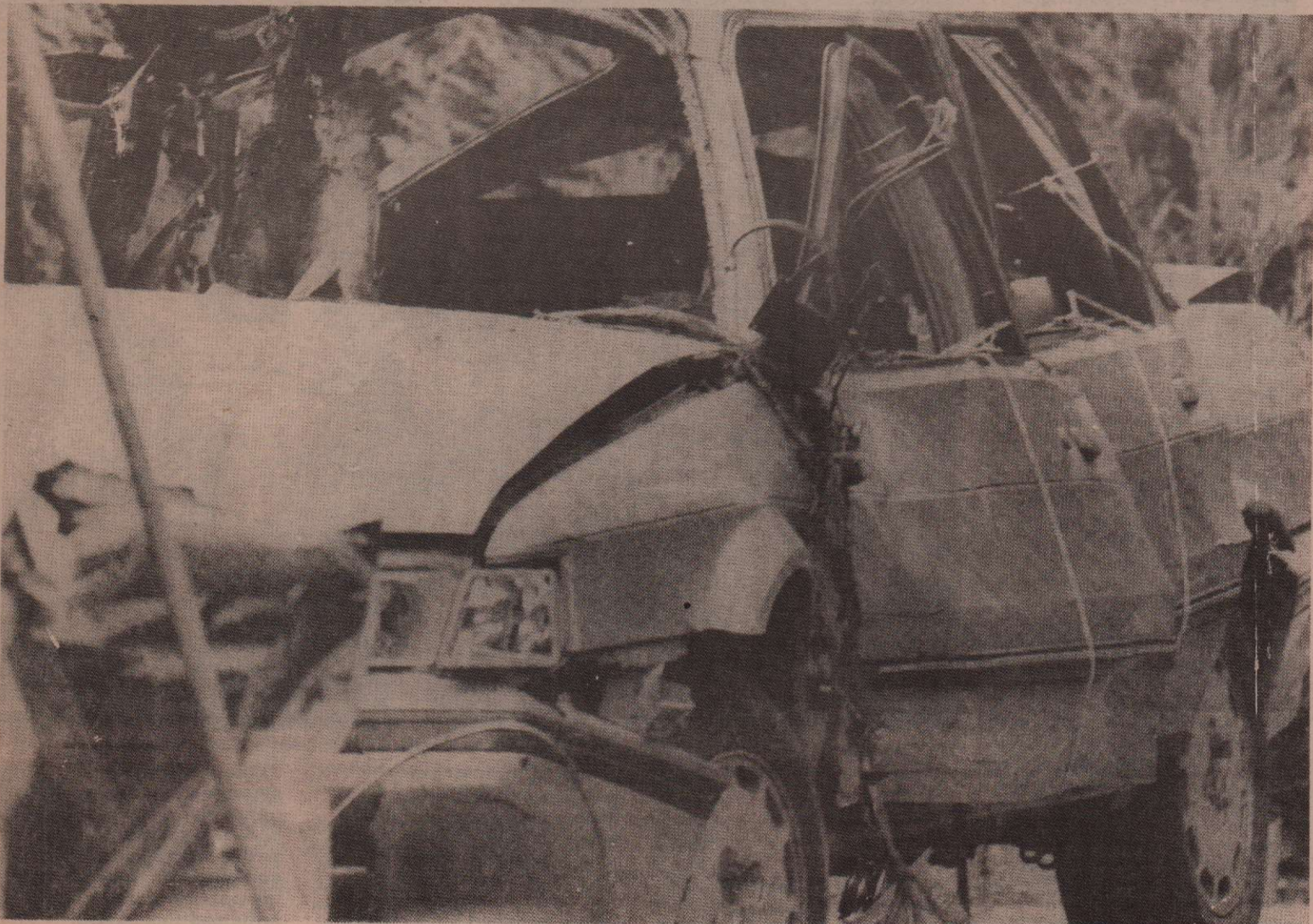
We won't allow Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley to silence the voice of working class

socialism! Socialist Organiser's editorial board last weekend decided to respond to the ban by expan-

ding the paper to 16 pages weekly from September. And it called on readers to enable us to do that by contributing to a

£25,000 fund drive.

Send donations to SO at PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



The strange case of the silent sectarians

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

One of Sherlock Holmes' most celebrated cases involved "the dog that barked in the night" — the point being that the dog *did not* bark.

I was reminded of this episode in the career of the great detective as I perused the 'left press, in search of coverage of the Labour Party's ban of *Socialist Organiser*.

To my surprise, *Tribune*, a publication not usually thought of as sympathetic to the 'hard left', gave the affair quite detailed and accurate coverage. *Labour Briefing* came forward with a fair report and a clear statement of solidarity (marred only by some petty jibes elsewhere in the same edition).

However, the two best known organs of the 'hard left' — *Socialist Worker* and *Militant*, have had precisely **nothing** to say on the banning of *SO*. This seems strange at first: *Socialist Worker*, in particular, rarely miss an opportunity to highlight examples of the Labour leadership's 'stampede to the right' and to shed crocodile tears over the plight of the poor, beleaguered left...each set-back, of course, proving yet again the futility of socialists staying in the Labour Party.

So why the silence when it comes to *SO*'s unceremonious banning? Perhaps *Socialist Worker* simply didn't notice what was going on in the run-up to last week's NEC?

Far from it. *SW* of 14 July carried a quite detailed piece on Frank Field (the Birkenhead MP whose deselection sparked the moves against *SO*), noting that "Labour's national executive is now investigating Field's deselection with a view to witch-hunting the left." Last week's *SW* devoted an entire page to the suspension of 14 Liverpool councillors and the District Party, decided at the same NEC meeting that banned *SO*.

Militant also gave plenty of space to the 14 councillors and Liverpool DLP. But, again, **not a single word** about *SO*. What can we deduce from these strange omissions?

Well, my dear Watson, it is clear to me that these two publications suffer from what that great pioneer of scientific socialism, Mr Karl Marx, so aptly defined as "sectarianism" — that is, the propensity to put their own factional concerns and petty rivalries ahead of the interests of the proletarian movement as a whole.

The *Militant* suffers from chronic delusions of grandeur, regarding itself as the only true expression of Marxism in the entire world. This publication refuses to even acknowledge the existence of other avowedly Marxist currents except as "petty-bourgeois sects on the fringes of the labour movement". That the leadership of the Labour Party was concerned enough about *Socialist Organiser* to proscribe it, simply does not fit into *Militant*'s view of the natural order of things — and so they totally ignore it.

The case of *Socialist Worker* is even more extraordinary: this publication and the group that produce it have long proclaimed their affinity and goodwill towards all on the left wing of the Labour Party. But in reality, they are consumed by an almost irrational hatred for *Socialist Organiser*, whom in private they rail against as an agency of a sinister Zionist and imperialist conspiracy in the pay of the American Central Intelligence Agency.

Unable to express these sentiments openly for fear of being considered certifiably insane, *Socialist Worker* considers it wiser to print nothing on the subject.

It is plain to me that serious socialists presently engaged in a life-and-death struggle to defend proletarian politics within the Labour Party (a struggle not unlike my own epic battle with Professor Moriarty at the Richenbach Falls) can hope for no aid or support from either *Militant* or *Socialist Worker*.

But you don't have to be Sherlock Holmes to work that out for yourself.

The honourable bonehead

EDITORIAL

When a prominent mainstream politician dies, the others and their journalists fill the airwaves and the newspapers with a choral hymn to the splendid and irreplaceable dead.

Usually it is worthless crap — and not sincere crap, either, just the other members of the trade talking up their profession, pretending it consists of honourable men and women moved by ideals when in fact most mainstream politicians are hacks and whores tending the garden of the bourgeoisie and caring for little but their careers.

With Ian Gow, killed on Monday by a Provisional IRA car bomb, a politician may for once have deserved some of the praise being

showered on his corpse.

Five years ago he was a well-favoured member of the Thatcher gang, a minister with bright prospects. Then Mrs Thatcher signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement which gave Dublin a share of the political power over Northern Ireland.

Gow the Unionist, the Tory, the Englishman was outraged. He resigned from the government and spent his last five years on the back benches, speaking out against the IRA as often as events sent the TV cameras to record what he had to say.

The ally of raucous agitators like Ian Paisley, Gow himself spoke with the accents and sentiments of the traditional Unionist English upper classes. But those classes had, in the main, grown more flexible and sophisticated. They had distanced themselves from the Ian Paisleys, and were willing to dilute or even abandon the Union.

When Gow and Thatcher fell out in November 1985, Mrs Thatcher represented the political present of

the British ruling class, and Gow was an anachronism, a romantic throwback. He was the honourable English gentleman who really believed in the Union between Britain and Northern Ireland, and in the British-Protestant alliance.

He was, in fact, the traditional English upper-class bonehead, who understood nothing of the real Ireland and was unable to learn anything except the "lesson" that the British ruling class has spent hundreds of years vainly applying to Ireland — repress the Catholics, beat down the croppies and the taigs, or, in the words of the modern politician's cant, maintain "law and order" and "security".

Bonehead Gow believed — behind the "civilised" veneer and the coded words about law and order — in naked force, and as much of it as necessary to restore and maintain Protestant majority rule (that is, Protestant supremacy) in Northern Ireland.

The choice is either that, or a political solution that reconciles Protestant and Catholic. We do not think that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is such a solution, but at least it is an attempt at one. Ian Gow made a personally honourable stand, sacrificing his career, on behalf of a policy of continued suppression of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, the half million people artificially separated from the Irish majority community in 1921-2 and made into a second, artificial, Irish minority.

The admirers of Ian Gow can rest easy: his mind and spirit are still alive and powerful among those in

England who determine the fate of the people of Northern Ireland!

Gow's type still has immense power and influence in politics, in the Civil Service, and in the army. You can see that on television, for example, when British Army officers are interviewed after the latest IRA bombing or assassination.

Talking as if they all go to a British Army central school of elocution, they denounce the Provisional IRA as "cowards". These are men pursuing protected and lucrative careers within a mindless, soulless, bureaucratic military machine, men who let the "cause" they fight for be decided for them by politicians like Thatcher. And they denounce as cowards young men and women who elect to fight against overwhelming force — the force of arms, of political power, of manufactured public opinion, and of traditional British hypocrisy — for a cause in which they risk death or long imprisonment and can hope to win nothing for themselves!

When the bomb went off under Gow he fell victim to the violence he advocated for the Six Counties Catholics. He was a "soft" target: the idea that killing him will forward the cause of Irish unity is about as boneheaded as Gow himself was. Like the rest of the "soft target" Provisional IRA killings and bombings, this one testified more to the weakness than the strength of those who did it.

Even so, Labour politicians should not have joined in the chorus of synthetic grief for this honourable but politically repulsive John Bull bonehead.

post Monday

Published by WL Publications Ltd
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA
Printed by Press Link
International (UK) Ltd (TU)
Registered as a newspaper at
the Post Office
Signed articles do not
necessarily reflect the views of
Socialist Organiser

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

Karl Marx
Socialist Organiser
PO Box 823
London SE15 4NA
Newsdesk: 071-639 7965
Latest date for reports: first

4 WITCH-HUNT

School for slander

GRAFFITI

It will come as no surprise to many that most of the so-called evidence used in Joyce Gould's report to the NEC for justifying *Socialist Organiser's* proscription should originate from the student movement.

SO has been a regular target for libellous attacks in the pages of the student *Clause Four* and Democratic Left publications for several years.

Compared to their student equivalents, the Kinnockite leadership clique has been slow in clamping down on SO supporters. Two years ago, the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) leadership sent a dossier to the National Constitutional Committee (NCC), focused on the activities of 'Socialist Student' (in which SO supporters were central), calling for expulsions.

At the time Socialist Students was challenging Labour Students' domination of NUS, and the limited witch-hunt was a device to frighten off potential support. In the end, nothing came of it; there were no grounds for excluding Labour Party members contesting elections against NOLS in NUS.

No doubt the present Labour Students leaders will be enthusiastically supporting the NEC's actions.

The hypocrisy is, of course, incredible. Let's look at the charges. Firstly, that SO is a Leninist sect — these arguments have been taken up elsewhere, but the "anti-Leninists" of *Clause Four* and the LCC operate on the basis of a highly bureaucratic and centralised structure. The "invitation only" meetings of the Kinnockite student cliques are legendary. The annual round of secret deals and agreements in the run-up to NUS and NOLS elections negates the democratic structure of the student movement. Who are the secret conspirators here?

The second charge, although not part of the NEC's evidence, is the real motivation of those in Labour Students. It revolves around the growth of *Socialist Organiser* and in particular Left Unity in NUS. Specifically, it involves the issue of SO supporters contesting NUS elections against NOLS. In a perfect world, in which NOLS was an open, democratic organisation, the left wouldn't need to bypass NOLS. But that's not the world we live in.

Essentially NOLS is a tight faction, loyal to the Labour Party leadership and hostile to the left. Its conferences are rigged, its internal structure inherently undemocratic, now, with its membership and influence shrinking, it is the laughing stock of NUS.

Of course NOLS have never acted against those right-wingers who challenge them, and have a history of supporting "independents" and Liberals against left-wing Labour candidates in student union elections;

- Labour Party members who stood on Left Alliance slates were never referred for disciplinary action.

- In 1986 a 'Labour Solidarity' candidate had a nomination in for NUS President against the official NOLS candidate.

- NOLS have helped elect

Tories (1982), the SWP (1985), and Communist Party candidates against other Labour Party members.

- In 1984 NOLS attempted to trade votes with the Union of Jewish Students in return for support against the banning of Sunderland Poly Jewish Society.

- In 1988 they stood Geoff Davidson, an ex-Tory councillor for NUS Finance Committee. He was only withdrawn when his past became public.

- NOLS NC member supported a Liberal against the Labour candidate at Sheffield University.

- At Easter, 1990 NUS Conference, the NOLS candidate for Treasurer had previously stood as an independent against Labour in his college, whilst an ex-NOLS chair openly supported anti-Labour candidates in the same election.

The list is endless. What these examples do show is that the real culprits in bringing Labour into disrepute in NUS is the LCC/Clause 4/Democratic Left NOLS leadership. Charges should be brought against these miserable excuses for socialists.

NOLS has not always been loyal to the Labour Party leadership. The trajectory of NOLS from Bennism to Kinnockism is a good index in the development of the soft left over the last ten years. During the struggles of the early 1980s, NOLS fully supported the left in its attempts to introduce mechanisms to hold the movement's leaders to account.

Although "anti-Trotskyist" (Clause 4 was set up to wrestle power away from Militant in NOLS in 1974), they became involved in the Rank and File Mobilising Committee (RFMC) and supported Benn for deputy leader in 1981.

Confused and demoralised by the defeats of '83 and the consolidation of the Labour bureaucracy, they quickly fell into line. Gone was the talk of working class struggle, in was the "dented shield" strategy, which now means do nothing, wait and hope.

The student movement is a conveyor belt for the young aspiring Labourite careerist. The Labour Party machine is littered with ex-NUS hacks. Many of them have started out with good intentions, with an idea of struggle and socialism, but the bureaucracy's tentacles pull them in and the logic of their self-advancement leads them to abandoning any principles and to attacking their own left wing. Moreover, the real struggles of those they 'represent' become a nuisance, an irritation that gets in the way of the endless round of expenses-paid lunches in the House of Commons and beyond.

The reason those in NOLS have plotted to get *Socialist Organiser* proscribed may feel it assures them some short-term personal gain. The framework for NOLS' hatred of SO derives from our success in NUS. In a short period SO has grown to be the most influential revolutionary group in the student movement. We have managed to combine militant rank and file action with an assault on the NUS bureaucrats themselves.

These people set their sights no higher than a career and a Labour government that will shackle the unions, attack workers' living standards, and bow to the demands of the bosses. We set our sights much higher.

Paul McGarry

Why we oppose this ban



Socialist Organiser supporters lobby the NEC, 25 July 1990. Photo: Geoff Ward

All statements in a personal capacity

"The NEC's decision of 25 July 1990 to declare Socialist Organiser ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party is indicative of how far the Party has travelled on the road to intolerance.

"In 1982 the then NEC found that the Militant Tendency 'as presently constituted' would not be eligible for inclusion on 'the register of non-affiliated groups of Labour Party members'. At the time it invited the Militant Tendency to apply for inclusion on the register. It asked Militant to 'indicate the changes' it was prepared to make 'to implement the NEC's decision to conform to the constitution of the Party'.

"The NEC listed 8 rulings with which an organisation had to comply to qualify for inclusion. One of these was that 'any group found to be in breach of these rules should be given a period of not more than three months in which to put an end to such infringements'. This was in 1982.

"In 1990 no such latitude is being extended to supporters of Socialist Organiser, even though the editor of the newspaper is prepared to comply with NEC requirements. The NEC did not think it necessary even to reply to SO's offer. Without so much as a hearing, it declared SO ineligible for affiliation to the Labour Party. This means that Party members associated with the distribution of the newspaper will have failed to conform to the constitution of the Party and will face disciplinary charges.

"It is a sad reflection that at a time when Communist Parties in Eastern Europe are

widening internal party democracy the Labour Party should be moving in the opposite direction."

Vladimir Derer — CLPD

"I am appalled at the ban on Socialist Organiser. It is another turn in the screw against internal political debate in the labour movement. The strength of the labour movement ought to be the ability of all to express views freely. Instead we have the serious curtailment of free speech in the Labour Party. I am totally opposed to all bans and proscriptions in the Labour Party."

Jeremy Corbyn MP

"I am against expelling people from the Labour Party on grounds of their political views. If there is anyone who thinks it will make the Party more attractive to the electorate — they are mistaken. It will simply result in a list of demands for new expulsions."

Chris Mullin

"We both condemn the proscription of Socialist Organiser. Freedom to organise and build support for the ideas of the left within the Labour Party should be a fundamental right. We will be urging our delegations to this year's annual conference to support the reference back of the report dealing with SO."

Tony Kearns and Tom McGee — UCW National Executive

"Labour Women's Action Committee believes that ideas cannot be stamped out by banning or expulsions. But this is what the NEC is trying to do. They are attempting to censor ideas."

Labour Women's Action Committee

"When a party starts clamping down on political opposition by attempting to ban it, something is far wrong. It's particularly ironic coming from people who in the past have quite correctly criticised this kind of undemocratic behaviour in the East. I hope that ordinary members of the Labour Party will refuse to accept this ban."

Callum Macrae — Chair, Edinburgh Trades Council

"The witch-hunt has already done massive damage to the Labour Party. The attacks on Socialist Organiser are not only unjust — in that once again they have proscribed against people with socialist ideas — but there is also the pragmatic considerations that they will provide a field day for our enemies in the media, and distract from the task of defeating the Tories."

Bob Clay MP

"We deplore the decision to witch-hunt Socialist Organiser from the Labour Party. It seems that NOLS played a part in getting the paper proscribed. It's not surprising really, they've lost all the big political arguments in the student movement for the last few years. Socialist Organiser has played a central role in organising and mobilising the left in NUS whilst at the same time making revolutionary socialist ideas popular amongst students. We will fight the ban."

Emma Colyer — National Secretary, National Union of Students

Janine Booth — Women's Officer, NUS

Steve Mitchell — Vice President FEUD, NUS

Mark Sandell — National Executive Member, NUS

First for the chop

By Gail Cameron

As sales organiser for Socialist Organiser on Merseyside, I'm first in line for expulsion from the Labour Party now that the National Executive has banned the paper.

We had no charges, no evidence, no hearing, no justice. Yet now I will be accused of 'a sustained course of conduct prejudicial to the Party.' The Labour Party's national officials want to hound me out of the party in order to placate Frank Field MP.

In 1987 Frank Field, from his safe Birkenhead constituency, went to press refusing to support the Labour candidate in the neighbouring marginal constituency, Wallasey, a seat that had to be won if we were to have had a Labour government.

At that same time I was campaigning for a Labour victory, splitting my time between working in my own safe Labour constituency in Sheffield and the neighbouring marginal seat.

Since then I've been active in various anti-deportation campaigns and campaigns against police harassment, the campaign to Fight the Alton Bill and the Stop the Amendment Campaign; my local Anti-Poll Tax Union and various strike support work.

Since moving to Wallasey, I've become secretary of the constituency women's section and vice-chair of the Wirral District women's council, and constituency youth and student officer.

Meanwhile, Frank Field has held the NEC to ransom with the threat of resigning his seat, causing a by-election, and standing against Labour. Yet it is I who face disciplinary action for activity 'prejudicial to the Labour Party'.

The four years I've been a Labour Party member have been spent trying to activate the Party, making it a party responsive to the struggles of working class people whether in the workplace or in the community. In that time I've been involved in a variety of campaigns — against health cuts, police harassment, attacks on abortion rights, supporting strikers etc and have tried to make these issues for the Labour Party to take up and fight on.

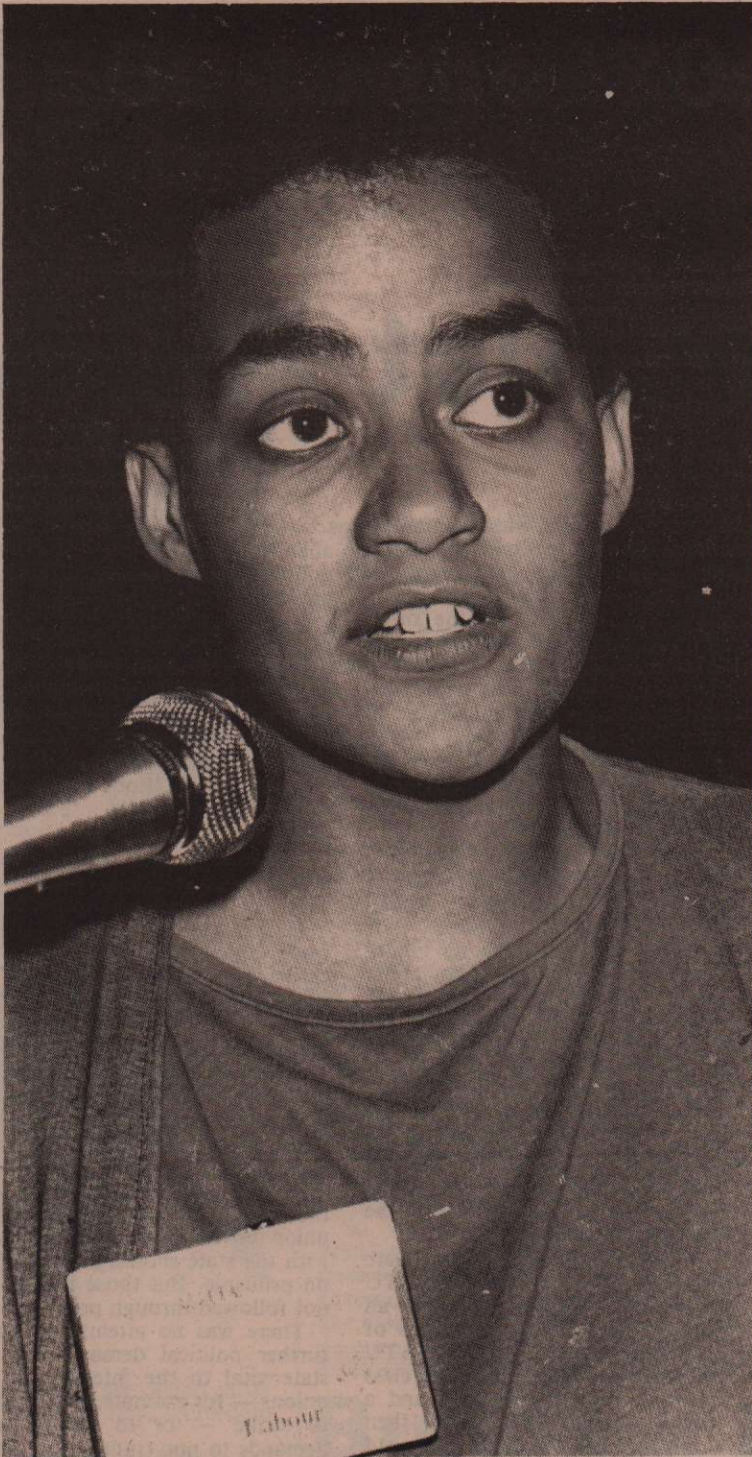
My time has been spent trying to build the Labour Party, to make it democratic and a real forum to debate socialist ideas and to win elections. Contrast that with a man who consistently flouts Labour policy by voting against abortion

"Frank Field has held Labour to ransom. Yet it is I who face disciplinary action for activity 'prejudicial to Labour'."

rights, fails to support ship yard workers in his own constituency fighting to save jobs, and takes pride in sabotaging Labour election campaigns!

There is no justice in the ban on Socialist Organiser nor in any moves to expel me. I ask all Labour Party members and affiliated trade unionists to support me by supporting reference back of the section of the NEC Report at Blackpool party conference this October dealing with the ban on Socialist Organiser.

And win or lose at Blackpool, I'm not giving up! Even if the Party leadership expels me, I'll continue to work for Labour in elections, to be active in local campaigns and in my union, and to fight for socialism.



Gail Cameron speaks at Labour Women's Conference 1989. Photo: John Harris.

"it would seem to have been more fair for Socialist Organiser to have been allowed to answer in person before the NEC the points that were made against you. You have not been given the opportunity to answer the allegations, and it would have been more just if the NEC had allowed an answer to be made."

Chris Smith MP

"Labour Briefing extends its unqualified support to Socialist Organiser in its struggle against the witch-hunt — a struggle which all socialists in the Labour Party must make their own. The right of like-minded comrades to organise within the Labour Party to advance their ideas is essential to the democratic lifeblood of the Party. We defend the right of any Labour Party member to sell any Labour Party newspaper at any Labour Party meeting. We deplore the use of Labour Party full-timers to compile secret, unchallengeable dossiers on political opponents of the Labour leadership. We call on all CLPs to stand up for Party democracy and to resist any attempted expulsions of Socialist Organiser supporters."

Labour Briefing Editorial Board

"I was expelled from the Labour Party for bringing the Labour Party into 'disrepute' for allegations I made on TV about Roy Hattersley's CLP. The broad-based campaign organised around my case won my reinstatement. I am against all expulsions from the Party on political grounds."

Kevin Scally, Sparkbrook CLP

"I am completely opposed to the banning of Socialist Organiser."
Mick Rice — Secretary, Birmingham Trades Council and Labour councillor

"I am opposed to the ban of any working class newspaper and the witch-hunt of any people who support those papers."
Billy Lowe — NCU Engineering Group Executive

"I am not in favour of the proscription of socialists. I have been unhappy with the NEC for some time. This smacks of fear of different points of view."
George Nazer — CoHSE National Executive

"I thought the age of kangaroo courts was over. British justice has always been that there should be a fair hearing; no pre-judgement; not guilty until proven otherwise. There has been no evidence given for this."
Dave Hatt — NUR NEC

"I am extremely concerned at the expulsion of socialists from the Labour Party. I think the Labour Party should be a socialist party."
Martin Meyer, TWGU 9/10

"Thank god for Socialist Organiser! You helped us in our dispute from last

Christmas. We did not win, but it put pressure on the union to pick up on what was happening. It helped us financially and publicised our plight. It is stupid to expel such trade unionists and working class supporters from the Labour Party."
Roy Howell — East Midlands Company Rep (NUR)

"Proscriptions and witch-hunts within the Party are not the way forward to a Labour government."
Dave Cooke — MSF National Executive

"I think there are quite a few MSF members who will be concerned about the move against Socialist Organiser. This move should concern all of us. Free speech in the Party should be cherished. It is a shame that this has happened."
John Gardner — MSF National Executive

"At a time when the labour movement should be using all its resources to attack the Tory government it is a disgrace that Kinnock and the NEC are weakening the movement by attacking socialists. The present leadership seem not only prepared to ditch socialist policies but also to kick activists out of the Party. We must not allow our Party to be Stalinised just at the time when Stalinism has collapsed in Eastern Europe."
Andy Dixon — NUT National Executive

"I am a regular reader of Socialist Organiser. I am completely opposed to the banning of the paper."
Dave Harvey — NUT National Executive

"When politicians try to proscribe the views of other people then we can be sure of one thing: that these politicians neither understand nor care about democracy."
Jake Ecclestone — NUJ General Secretary

"In recent months when the Berlin Wall has come down, it is amazing that the Labour Party is willing to build walls in the broad socialist movements and resort to purges reminiscent of Stalinism."
Peter Dunnico — TGWU General Executive

"I am firmly opposed to any form of witch-hunt in the party — especially when taken in such an undemocratic manner. We should solve ideological differences through debate and not through the organisational methods of the NEC."
Ian Driver — NUPE NEC and Southwark Labour councillor

"The attack on Socialist Organiser is part and parcel of the attack on the Liverpool councillors and the attack on Scargill. It is because the leadership of the Labour Party and TUC think we're going to have a Labour government, know that they're going to

disappoint a lot of working class people, and are trying to behead the opposition to the next round of wage freezes, etc, in advance. It's part of the move to look more Tory than the Tory party. The witch-hunts, along with the abolition of reselection which they are after, and all the other attacks going on, particularly the pillorying of Scargill, are an attempt to try and damage the left so badly that the reaction to the disappointment that they're planning to create amongst the working class if they win will take some time to get going."
Keith Nathan — Leeds City Labour Councillor

"Women for Socialism has been very grateful for the help of Socialist Organiser — particularly for trade union work. Obviously, I am totally opposed to the ban on Socialist Organiser."
Ruth Clarke — Secretary, Women for Socialism

"It is entirely regrettable that free speech and free discussion in the Party is being thwarted by this ban."
Walter Wolfgang, CND

"I found it sad that the Labour Party, which I believed to be a broad church, feels so threatened by dissident voices in its ranks. I hope that any members who work within the rules of the Labour Party will be allowed to express their socialist views."
Bill Michie MP

"The proscription of Socialist Organiser is an undemocratic outrage. The so-called allegations raised have gone from the bizarre to the ridiculous — and those accused have not been given even the most elementary rights to defend themselves. It is clear that these 'allegations' are intended to add a veneer of legitimacy to a further escalation of the Labour leadership's attacks on the left. The vilification of Arthur Scargill for defending the NUM during the miners' strike forms part of the same pre-election assault on the left of the labour movement."

Socialist Outlook unreservedly commits itself to defend the right of Socialist Organiser to fight for its ideas within the Labour Party. Whether one agrees with those ideas is not the issue; it is a question of defending party democracy, and fighting back against Neil Kinnock's offensive against socialists within the party. There is no doubt that this offensive to drive socialist ideas out of the party, 'sanitising' the party for the pre-election period, will quickly spread to others on the left if it is not fought now. This is the lesson of the failure of the left to unite in defence of Militant when they were under attack."

Repeal the proscription of Socialist Organiser! Unite against Kinnock's witch-hunt!
Socialist Outlook Editorial Board

Black workers and the Communist Party

The South African Communist Party re-launched itself as a legal body last weekend. Anne Mack and Mark Dupont explain how its influence has grown inside the workers' movement and why it can now count in its ranks world famous militants like Moses Mayekiso

After his arrest in June 1986 Moses Mayekiso became a symbol, a living embodiment, of the spirit of resistance of South Africa's independent black workers' movement.

Moses was clearly identified with the left wing of that movement. He spoke of the need to link together the class struggle of the workers with the democratic movement. He was one of the first mass leaders in South Africa to talk openly and clearly about the need for working class power to become the objective of the mass movement.

Moses was trying to sketch out an independent class politics for this movement. In one interview, in 1985, Moses put the issue very clearly: in fact, too clearly for some of his associates in the metalworkers' union:

"At present the FOSATU shop stewards' councils, and also MAWU, are discussing the political set-up. We are looking at the crisis and the solutions to the crisis. The general feeling is that the workers must have their own party and their own freedom charter..."

"The Charter [the Freedom Charter of the ANC] is a capitalist document. We need a workers' charter that will say clearly who will control the farms, presently owned by the capitalists, who will control the factories, the mines, and so on. There must be a change of the whole society. Through the shop steward councils people are opposed to this idea that there will be two stages towards liberation: that we must clean up capitalism first, then socialism. It's a waste of time, a waste of energy, and a waste of people's blood."

Moses argues something very different today. He is now a member of the ANC and of the leadership of the Communist Party. A party whose leader Joe Slovo said recently that socialism was unlikely in South Africa, not just in his lifetime, but in his son's! Due, it seems, to the backwardness of the most industrially advanced country on the African continent.

Despite what some ultra-lefts may say, Moses has not simply 'sold out'. His personal political evolution encapsulates the evolution of a large section of the independent workers' movement over the last few years.

To understand Moses' development we need to understand the tale of how the 'populists' triumphed over the 'workerists' in the trade unions.

The 'populists' could be roughly defined as identifying with the nationalist political tradition of the ANC, represented in South Africa by the United Democratic Front. The 'populists' tended to favour a 'high profile' political style of trade unionism. Arguing that the workers

must participate in wider community struggles, they tried to build alliances with all progressive groups committed to fighting apartheid.

The 'workerists', on the other hand, though committed to the wider struggle against apartheid, were wary of alliances with non-worker-controlled organisations in which the distinct voice of the working class might be submerged. They stressed the need for patient organising, educating and building on the shop floor.

Five years ago the 'populists' were a weak and isolated faction in the workers' movement. Today they are dominant. Although, "officially" the distinction no longer exists! But populist ideas alone should not be given too much credit. The ANC has a large apparatus. It has funds. It has managed to portray itself as the symbol of a whole history of black resistance.

Even those factors are not enough to explain the rise to dominance of 'populism'. The left allowed itself to lose out. The weaknesses of the left gave the populists their advantage.

The trade union left — who were strongest in the old FOSATU federation — tended to reduce all political questions to questions of organisation. In the FOSATU framework, once the working class was well enough organised and a strong enough base created, then working-class politics would dominate almost automatically.

The FOSATU left had a political agenda, and functioned in part like a political tendency. But they had one crucial weakness. They had a two-stage theory of first building a strong trade union movement and then moving into politics. This meant in practice that the building of political organisation and the development of socialist ideas outside the immediate process of production were postponed to a later period. In the early 1980s there was a political vacuum in the country, but FOSATU let slip a favourable opportunity to prepare workers politically for the tumultuous times to come.

The ideas of the FOSATU left took root in a relatively small but crucial cadre of union activists and shop stewards. The populists, however, were able both to appeal directly to the rank and file over the heads of the FOSATU left, and to exploit the lack of a wider political perspective on the state within the FOSATU left.

Township revolt

So, when the townships exploded in 1984, it was the populists, basing themselves on the ANC, who appeared to have all the answers to the big political questions of power.

The unions didn't know how to respond to the massive uprising. In part they were held back by a sectarian attitude to community organisations which were not 'proper' working-class organisations like unions. They were influenced by syndicalism — a philosophy which reduces the whole of working-class politics to trade union action. In the absence of a clear lead from the left in the union, the working-class struggles in the black townships — and they were working-class struggles, over issues like rents — were quickly subsumed and generalised into a vague and unspecified populist protest against apartheid in general.

Right from the start of the

township revolt, the workerists allowed the populists to define the political issues. Very quickly this powerful, spontaneous revolt in the townships was fastened into the populist mould. There was no real living link between the issues around which workers and youth were mobilising — rents, fares, racist schooling — and the maximum goals attached to them, 'Free our leaders!', 'End apartheid!', 'Ungovernability!', 'People's power', etc.

The seeds of defeat and demoralisation had already been sown.

In part this happened because the trade union left had missed an earlier opportunity. The FOSATU left made political gains in 1980, when alone in the movement they recognised the importance of state 'registration' or recognition of the unions, and exploited to the full the new legal rights associated with recognition. They broke from the perspective long dominant in the ANC and, for different reasons, in the syndicalist wing of the trade union movement — that all dealings with the state should be boycotted on principle. But those gains were not followed through politically.

There was no attempt to make further political demands on the state vital to the interests of the unions — for example, for the right to strike — or to extend such demands to non-trade-union issues like rent, local government and education. Lawyers were used — effectively in many cases — to widen the scope for legal action in the courts. Sometimes pressure was put on employers so that they in turn would put pressure on the state. But direct political demands on the state were not posed.

Even state recognition of the unions had come from the top down, as a state strategy for incorporation rather than as a demand from below. The FOSATU left had a golden opportunity in the early 1980s to break decisively from the ANC's idea that because the state was so rotten and could not be reformed, therefore no demands for reform could or should come from below. They had an opportunity to transfer to the political realm the lessons learned in the economic, to extend the method of patient organisation through pressing winnable demands on the enemy and linking ultimate goals with immediate 'small' reforms.

A missed opportunity

The FOSATU left missed this opportunity — partly because of the social weight of the populist view of the state, and partly because the syndicalism which informed the FOSATU left did not give it the political equipment to develop a working-class alternative.

In 1982 the general secretary of FOSATU, Joe Foster, made a speech about the need for a working-class political movement. He did not clarify what this meant programmatically or organisationally, and in any event his ideas were not followed through. The trade union left chose the road of 'union unity' and 'disciplined alliances' with the popular movement instead of building its own political wing.

The populists were against a workers' party. They were committed to broad national movements organised in Congresses rather than party politics; and the ANC saw the



South African Communist Party as the sole representative of working-class interests. They could not be confronted sufficiently by a trade union left which was influenced by its own anti-party ideas stemming from syndicalism.

A workers' party — even a small and weak one — launched out of FOSATU in the early '80s, and armed with a creative approach to the township struggles, could have radically altered the course of events. It was not to be.

COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, was formed in late 1985 by the unification of FOSATU with some populist-led and other unions. This was a massive step forward. But it gave the populists a weight and influence within the unions that they did not deserve.

In its first year, COSATU was held back by submerged political disagreements and infighting. While the populists organised, mobilised and conspired, the workerists retreated to the shop floor. They kept their heads down.

The left hoped that their stronger industrial unions would allow them to absorb the populists. That didn't happen. COSATU was formed in the midst of the fire and fury of the township revolt. That propelled it into a political tumult for which the trade union left was ill-prepared.

What was the trade union left's view on disinvestment? On sanctions? The ANC? Buthelezi? The 'homelands'? Black councils? For better or worse, the populists had a position, while the trade union left was groping in the dark.

Even as COSATU was formed, the township revolt was showing the first signs of decline. Confusion and demoralisation began to set in as the vigilantes — the murderous Black Hundreds of the South African counter-revolution — started to gain ground.

The workers' voice

The ANC's slogan of 1985 had been 'Make the townships ungovernable'. This was plainly failing. Anarchy, not working-class power, had replaced the collaborators of

the state, but there was little alternative on offer from COSATU.

"Some activists from the trade union left were able to play a very important role as the working class wing of 'people's power', attempting to ensure that 'people's power' was democratically grounded in the people and not a cover under which one or another factor served its own interests..."

Some trade unionists did try to deal with these problems. Alec Erwin, the national education officer of FOSATU and then COSATU, posed theoretically the need for a 'transformational' politics to build in the townships the kind of democratic structures built in the unions. Moses Mayekiso, general secretary of MAWU (and now of NUMSA), set out to build democratic and accountable structures in practice, in Alexandra township, near Johannesburg. There were other instances of trade union involvement in community organisation, though Alexandra was arguably a model.

The ANC also responded to the decline in the township revolt by raising the slogans of 'people's power' and 'people's education' in place of 'ungovernability'. It presented this as a further step on a triumphant road to liberation, rather than as a response to the problems of 'ungovernability'.

Some activists from the trade union left were able to play a very important role as the working-class wing of 'people's power', attempting to ensure that 'people's power' was democratically grounded in the people and not a cover under which one or another factor served its own



interests or pursued its own ends. Popular justice', for instance, was made both more just and more popular than the ad hoc courts which had fingered collaborators and sentenced them to 'the necklace'.

Organisations like the Alexandra Action Committee represented wonderful examples of working-class power which will provide an inspiration for the struggles to follow. But major problems were looming.

First, state repression in the townships grew far worse. In May 1986 the Crossroads squatter camp was razed to the ground. The next month a new, national, state of emergency was declared.

On the surface, at least, most township organisations collapsed under the pressure, including the best examples of 'people's power' like the Alexandra Action Committee. Militants like Moses Mayekiso were arrested or detained, while the state set up its own Joint Management Committees under the military to govern and push new resources into the impoverished communities.

The trade union left made the most of 'people's power' — except perhaps in areas like the Eastern Cape where its isolation from township protest left its fingers badly burned — but did not confront the limits of the approach as a whole. The idea of 'liberated zones' was a myth born out of initial gains by the popular movement and the initial slowness of the state to react. It was not backed by military force. The ANC's armed forces remained for the most part far from the clutches of the South African Defence Force.

Dual power in this context is necessarily a temporary state of affairs. It must either secure a new accommodation with the state, or overthrow the state, or fall. In the absence of forces to overthrow the state, and in the absence of a national organ capable of winning a new accommodation with the state — for example, democratically-based local authorities and educational authorities, the freezing of

rents, adequate financing of local authorities by the state, etc — it was a matter of time before dual power fell.

Second, the trade union movement, which had been partially insulated from the full brunt of state repression, was under increasing pressure in the face of unemployment, inflation, vigilante attacks and foreign disinvestment at the workers' expense. As the township revolt declined in 1986, strikes reached record levels which were then exceeded in 1987.

Newly-organised workers in the mines, railways and municipal services flexed their muscles. Older-organised workers fought for a 'living wage'. Often, however, the unions have had to retreat. The miners' strike was defeated. The July 1986 stay-away against the state of emergency was a flop.

"Very quickly, the pro-Communist Party 'populists' emerged as the dominant tendency in the unions. Their turn away from the madness of 'ungovernability' towards the 'politics of negotiations' helped the populists win more ground. The idea of winning small demands through combining organisation and negotiation appealed to many ex-workerists."

As the township revolt declined, the ANC started to put more and more resources and energy into strengthening its position in the unions. One expression of this was

its campaign to get union after union to adopt the ANC's Freedom Charter.

Those people, like the left in the shopworkers' union CCAWUSA, who obstructed the populists, found themselves on the receiving end of a classic Stalinist stitch-up. Critics of the ANC received dark threats and strong hints that they had been given 'a friendly warning...'

Very quickly, the pro-Communist party 'populists' emerged as the dominant tendency in the unions. Their turn away from the madness of 'ungovernability' towards the 'politics of negotiations' helped the populists win more ground. The idea of winning small demands through combining organisation and negotiation appealed to many ex-workerists.

The late '80s also saw Glasnost inside the SACP. Joe Slovo denounced the 'cult of the personality' and advocated pluralism in harmony with Gorbachev's line. Simultaneously, the party put on a 'left' face to influence the trade union rank and file. According to this new line, the democratic and socialist revolutions were part of the same 'fused' and uninterrupted process. Whatever the immediate tasks of the movement, the long-term goal of the SACP was socialism.

This disarmed the neo-Trotskyist left who tended to reduce 'Stalinism' to a 'right-wing' two-stage theory.

The CP appeared more open and tolerant than ever before. It had become the leading force inside the unions; its pull on worker activists who wanted more than just militant trade unionism, who wanted politics, became magnetic.

Moses Mayekiso is simply the best known of the many workers who have gone down this road. Tragically, they have joined a party whose central, hardened leadership will fight tooth and nail to keep the democratic movement within the strictest bourgeois limits 'hand in hand', as Joe Slovo loves to say, 'with true business patriots of this land'.

Did the CP plan to take power?

The South African government is rapidly retreating from the allegations it made last week that the Communist Party is co-ordinating plans to overthrow it.

The 'evidence' against CP leader Joe Slovo is very thin indeed.

Slovo is supposed to have called for the preparation of an armed uprising but:

- The police have not even established that the 'Comrade Joe' in the minutes they are using as evidence is Joe Slovo;

- The minutes clearly refer to self-defence against Inkatha vigilantes in Natal and not the overthrow of the government — "Chair: While the ceasefire happens nationally, the people on the ground have to continue to be on the attack and eliminate the warlords and the councillors." [the meeting was in Tongaat, Natal]

"Comrade Joe: Those who do not sign the ceasefire are not bound by the terms of it."

So, with the ANC insisting on keeping Joe Slovo in its negotiating team for next week's talks with the government, the 'red scare' looks like dying down for now at least.

The allegations were obviously timed to coincide with last weekend's public re-launch of the Communist Party.

The SACP is one of the few Communist Parties left on earth which appears to be thriving. This is despite many years of crazy politics which included: separate white and black "anti-fascist popular fronts" in the '30s (Imagine that — a racially segregated cross-class alliance!), and opposition to black workers' strikes during the second world war on the grounds that they undermined the war for democracy! More recently, the CP denounced the independent unions in the '70s as yellow, collaborationist bodies.

Yet the party still manages to come out on top. Over the last four years it has built up a big base in those same unions that it used to slander.

Speculation about a major breach between the CP and the 'nationalists' within the ANC has started again. However, a split is very unlikely, certainly in the here and now. Both the CP leadership and the non-CP elements in the ANC are deeply committed to a negotiated settlement and an 'historic compromise' with white capital.

Building in the prisons

A South African socialist who spent two years in detention tells of how the Communist Party used the gaols as a recruiting ground and training centre

history or on the demands of the Freedom Charter. They also held more detailed 'advanced' discussions in small groups.

In this way the SACP has built up a cadre of mainly working class youth out of the generation of '85. A remarkable achievement really, because in '85 the SACP only had a few old timers left in my area.

However, the SACP has had to pay a price for these recruits. The 'old timers' where I come from were very much on the left of the party: they talked about an 'uninterrupted democratic and socialist revolution'. They were serious socialists. The youth will be very unhappy with the new 'line' supporting a negotiated settlement and saying socialism 'is not on the agenda'.

It's important to realise that the SACP is not just the cynical leadership."

"I spent two years in 'preventive detention' in the Eastern Cape [an ANC stronghold]. I was arrested in late '85 as part of the mass arrests under the first State of Emergency which took out activists in virtually every street in the townships.

The Communist Party used the mass detentions to build itself.

They organised talks and discussions to get over their basic ideas. During exercises they sometimes held classes of over 200 on South African



Mandela and Slovo

Anti-semitism from the '50s to the '80s

Stan Crooke continues his account of anti-semitism in the USSR. Part 3 next issue.

Stalin's successor Khrushchev made evident his own anti-semitic views on a number of occasions, even if, like his predecessor, he denied the existence of anti-semitism in the Soviet Union.

In 1956 he declared: "Should the Jews want to occupy the foremost positions in our republics now, it would naturally be taken amiss by the indigenous inhabitants. The latter would ill receive their pretensions, especially as they do not consider themselves less intelligent or capable than Jews. Or, for instance, when a Jew in Ukraine is appointed to an important post and he surrounds himself with Jewish colleagues, it is understandable that this should create jealousy and hostility towards the Jews. But we are not anti-semites."

In the same year he provided a novel explanation for the absence of Jewish schools and cultural institutions in the Soviet Union (closed down by Stalin shortly before his death): "As far as Jews are concerned, even if Jewish schools were established, very few volunteers would be found willing to attend them. The Jews are dispersed over the whole Union. One could never establish a university in the Jewish language...If Jews were compelled to attend Jewish schools, there would certainly be a revolt. It would be considered as a kind of ghetto. The Jewish theatre pined away for lack of audiences, in spite of subventions and subscriptions."

In an interview with the French paper *Figaro* in 1958 Khrushchev claimed that the project of creating a Jewish national state in Birobidzhan failed because Jews were incapable of collective work — they were individualists and not inclined to do agricultural work.

Khrushchev also believed that many of the Jewish intellectuals and writers executed by Stalin in the late 'forties and early 'fifties had been planning to establish an independent Jewish republic in the Crimea which would have seceded from the Soviet Union in order to provide a base for American imperialism:

"Stalin showed vigilance here. He put a stop to the pretensions of world Zionism and its attempts to create a base in our country in order to struggle against us. This base would have been Zionism, upon which American imperialists would have relied. If such a republic had been created, then it could not be excluded that there might be Zionist penetration into it. In America Zionism is very developed and, without doubt, America would have seized any opportunity to put pressure on us."

In the immediate post-Stalin years the level of state-organised anti-semitism fell sharply in comparison with the years of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign and the Doctors' Plot. The imprisoned doctors were released from prison, and the surviving Jewish intellectuals who had been arrested and imprisoned in the course of the anti-cosmopolitan campaign were likewise released. Jewish writers who had been executed in 1952 were re-instated individually.

But discrimination against Jews in employment continued. Jews continued to be excluded either partially or entirely from government departments dealing with countries abroad and from sensitive security

jobs, including high army posts. A disproportionately small number of Jews were present in the party hierarchy and the state administration, and there was also evidence of a re-introduction of a "numerus clausus" for Jews wishing to enter higher education.

Jews were also penalised with loss of employment for 'inappropriate' behaviour. In the aftermath of the welcome given by Soviet Jews to the Israeli delegation to the Moscow International Youth Festival of 1957 hundreds of Jews were declared guilty of 'fraternisation' and dismissed from their jobs. A number of them were also arrested and exiled to Siberia.

At the close of the 1950s, as part of a broader campaign against religion, the government launched an offensive against Judaism in which anti-semitism was never very far below the surface.

The tenets of Judaism were condemned as particularly immoral. Backed up by the odd quote from Marx ("Money is the jealous God of Israel, beside which no other God may stand...We recognise in Judaism a universal and contemporary anti-social element"), the government propaganda declared money to be the god of the Jewish faith. Judaism was accused of promoting the idea that Jews were the chosen people and of thereby encouraging Jews to hate other peoples. Judaism was also accused of encouraging allegiance to

"At the close of the 1950s, as part of a broader campaign against religion, the government launched an offensive against Judaism in which anti-semitism was never very far below the surface."

another state (Israel) and to a reactionary pro-imperialist movement (Zionism).

The Jewish clergy was accused of a variety of immoralities: improper conduct, robbing the people, drunkenness, and living in luxury at the expense of their congregations. Synagogues were closed down or forced to close down 'voluntarily'. In 1917 there had been about 5,000 synagogues throughout the country. By 1941 the number had fallen to 1,011 and to 450 by 1956. The anti-Judaic campaign took a further toll: there were 92 synagogues in 1964, and 60 in 1965. In the 'Jewish national homeland' of Birobidzhan there were no officially registered synagogues at all. (There were, in any case, very few Jews living in their 'national homeland': in 1959, over thirty years after the launch of the project, Jews constituted just 8.8% of the population in Birobidzhan.)

There were also reports of synagogues being burnt down: in Malakhovka in 1959 and in Tskhakaya in 1962. Money collected by Soviet Jews to build new synagogues was confiscated by the authorities. Soviet Jews who formed 'dvadtsatki' ('councils of twenty' — Soviet law nominally recognised the right of members of religious groups to form 'dvadtsatki' to petition for the opening of places of worship) and petitioned for the opening of synagogues were victimised by the authorities.

Kosher butchery and the baking of matzos were made increasingly difficult by the authorities. In 1962 the baking of matzos was forbidden throughout the Soviet Union and matzos was denounced as "counter-revolutionary bread". In 1963 three Jews were sentenced to prison for the illegal baking of matzos.

Packets of matzos smuggled into the Soviet Union were described as an "ideological diversion". Only after protests from abroad was the ban on the baking of matzos lifted in some towns in the Soviet Union in 1964/5.

The 'anti-Judaism' campaign flowed over into an 'anti-Zionist' campaign of an equally anti-semitic nature, albeit on a more modest scale than the 'anti-Zionist' campaign which erupted at the close of the '60s. "Judaic sermons are the sermons of bourgeois Zionists," claimed a Kirovograd radio broadcast in 1959, whilst the Kubishev local newspaper argued: "The character of the Judaic religion serves the political aims of Zionism and the awakening of a nationalist frame of mind."

In 1963 the pamphlet, *In the Name of the Lord Jehovah* was published, a sustained attack on "Jewish bourgeois nationalism, Zionism, the spiritual source of which is Judaism". In the same year "Communist Moldavia" attacked Zionism as a "bourgeois-nationalist movement which arose at the end of the nineteenth century; this reactionary trend is rooted in the idea of the exclusiveness of the Jewish people". In 1964 Mayatsky's *Contemporary Judaism and Zionism* was published, giving an initial airing to many of the themes to be taken up in the post-1967 'anti-Zionist' campaign.

The previous year had seen the publication of Yofim Kichko's - *Judaism Without Embellishment*, following in the footsteps of Kichko's dissertation thesis 'Modern Zionism and its Reactionary Role' and his earlier work of 1957, *Judaism: Origin and Essence*. The extreme anti-semitic nature of Kichko's latest work, including anti-semitic cartoons and allegations of collaboration between Zionism and Nazism, provoked a wave of protest in the West which resulted in a vague and half-hearted criticism of the book in the pages of *Pravda* and *Izvestia*:

"The author of the booklet and the author of the preface meant to unmask the reactionary nature of Judaism; in so doing they misinterpreted certain questions as to the origins and development of this religion. A number of erroneous statements and illustrations in the booklet may have hurt the feelings of believers and be interpreted as anti-semitic. But it is well-known that there is not and cannot be such a problem in our country...The erroneous statements...only invite anti-Soviet insinuations. That is why Soviet public opinion objected to the erroneous passages in Y Kichko's book."

The 'anti-Judaic' and 'anti-Zionist' campaigning occurred at the same time as the KGB campaign of the early 1960s against economic crimes. This too possessed a clear anti-semitic content. Some 50% of the crimes reported in the press in which the death penalty was imposed involved Jews. In Ukraine, where Jews numbered 2% of the population, 90% of those executed were Jews, and in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (where Jews were 0.2% of the population), 64% of those executed were Jews. In its coverage of the trials the press gave the Hebrew form of the patronymic names of the defendants, as well as detailing references to the alleged involvement of synagogues and rabbis, thus creating an anti-semitic amalgam of fraud, embezzlement, Judaism and Jews.

In August of 1967 the simultaneous publication of the article 'What is Zionism?' in the major Soviet provincial newspapers signalled the start of a major 'anti-Zionist' campaign which was to continue throughout the 1970s into the eighties. The article portrayed

Zionism as an international organisation, often operating behind the scenes, which disposed of vast amounts of money. This "Zionist corporation" had deeply penetrated into politics, finance, religion, and trade with the aim, albeit "well camouflaged", of augmenting its already vast wealth.

At the same time Kichko, the former author of "erroneous statements", launched the anti-Zionist campaign in Ukraine with his article 'Zionism — Tool of Imperialism'. The following year Kichko was awarded a Diploma of Honour by the Ukrainian Supreme Soviet for services rendered in the dissemination of "atheist propaganda".

In 1969 Yuri Ivanov's *Beware: Zionism!* was published, with an initial print-run of 70,000 copies. Second and third editions of the booklet were published in 1970 and 1971, with print-runs of 200,000 and 100,000 respectively. Ivanov portrayed Zionism in terms which were to be the stock-in-trade of the 'anti-Zionist' campaign in subsequent years: Zionism as the ideology of the Jewish bourgeoisie, Zionism as the ideology of Jewish chauvinism, Zionism as a variant of fascism, Zionism as a world-wide network conspiring against the 'socialist camp' and other 'progressive forces' on behalf of American imperialism.

With the appearance of Ivanov's booklet the 'anti-Zionist' campaign

"The state of Israel, the creation of which had been welcomed by the Soviet government in the late 'forties, was portrayed in very different terms by the anti-Zionist campaign."

was well underway. In the following years there was a flood of similar 'anti-Zionist' publications by writers such as Bolshakov (*Zionism in the Service of Anti-Communism*), Davydov (*We Pass Judgement on Zionism*), Mints (*Zionism: Theory and Practice*), Skurlatov (*Zionism and Apartheid*), Brodsky (*Zionism — A Tool of Reaction*), Kiselev (*International Zionism: History and Politics*), Mitin (*The Ideology and Practice of International Zionism*), and Soifer (*The Collapse of Zionist Theories*).

The essence of the 'anti-Zionist' campaign was that it portrayed 'Zionism' and 'Zionists' in terms of traditional anti-semitism. 'Zionists' were cunning, scheming plotters. They disposed of vast amounts of wealth, acquired through being parasitic upon the labour of others. They controlled the media, the secret services, and institutions of government throughout the world. Just as the Russian Slavophiles of the nineteenth century had believed in the existence of a "World Kabal" based in Paris which directed the activities of Jews in different countries in pursuit of world domination, just as the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" purported to be an exposé of Jews plotting to rule the world, so too the 'anti-Zionist' campaign portrayed Zionism as an international conspiracy in pursuit of world power.

The emergence of Zionism was not seen as a response to anti-semitism but as part of the plans of "Jewish capital" to expand its influence and power: "In the West, Jewish capital became such a powerful force that it was able to participate independently in the colonial division of the world." Hence the emergence of Zionism at the turn of the century: "The

emergence of political Zionism was a consequence of the struggle of the Jewish bourgeoisie to extend its positions in the economy of the most powerful capitalist states of that time and in the economic system of world capitalism as a whole."

According to the 'anti-Zionist' campaign, the existence of anti-semitism is welcomed and exploited by the Zionists: "Zionists have used anti-semitism in the political practice of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which emerged as a competitor of the Christian bourgeoisie in the Christian monarchies of the Hapsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Romanovs, or in republics which had adopted the principles of freedom of conscience. Any manifestation against the industrialist-Jew, the banker-Jew, the merchant or the middle-man, was characterised as 'anti-semitism'; protests of workers and clerics against the most difficult conditions of employment with boss-Jews were also included under the heading of 'anti-semitic' manifestations."

Hence the Zionists had repeatedly encouraged and financed anti-semitic organisations: in America in the 1930s ("In 1930 there emerged more than a hundred organisations, the time and resources of which were spent on propaganda of hatred towards Jews. It is important to note that many of them were covertly financed by secret Zionist funds."), in the Arab countries in the late forties and early fifties ("In the course of several years Zionists stoked up and provoked in every way possible 'useful anti-semitic activities' which helped promote the mass exist of hundreds of thousands of believers in Judaism from Arabic countries."), and in Western Europe in the 1970s ("Anti-semitic organisations have been set up with the resources dispensed from the secret funds of Zionism.")

Zionist encouragement of anti-semitism even went so far, claimed the 'anti-Zionist' campaign, that the Zionists financed Nazi Germany: "Zionist leaders over the seas made friendly agreements with Hitler and consented to the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Jews...At a time when the ovens of Buchenwald and other death camps were burning hundreds of thousands of Jews, American millionaires and multi-millionaires of Jewish nationality traded with fascist Germany, via 'neutral' middlemen, supplying it with weapons and credit."

Zionist collaboration with the Nazis even went so far as to espionage on their behalf: "In many cases the Zionists served as a 'fifth column' for Hitler, their international network was used in pursuit of the goal of establishing the world domination of Nazi Germany." In a number of countries they presented themselves as victims of German fascism and "introduced themselves into the state and economic apparatus of the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition and betrayed secret information to the Abwehr."

The state of Israel, the creation of which had been welcomed by the Soviet government in the late forties, was portrayed in very different terms by the 'anti-Zionist' campaign: "The economy of Israel is in reality controlled by the international Zionist corporation, by Zionist capital of the USA, England, France, and a series of other countries." Thus, "the nationalistic ruling stratum of Israel is in fact part of the international Zionist concern, based in New York and controlled from the United States."

Zionist plotters were held responsible by the 'anti-Zionist' campaign for stirring up unrest in the coun-



tries of the 'socialist camp': "The role allotted to Zionism in the strategy of imperialism is to create within the different socialist countries — by means of Zionist-minded elements, with the assistance of all possible revisionist and nationalist conceptions — centres of opposition to the popular order, with the goal of its liquidation by way of quiet counter-revolution."

The Hungarian Revolution of

1956 was portrayed as the work of Zionism: "In 1956 the American Zionist organisation 'United Jewish Appeal' created a special and extremely large fund for supporting the forces of reaction in Hungary, and prepared there its agency for the organisation of the overthrow of people's power." Zionists were held to have played a similar role in Poland a few years later: "Zionists active in Poland collected over a million dollars in support of

counter-revolutionary forces and attempted to influence predominantly young students, inciting them to struggle against the nation."

Zionists were likewise held responsible for the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia: "With the connivance of Dubcek the Zionists obtained control over the sources of information." Zionists "succeeded in deeply penetrating into televi-

sion, radio, and the press." Czechoslovak television became "a tribune and mouthpiece of Zionism... The slogan of 'democracy without communists' became the leitmotif of performances... of writers and journalists linked not only with Zionism but also with other counter-revolutionary forces."

But the main target of the Zionists, warned the 'anti-Zionist'

campaign, was the Soviet Union itself: "The main direction of the struggle of international Zionism against the revolutionary forces of the world is the struggle against the USSR." It must not be forgotten, stressed the campaign, that "the main thrust of Zionism is the struggle against the USSR, against its Leninist foreign and domestic policies, against Marxist-Leninist ideology and Soviet culture."

Zionism was portrayed as all-powerful in the United States. Its spheres of influence included the CIA ("The interests of the powerful Jewish bourgeoisie and other groupings of finance capital are interlaced in the secret service."), the primaries for the selection of Presidential candidates ("The participation of Zionist capital in the financing of primary campaigns and in working out the platforms in the primaries of the candidates for President — this phenomenon is characteristic of political life in the USA."), and the Mafia ("The leadership of the Mafia [at the time of Al Capone] was closely linked with Zionists and international Zionism, and some Zionists... became its leaders.")

But it was not in the United States along that Zionism wielded such influence: "It is not exaggeration to say that the system of organisations of international Zionism (which extends throughout the entire world and, at the same time, is strongly centralised) united with a powerful financial-economic base in the shape of the monopoly bourgeoisie of Jewish origin... is the main source of strength and activity of Zionist influence on the politics of a series of leading capitalist states."

It seemed, therefore, that Zionism had achieved the goal of Jewish world domination, as envisaged in the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion": "Too much bears witness to the fact that in the sum of the various factors which determine the course of action of the ruling circles of the leading capitalist states, the cosmopolitan Jewish bourgeoisie and Zionist capital (closely linked with Judaic clericalism) emerge as significantly more organised, more ambitious, and more powerful than any other influential monopoly (family, banking, regional) groups and groupings of the financial oligarchy."

This 'anti-Zionist' campaign, in which 'Zionist', like 'rootless cosmopolitan' in the forties, was merely another word for 'Jew', continued throughout the 1970s and was given a fresh burst of life in the early 1980s in the face of campaigning by Soviet Jews to defend their religion and culture and to win the right to emigrate.

More 'anti-Zionist' articles appeared in the Soviet press, and another wave of 'anti-Zionist' books were published, including books such as *The Poison of Zionism* which were specifically intended for use in schools. More closures of synagogues were carried out, leaving Moscow with one synagogue for half a million Jewish inhabitants. And the number of Soviet Jews allowed to emigrate slumped from over 51,000 in 1979 to 1,315 in 1983, whilst Soviet Jews who campaigned for the rights of Jews in the Soviet Union received lengthy prison sentences: Joseph Begun (7 years in prison, 5 years internal exile); Alexander Paritsky (3 years); Yuri Tarnopolsky (3 years); and Feliks Kochubievsky (2½ years).

In spite of all this, the "Anti-Zionist Committee" set up in Moscow in 1983 to press home the 'anti-Zionist' campaign insisted that the Soviet campaign against Zionism was nothing to do with anti-semitism, and that there was no such thing in the Soviet Union as a "Jewish question".

The curse of hindsight

CINEMA

Belinda Weaver
reviews 'Reunion'

Reunion' is a puzzling film, full of gaping holes. Director Jerry Schatzberg never gets the tone quite right. It's uneven. We can generally tell what each individual scene is meant to convey, but they never add up to a whole. The film is full of loose ends.

The scriptwriter Harold Pinter may be the problem. Pinter's skill lies in stripping the fat from other people's work, paring it down to the bone. But in 'Reunion', he has removed the connective tissue too. We can't tell what the director was striving for, what message, if any, he wanted to get across.

Most big films these days signal everything; our responses to each scene are orchestrated. 'Reunion' errs the other way; too much is left open and ambiguous. It's frustrating, amorphous.

It's a flashback movie, beginning with the elderly Hans Strauss (Jason Robards) in New York, planning a trip to Stuttgart. These early scenes don't 'place' Hans for us. We don't know why he's going, or what the trip means for him. Robards seems exhausted, enervated, jet lagged before he's even left the ground. Once he's in Stuttgart he wanders around, accosting people in English, and we still don't know what he's doing.

Just in time, we flash back to his youth, when Hans, then a 16 year old Jewish schoolboy, meets the aristocratic Konradin von Lohenburg and they become friends. Konradin is still and rather prissy, but the budding friendship is nicely done. The two edge towards each other tentatively, but we can see what the friendship means to each. Luckily for the movie, we can relate to these two, the way we can't to Robards.

The year is 1932, Hitler is soon to come to power, and attacks on Jews are becoming more common. Hans first feels uneasy about it, then frightened. Konradin sticks by his friend, despite considerable pressure from peers and parents.

But things will soon change. Hans's father Jakob is a doctor who fought in the first world war. He has assimilated as best he can; he sees himself as German. When a Zionist comes to his home to ring alarm bells Jakob throws him out. He puts his faith in the Germany of Goethe, Schiller and Beethoven.

But the film belittles Jakob by making him ridiculous. This is partly the curse of hindsight; any Jewish character of 1932 who denies the Nazis are a problem is going to seem like a fool to us. However tragic his fate, Jakob is not a real character for us; he's a plot device to underline how the Jews were betrayed by the very German nationalism many of them professed.

Different versions of that nationalism are on show here. There is Jakob's idealistic (and misguided) one. Hans and Konradin subscribe to a pastoral nationalism, following in the steps of the German romantic poets who celebrated the beauty of nature and the German countryside. Konradin later switches to the nationalism of his aristocratic class, who follow Hitler in the hope that he will make Germany great again, that he will exact revenge for the humiliations at Versailles. Konradin regrets what will happen to the Jews, but his belief in Hitler is not shaken by it. The later Hans, played by Robards, will have no truck with anything German. What his father saw as all good, he sees as all bad.

What the film lacks is any real

criticism of these differing nationalisms or any perspective on how Hitler could have been opposed; the tone is fatalistic. There is one brief view of a strike, but otherwise the rise of the Nazis is seen as inevitable. In Schatzberg's view the Jews, as represented by Jakob, bury their heads in the sands; the non-Jews, like Konradin, can only gain from a restoration of German supremacy.

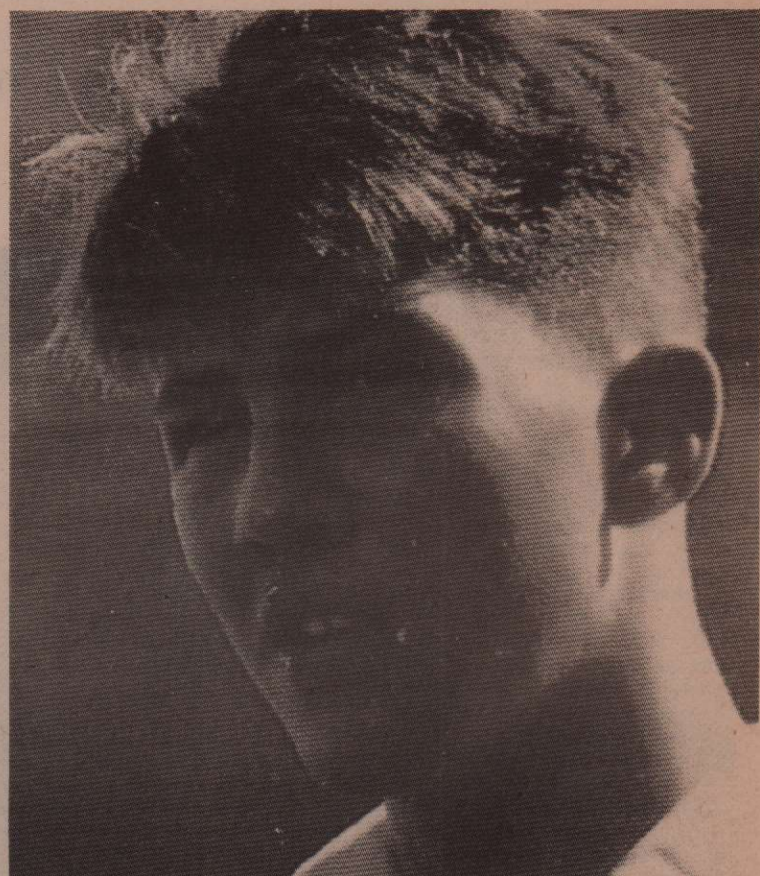
Presumably, the film is meant to show the bewilderment and confusion the boys felt during that troubled time, when they could not foresee the results of Hitler's rise. But the film is made with hindsight; has the director nothing to say? Is he, almost sixty years later, still as muddled as the boys were then? It's as if nothing has been learned from the Holocaust or from the war. To Schatzberg, Nazism is like a malignant plague; nothing could have stopped its outbreak.

By the time we realise that Hans

is in Germany to find out what happened to Konradin, we're alert for a big revelation. Did Konradin become a Nazi? If not, did he survive the war? What will Hans find?

But even here, Schatzberg and Pinter fumble the ball. The revelation begs more questions than it answers, and we're cheated of Robards' reaction. Worse, we're still in the dark about why Hans is even trying to find out. Did a vital reel go missing somewhere, or are Pinter and Schatzberg simply incompetent?

The film does have good moments, mostly when the young Hans and Konradin are on the screen. The period detail is nicely done; the film strives to capture the feel of pre-Nazi German life. But this isn't enough to outweigh the very great omissions of plot, motivation and denouement. Schatzberg and Pinter should go back to film school, and take a course in history on the side.



The young Hans Strauss

Manuel Puig

By Edward Ellis

Manuel Puig, the Argentine novelist, died last week at the age of 57, from complications following a gall-bladder operation.

He was best known for his book 'Kiss of the Spider Woman', which was made into an award-winning film by Hector Babenco.

Puig wrote powerfully political books. In 'Eternal Curse on the Reader of These Pages', an American hospital orderly assigned to wheel an old Argentinian around the streets of New York discovers that his charge had been an imprisoned militant, who was so badly tortured that he has forgotten everything about his life. But he has

notebooks, in code, which tell his story. Decoded they begin: "Eternal curse on the reader of these pages," the old man's malediction to the prison authorities.

Puig was renowned for the role that mass popular culture played in his work. In 'Betrayed by Rita Hayworth', the men and women of a South American town dream of film stars to alleviate the tedium of their lives. 'Heartbreak Tango' uses popular Latin American songs. For Puig, this culture had something of the quality of religion for Marx: an expression of alienation and the product of mind-numbing oppression, but nevertheless an avenue of escape.

In 'Kiss of the Spider Woman', Puig combined both these themes, popular culture and political struggle, in a story of extraordinary beauty and power. Two men are locked together in a prison cell. One is a revolutionary militant, guiltily

dreaming of the bourgeois woman he once loved. The other is a homosexual, arrested for "corrupting a minor", whose life revolves around the desperate search for love and the tacky old films he has seen.

To pass the time, he tells the stories of the films. His grim cell-mate, despite himself, becomes fascinated, both by the stories and by the man, and gradually a sort of sexual and emotional relationship develops between the two men.

Both the story and the method of telling it are wonderfully simple. (In a device he often employed, Puig has the whole book in dialogue, with no narrative — except for footnotes discussing psychological theories of homosexuality.)

The film, as is so often the case, failed to capture the book's power, and in one important respect missed the point of it.

Puig belongs stylistically to the

later generation of Latin American writers. Marquez et al draw on traditional culture, on the pre-colombian element in Latin America. In Puig's work, no one ascends to heaven wrapped in freshly washed sheets or falls victim to plagues of silence or looks like a mermaid. It is a more realistic style, the imagery coming from Hollywood or other twentieth century sources. Gerald Martin, in his important study of Latin American fiction, 'Journeys Through the Labyrinth', asks, "Who, in Britain or the United States, has written such radical, subversive, or deconstructive texts" as Puig's?

He was forced to leave Argentina because of his left-wing views. His books were banned, both by Peron in the early seventies, and by the generals later, usually on charges of immorality. He lived in Brazil and the United States, and finally in Mexico.

Vandals at the museum

LES HEARN'S SCIENCE COLUMN

A recent letter to *New Scientist* from a scientist in Fiji explains the importance of palaeobotany, the study of prehistoric plants and their environment, to modern society.

The author, curator of the South Pacific Regional Herbarium, writes that palaeobotany provides information about different climates and patterns of vegetation in the past. Remains of long-dead plants may provide a local perspective on the effects of the wider climatic changes known to have occurred as carbon dioxide levels and temperatures varied.

Palaeobotanical studies are likely to be crucial as scientists try to detect and predict the effects of increased CO₂ levels now. This conclusion seems uncontroversial, so why write the letter?

It was, in fact, a protest against recently leaked plans to slash research into palaeobotany at the Natural History Museum (or British Museum (Natural History)). And

palaeobotany is not the only area of research to be chopped at the BM(NH), at present "the premier institution for research on the natural world". According to the museum's five-year "corporate plan", 20% of the research scientists employed there, up to 100, are to have their jobs cut. These include, for example, ten palaeontologists, seven researchers each from botany and zoology, and nine in mineralogy. Entomology, the study of insects, will lose 17.

For over 100 years the BM(NH) has held a leading place in the natural history of living and extinct plants and animals. Its job of describing and classifying living things, the science of taxonomy, is described by a German critic of the cutbacks as "basis for all biology". He points out that if we don't identify the organisms that exist, we won't know the full extent of the damage being done to the diversity of life on earth.

A Polish woman, now a professor of palaeontology in Norway, sees taxonomy as the basis of genetics, biochemistry and other biological disciplines. And a letter of protest from the curator emeritus at the American Museum of Natural History states that the cuts in staff and research, in addition to past cuts (because this is not the first time the BM(NH) has felt the unwelcome attentions of the Tories)

will "reduce the museum to an institution of minor rank" in contrast to its past status as "the primary museum of its kind in the British Commonwealth".

The corporate plan has unleashed a storm of scientific protest, in the form of letters like the above, petitions, editorials in the science press, and even a protest strike by museum scientists, action not seen since the museum introduced entry charges under pressure from the government (they cost about as much to administer as they raise and have led to massive drops in numbers of visitors).

Readers will realise that an institution of world renown would not voluntarily mutilate itself and, of course, the corporate plan is a direct result of a famine of funds. The museum's grant-in-aid from the government, some £25 million per annum, is to rise by only 4% per annum over the next five years. With inflation at about 10% and unlikely to fall significantly, this is equivalent to a sizeable cut each year.

Museum director Neil Chalmers estimates a shortfall of £4.4 million over the five years, assuming that wage costs, nearly three-quarters of expenditure, rise by only 6% per annum. This shortfall assumes that some money will be raised from private sources. Chalmers draws the conclusion that, rather than protest

at the size of the grant and even resign, he should implement the cuts in the research programme that have now been publicised.

The only alternative he sees is to raise more private sponsorships but, as he points out, the £4 million so far raised is earmarked for exhibitions rather than research. Companies want "tangible evidence" of their generosity, ie. they want their names to be seen in the best light by millions of visitors, rather than by the thousands who read scientific journals and books.

BM(NH) exhibitions have been successful over the past few years but some have been criticised as aiming for popularity rather than scientific value. Whether true of past exhibitions, the news of the visit of 16 representatives of museum management to Disneyland does not inspire confidence for the future.

Chalmers talks of restricting the museum's research to areas where the science and its human applications are "most important". But any scientist will tell you that it is impossible to know in advance if a particular line of research will be important. As *New Scientist* says, the decline in interest in taxonomy, of which the BM(NH) cuts are a symptom, "can only diminish our increasingly important ability to understand the natural environment".

Instead of poll tax

POLL TAX

The Labour Party has finally come up with its alternative to the poll tax: a revamped system of rates, with more generous rebates and more frequent revaluations.

Many Labour activists will be so relieved about the Labour leaders coming up with any alternative at all that they will not be much disposed to question the details. Rates would certainly be a better system than poll tax. And before the National Executive on 25 July, Dennis Skinner pointed out that he had initially been a single voice on the Executive calling for a return to rates.

But there are at least three problems. The return to rates will take at least two years. In the meantime a Labour government would continue to implement the poll tax, and

presumably to force councils to prosecute non-payers.

Even after the return to rates, Labour has made no commitment on restoring the billions of pounds of central government grant taken away by the Tories (or transferring from central government to local government tax powers to make up the difference). Labour councils could well end up faced once again with the choice between continued cuts and high rate rises.

Finally, even if rates are better than Poll Tax, they have disadvantages. They are, effectively, a tax on housing, that is, on a necessity, and so they generally take a bigger slice of income from poor people than from rich people.

Rebates can reduce that problem, but they can't abolish it. Like any other means-tested benefit, they tend to miss out people who are less apt at dealing with bureaucracy.

Why not give local councils a choice on which taxes they use — rates, local income tax, or a "poll tax" levied on employers or (for the unemployed and retired) on central government?

Non-payers under attack

The right-wing on Islington Labour Group have voted by a narrow margin to discipline councillors who are refusing to pay the poll tax.

At present, seven Labour councillors have not paid their poll tax — including the Mayor, Maureen Leigh.

The form disciplinary action will take is to withdraw attendance allowance for the non-paying councillors. However, this is completely illegal and will not be able to be implemented. The point is — as Mark Hill, one of the non-paying councillors, said — the right-wing were testing the water.

This battle is important, in view of the fact that Islington is one of the poll tax-capped councils. Over the summer, cuts totalling up to £18 million will be made. Most of the cuts are likely to come from the education budget. In addition to this, Islington's Chief Executives are drawing up plans for benefit arretments and warrant sales, although this is against Labour's manifesto commitments.



With cuts of this magnitude, it is very likely that compulsory redundancies will follow. A campaign in the local Labour Parties and council unions must be mounted to oppose the cuts, and support the non-paying councillors.

Behaving like Madame Ceausescu

WHETTON'S WEEK A miner's diary

Some while ago two persons attempted to join the Labour Party, one in Bassetlaw and one in Mansfield, and were rejected by the CLPs because they did not comply with the rule book.

They were not members of a bona fide trade union recognised by the TUC. They approached the NEC directly, and the NEC accepted them into the Labour Party.

I don't have to spell it out that these two were members of the UDM. They were not rejected because they were members of the UDM. They were rejected because they would not comply with the rulebook.

But that alongside the fact that 14 Labour councillors in Liverpool have been suspended, and that SO has been banned!

So genuine socialists who have fought year after year for the return of a Labour government — who have been out on the street recruiting, campaigning, urging people to vote for the return of a Labour government — are expelled, and people who have absolutely no interest in the furtherance of socialism are taken in.

Joyce Gould is behaving like Madame Ceausescu, and it's about time that we said enough is enough.

The latest on the smear campaign against Scargill is that Maxwell has been approached by Roy Lynk over buying power stations.

The whole thing stinks. It is rotten from top to bottom.

It's a continuation of the 1984/85 strike. The authorities whose object was to destroy the NUM failed to do so in '84/'85, and the fight goes on.

We will fight to make sure that Scargill, Heathfield and the NUM remain collectively active for socialism in this country.

Paul Whetton is a member of Manton NUM, South Yorkshire



On 26 July 1990 there was the court case for the murder of 11-year old Tasleem Akhtar in Birmingham. The court found a 16 year old boy (Lee Costello) guilty of murder and ordered him to be detained at her majesty's pleasure.

Although the judge said the motive for the

murder was sexual and not racial, it is strongly believed by family and supporters that it was racially motivated. During the hearing the family and supporters held a picket outside the court. Photo: Mark Salman

Greenwich strikers still solid

The Greenwich housing strike over the poll tax is continuing due to Greenwich Council's refusal to settle. The Council have prolonged the 14 week dispute by insisting on changes in job descriptions. They are demanding that the Cashier and Housing Assistants job descriptions be changed to include a large bulk of the Advisors work.

Management is also threatening disciplinary action against 15 unnamed strikers. In addition they want to transfer a number of housing managers to different offices.

These conditions placed by management on a return to work is tantamount to a lock-out.

The Council lost the dispute when the London-wide disputes committee ruled in favour of NALGO's regrading claim

for cashiers involved in poll tax collection. The successful regrading claim translates into a pay increase of up to £1,000 for the cashiers.

Following that ruling the Council have now thrown up obstacles to a final settlement. Management are even refusing to meet NALGO negotiators.

The 160 strikers will meet on Wednesday afternoon. The strikers are solid and determined that the Council's lockout will fail.

IN BRIEF

The battle lines are being drawn in the **North Sea oil industry.**

The fight for union recognition and decent health and safety provision is gathering steam. A work-to-contract is in force on about 40 rigs, and the rank and file Oil Industries Liaison Committee is preparing for unofficial selective strikes in the near future.

A mass meeting at **GEC-Ferranti** Edinburgh voted overwhelmingly to ballot for strike action in response to the threat of 550 compulsory redundancies.

According to Alex Ferry of the **Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions** over 30,000 manual workers at nearly 600 plants have now won a cut in the working week to 37 hours or less.

Action by workers at **GPT**

Coventry has been suspended. The one-day strikes were against compulsory redundancy and enhanced payments for volunteers.

Union leaders representing **building craft workers** in local councils are recommending rejection of a 9.38% pay offer.

They have also made vague noises about industrial action.

The **National Rivers Authority** has conceded the first 37 hour week to manual workers in the public sector since the engineers began their shorter hours campaign in the private sector last year.

Onslaught on the docks

Just over one year after the end of the dockers' strike, many of the predictions made by rank and file dockers about the abolition of the Dock Labour Scheme have come true.

Job losses: Half the registered dock labour force has gone. Some 4,800 dockers' jobs. Avonmouth docks — run by a Labour council — has just announced plans to sack 200 out of 350 dockers.

Wage cuts: At Hartlepool dockers have faced a pay cut of £5,000 per year.

Casual labour: Grimsby docks take on casual labour, paying the workers just £2.50 per hour.

Attacks on non-scheme dockers: This year the traditionally highly-paid Felixstowe dockers were offered just 3.5 per cent on pay this year. A cut.

Attacks on union organisation: In August last year management at Tilbury imposed individual contracts of employment and team briefings on strikers returning to work. They refuse to negotiate with, or recognise, the union. Many activists were sacked.

Despite these setbacks, dockers continue to fight back.

SWP USA finalises split

With a barely audible whimper, the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International", a grouping which for a while, in the late 1970s, could claim to embrace the great majority of the world's would-be Trotskyists, has split apart.

The Socialist Workers Party of the USA, formerly one of the main pillars of the movement, has formally cut off links with the USFI.

From the 1930s to the 1960s, the SWP was one of the most solid

Trotskyist groups in the world. after World War 2 the SWP, like other groups who held the notion that the Stalinist systems were "degenerated and deformed workers' states", suffered political disorientation.

After 1979, however, it degenerated very fast from a confused and disoriented neo-Trotskyist group into a bizarre neo-Stalinist sect. Its press glorifies Cuba in a way which the mainstream Stalinist press used to do for the USSR, but has not dared for many years now. Its recent conference sent its main international message of greetings to Kim Il Sung's "Workers' Party of

Korea".

Organisationally, the SWP has dwindled to maybe 500 members, and its co-thinker groups in other countries, including Britain, are very tiny indeed.

The rest of the USFI, the LCR in France and co-thinkers in Britain like 'Socialist Outlook' and 'Socialist Action' followed the SWP some of the way after 1979, but soon balked. Since 1985, at the latest, there has been a 'cold split'. The USFI could not summon up the will or spirit to launch a political offensive against the SWP, but instead remained formally allied with these neo-Stalinists until the SWP chose to dismiss them.

SOCIALIST

ORGANISER

No charges, No hearing, No justice

By Sean Matgamna

The Labour Party purports to believe in justice and in the "due process" of law, and advocates a Freedom of Information Act, to give citizens access to files kept on them by the state.

Yet the Labour Party Executive has just banned *Socialist Organiser*, a Labour Party newspaper in the 12th year of its existence, without presenting us with charges, without giving us a hearing, and without giving us the right even to a written comment on the charges and the "evidence".

The NEC acted against *SO* on the basis of secret documents, drawn up by Party officials and marked "confidential", whose very existence we were not supposed to know about. When the document circulated for the June NEC (which didn't reach *SO* on the agenda) was leaked to us, we published a commentary on the many inaccuracies and on the libellous and preposterous account of my history in it — for example branding me as

an ex-member of the IRA, chased out of Ireland as an informant!

So, a new, edited version of the document was produced for the July meeting of the NEC. There were still numerous inaccuracies and incoherencies, and they still had not managed to spell my name correctly, but the obvious libel had been cut and many of the wilder allegations in the June document about how *SO* supporters organise had been dropped.

By rewriting the document like that, its authors implicitly admitted that they could not substantiate it, and that the original proposal to ban *SO* had been grounded on a tissue of what was now admitted to be nonsense.

But that did not bother the NEC majority — not Neil Kinnock, nor Roy Hattersley, nor Bryan Gould, not anyone else. They proceeded to ban *Socialist Organiser* and thereby to set up its supporters for expulsion from the Labour Party. Only two NEC members, Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner, voted even to give *SO* a hearing.

Procedure remotely comparable by state or semi-state bodies would surely prompt Neil Kinnock to mount the pulpit dressed up as a libertarian. Why should things be different within the Labour Party? Only once before have I ex-

perienced a procedure like it: a quarter century ago in Gerry Healy's "Workers' Revolutionary Party" (then called the Socialist Labour League), when I was put on trial, before an audience of people brought along to be intimidated by the spectacle, without any specific charges, and, once the "leadership" had made his abusive indictment, without being allowed to speak in my own defence.

Practices like that, more or less grotesque, always go together with a one-faction party.

The Labour Party has banned *SO* to placate Frank Field MP and to intimidate the critical left in the Party. They decided to ban us for that "real reason", and what they say about us is the best "good reason" they can find or concoct.

That we are class struggle socialists in the Leninist-Trotskyist tradition is not disputed: that we organise as a narrow one-faction sect is.

Socialist Organiser has been the forum for the major debates that have taken place on the far left in the last decade, with all viewpoints represented and given equal treatment — on policy for local government, Ireland, the Middle East, anti-semitism and the left, the nature of the Stalinist states, etc. And this is the paper Neil Kinnock chooses to ban for our alleged narrow sectarianisms!

The Labour Party does not even notice that what it says of us is internally incoherent. To minimise the importance of the ban on the paper they say (ridiculously) that *SO* is financed and circulated by "less than a hundred" supporters — and they say that we have an editorial board of 34 people (that is, a leading committee of one third, or maybe well over one third, of our number) — and that we are a nar-

Oppose these anti-semitic attacks!

By Richard Love

Last Sunday night, neo-Nazi thugs scaled the wall of a Jewish cemetery on Rochdale Road, Charlestown



No justice in Kinnock's court

near Manchester, and desecrated 72 graves, daubing them with swastikas and Nazi slogans.

The Manchester Jewish community is horrified at this latest, and most serious, attack by fascists. A young Jewish man, looking at the desecrated grave of his father, said: "We're possibly going to have to end up with Jewish vigilante groups to stop it happening again."

Fear of a large-scale rise of fascism in Britain is now widespread in Manchester's Jewish community, which sees what is happening in Europe as harbinger of things to come in Britain.

The attack in Manchester follows a pattern of similar attacks in other parts of Britain. The most serious attacks have taken place in Leeds and Edmonton, where a total of £100,000 worth of damage was caused. These attacks are almost certainly part of an organised strategy aimed at whipping up anti-semitism in Britain, as in Eastern Europe. In order to fight against this we need an equally organised response, linking up all those sections of society threatened by fascists with the labour movement in a fight against those Nazi thugs.

As an immediate response, a rally has been organised for Sunday 5 August at the gates of the cemetery, starting at 11.00am. The rally appears to be organised by a small left group who have a hostile attitude to Zionism. With these sorts of attitudes it will be difficult to mobilise the Jewish community, and that is necessary if we are to have any impact. What is needed for future actions is a more broad-based campaign, with labour movement support, able to involve people who oppose anti-semitism whatever their attitude to Zionism.

Greetings from Soviet socialists

Iwould like to thank you for several issues of your newspaper which we have received and which is very helpful for us in our work and in enlarging our world outlook.

Unfortunately we cannot reciprocate because we do not as yet have a regular newspaper.

At present our social-democratic organisation is in the process of formation and we are traversing a period of organisational and other difficulties, but we hope that our organisation will become a force to be reckoned with.

We hope that in the future we will establish and develop with our counterparts in the United Kingdom closer friendly contacts for the common cause of humane and democratic socialism.

Alexander N Gladky
Chairman,
Information Commission,
Minsk Social-Democratic
Organisation
USSR

Defend the right to socialist dissent!

Hands off Socialist Organiser!

Public meetings
Nottingham: Thursday 2 August, International Community Centre, Mansfield Rd. 8pm
Sheffield: Thursday 9 August, Sheffield Centre Against Unemployment, 73 West Street. 7.30pm
Manchester: Thursday 16

August, Town Hall, 7.30pm

North London: Sunday 12 August, Red Rose Club Main Hall, Seven Sisters Road, N4. 7.30pm
South London: Monday 13 August, Walworth Town Hall, Walworth Road (opposite Labour Party HQ). 7.30pm

National conference (provisionally) Saturday 1 September, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1

Sheffield against the witch-hunt

The left won a major victory at Sheffield Central CLP last week when we voted to condemn the NEC's decision to ban *Socialist Organiser*.

Sheffield Central is one of the

constituencies mentioned in the *Times*' article about the witch-hunt of *Socialist Organiser*.

At the Sheffield Labour Party Socialists launch meeting on Monday 30th, Gail Cameron, Mandy Moore and Reg Race spoke about the witch-hunt against *Socialist Organiser* and the prospects for the left in the Party.

The discussion focused around the need for a campaign for democracy in the Party to be married with linking outside struggles with the Party and drawing new people in to the Party.

Plans for an anti-witch-hunt campaign were discussed, and a lot of interest was shown in setting up a LPS local group.