

# A Socialist ACTION



Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

## Stand firm with the N.U.M.

'THERE IS NO way that this trade union is going to become a signatory to an agreement to close pits and axe jobs.' That was Arthur Scargill's declaration, rejecting any agreement which would involve the NUM in policing the NCB's attack on mining jobs and communities.

The unanimous vote of the NUM national delegate conference — to throw out the government-TUC proposals for pit butchery — is a magnificent tribute to the movement which has been born during the miners' strike. It is an inspiration to the entire labour movement.

The strength of support for the miners was demonstrated yet again in London on Sunday, when 80,000 marched to Trafalgar Square. The failure of the NCB's 'back to work' movement was clear again at the beginning of

this week.

Monday's return was significant, but less than the 8-10,000 the Board had expected. The NCB's claim, that nearly 50 percent of miners are back at work, is a lie. Twenty per cent of miners never joined the strike in the first place, and the clear majority of those who came out are still out.

Press and television claims aside, the strike is not collapsing. The reason for the return to work this week, yet again, is the treachery of the TUC.

The attempts by Willis and his supporters to negotiate away the NUM's position on pit closures stands in stark contrast to their complete failure to deliver congress policy of 'total support' for the miners. If Willis had shown even a bit of the energy in implementing congress policy that he's shown in negotiations with Thatcher and MacGregor, the strike would have

been over months ago.

But if the TUC are trying to isolate the miners, other groups of workers are finding themselves going into struggle at this time. Local government, teachers, local authority manual workers are all facing government attacks and a fight for wages.

The call to open the second front, alongside the miners, is *not* an idle one. There is a real possibility of inflicting a decisive defeat on a government whose support is visibly slipping away. It is the refusal of the TUC to wage a serious campaign to defend jobs and services which stands in the way.

As the economic policies of the government run into more and more serious trouble, nobody can be in any doubt that the TUC and Labour Party leaders will, in their majority, continue refusing to wage a real battle on any front. The answer to the Tory attacks

must be initiated by the left in the movement.

The next big action to support the miners must be Democracy Day on 6 March. This can be the occasion for a huge display of strength by the labour movement. The attempts by the TUC to keep the miners out of the demonstrations and actions on that day must be firmly rejected.

The unity of the movement in action is vital if the Tories are to be defeated. This means the miners must be at the centre of every action planned. Over the last week, the miners and their leadership have given a magnificent and heroic lead to the movement. They have mobilised thousands of activists across the country, in industrial solidarity action, in support committees, in demonstrations, and on picket lines.

As a fresh round of battles with the Tories opens, it is urgent that every step

is taken to *organise* that support. The militants and the members of the NUM must see that the TUC is not capable of isolating them.

The NUM should now start the fight for a national solidarity conference, which can answer the treachery of the TUC and organise support for the miners. Such a conference can also build for a massive Labour Party-TUC demonstration in support of the miners and to plan continuing the solidarity action.

Despite the new attack launched by the TUC, the miners are still continuing their battle. The NCB is not going to get a viable resumption of production even at pits where it has achieved some return to work.

The NUM has shown it is continuing to stand firm. The rest of the labour movement has to organise to deliver the support Willis refuses to give.

# SOCIALIST ACTION

## Attack on sexual rights

'GAY PLAGUE' hysteria is the latest, and sharpest, in a whole series of ideological assaults on sexual rights mounted by the establishment. Before AIDS, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, came the publication of the reactionary Warnock Report, the press attack on surrogate mum Kim Cotton, and Enoch Powell's recent bill to restrict experiments on foetuses.

These are part and parcel of a concerted effort to turn back the clock on advances won by women and gays during the 1960s and '70s, and to reassert the sanctity of the family. One headline after another has shouted the 'dangers' of gay sex, with scant regard for the facts.

AIDS is a new disease in the West. It was discovered among New York's gay community in 1980, and has since been identified in Australia, France, Belgium and Britain. Its origins have been traced to Central Africa where, in Zaire, there is currently a heterosexual epidemic. It's believed that gay men holidaying in Haiti brought it first to America and then to Europe.

Despite its Western origins, AIDS is no more a 'gay plague' than legionnaire's disease is a soldier's. AIDS is a virus transmitted in the bloodstream — which is why intravenous drug users sharing needles, and haemophiliacs transfused with clotting Factor-8 have also been identified as high-incidence AIDS sufferers.

Neither is the transmission of the virus a guarantee that the syndrome develops. In fact only 10 per cent or less people who contract the virus later develop AIDS. What is established is the high fatality risk — in the States, 8495 cases have so far been identified, over 4000 have died — and that almost no money is being put into research.

Medics say that the most effective way at present to combat the virus and the hysteria is better education. But the Health Education Council has spent an insignificant £500 sponsoring a Gay Switchboard conference on AIDS in 1982, and has only just published a short pamphlet.

Political reaction — in both senses of the word! — crosses the parliamentary benches. When health minister Kenneth Clarke announced he was considering quarantine, Labour's front bench spokesperson, Michael Meacher, was on his feet to demand immediate action.

Far from the public needing protection against the gay community, it is AIDS sufferers who are the victims — of a press hate-campaign, lack of medical expertise, and lack of political will to provide support and resources.

It is in the interest of the whole labour movement to protect the gay community from these attacks. Little is known, and even less is being done by the government or the medical establishment, to discover effective detection tests and treatments. Fifty people in Britain have already died, but the government has only allocated a pathetic £¼ million for research.

The strength of feeling whipped up against 'gay plague carriers' will be turned next against women, black people, Irish, and trade unionists.

The example of Manchester council is one to be followed. When threatened by a strike of town hall staff demanding separate toilet facilities for gays, the Labour council distributed a copy of the Health Education Council's pamphlet to every household in Manchester.

The equal opportunities committee issued a statement saying that AIDS: 'affects different groups and should not be used to attack the lifestyle and rights of gay men. The council will not allow panic about AIDS to deflect it from the aim of equal opportunities for gay people.' Right on Manchester council!

### WE'RE STILL MOVING!

THE NEXT issue, celebrating one year of the miners' strike will still be produced under difficult circumstances, and will retain the magazine format. Back to normal as soon as possible...



Police use violence in Whitehall to prevent miners' contingents on Sunday's demo reaching Trafalgar Square

THE MINERS' STRIKE is one of the longest and most bitter battles in the history of the British labour movement. Ten thousand five hundred and twenty miners have been arrested, 5000 miners have been injured on picket lines, four have died. To date 650 miners have been sacked for their actions against pit closures.

Consequently a large number of miners' families have not only had to endure the physical hardship of the strike, they have also found themselves, for the first time in their lives, in the dock. Now over 150 miners are behind bars. A large proportion of them will have also lost their jobs.

By Valerie Coultas

The crime that these miners have committed is to have fought for their jobs and communities and to have kept on fighting even when the TUC and other unions have failed to take on Margaret Thatcher and fight to defend jobs. The full repressive armoury of the state has been unleashed on the miners to punish them for their resistance, for their refusal to lie down.

The battle at Orgreave last summer was one of the most famous clashes on the picket line. But police in Yorkshire are not having things all their own way in convicting the hundreds of miners arrested after the riot police charged at pickets.

A recent trial of 10 miners, at Sheffield Crown Court from 21 January to 1 February, charged with unlawful assembly, failed to get one single conviction after 12 days of police evidence and 34 police witnesses.

# Cops, courts and miners

The prosecution attempted to prove that the miners at the front line of the push had adopted threatening poses.

It was the first time that the charge of unlawful assembly had been used — rather than threatening behaviour which carries a milder sentence.

It was obviously the case that this was a result of a policy decision high up.

Six hundred people have now been charged with unlawful assembly and riot. The prosecution failed in this instance for three main reasons.

Firstly, on the few occasions that the police did get their evidence to agree, it was at odds with the TV cameras.

Secondly, none of the arresting officers had written their own statements and Chief Superintendent Stark had set up a team of script writing detectives to prepare standardised accounts.

And thirdly, the public gallery was full each day. The South Yorkshire Defence Campaign assess that this put considerable pressure on the jury to acquit.

In the case of Terry

French of Kent NUM, on trial for allegedly assaulting a police officer when picketing at Wyvenhoe oil terminal, the sentencing was ruthless.

On a first trial the jury could not come to a decision and on a re-trial the judge gave a five year sentence!

In the Lancashire area, another militant pit, Bold, has already had 500 miners arrested on picket duty.

Two of their members are in Strangeways, one serving 40 days and the other serving 25 days.

Last Monday and Tuesday, in Bolton Crown Court, saw Dennis Pennington, the editor of *The Lancashire Miner* and a Socialist Action supporter, sent to prison for three months for allegedly causing criminal damage to a car on the Golbourne picket line in July last year.

Two other miners, Alan Cowley and John McGrath, who were charged separately with the same offence, were acquitted.

Again, as in the Orgreave case, four Stockport police gave contradictory evidence.

One said that a car had been turned on its top. The

other that it was turned on its side.

Alan had witnesses. Dennis had none. The police said that Dennis had his hands under the sill of the car which was overturned.

Dennis's defence was that the police had been the other side of the car and could not possibly have seen where his hands were. He had been at the front of the surge in the picket which had pushed the car over.

In fact Dennis had saved one of the policemen on the spot from having the car turned over on him.

Part of the prosecution's case against Dennis was that he was a 'ring-leader'.

The day after he was sent down his mother received a letter from the NCB, announcing his sacking 'for assaulting a scab'.

Obviously the NCB and the police in this instance had not got their act together.

But in general the police, the courts and the Coal Board are acting together to hand out the most vicious punishments possible to those miners who have been willing to

fight for their right to work.

By heavy policing tactics on the picket lines and in the pit villages they have tried to isolate and criminalise the miners in the eyes of the rest of the working class.

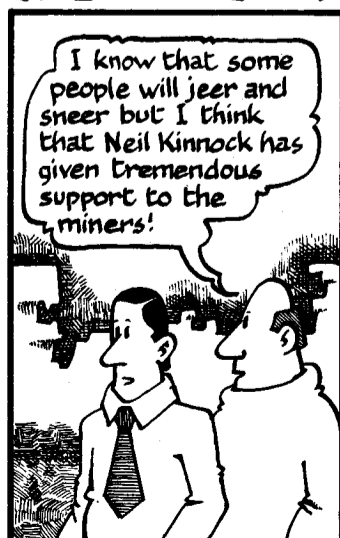
Speeches by Kinnock and Willis denouncing the violence of the miners and the police with no reference to who is the victim and who is the provocateur have aided this campaign.

It is therefore vital that the case of every miner in court and in prison becomes a public issue and that the widest sections of the labour and trade union movement fight to get them reinstated and to demand the release of all these victims of the Tory government's repression. Repression will be used against other trade unionists if Thatcher can get away with using it on the miners.

• Messages to Dennis Pennington should be sent c/o Bold NUM, Bold Miners' Welfare Institute, Fleet Lane, Parr, St Helens, Merseyside.

• The South Yorkshire Defence Campaign is organising a meeting on 2 March around the defence of miners in court and miners in prison at the Octagon Centre, Sheffield. For further details contact SYDC, c/o SCAU, 73 West St, Sheffield; or phone Worksop 771045 or Sheffield 701384.

## A PIECE of the ACTION



#88 2-85 **Cormac**

# 'A new dimension in British politics'

AT THE Liaison Committee for Defence of Trade Unions demonstration in support of the miners on Sunday, Arthur Scargill spelt out the negotiating position of the NUM and the impact of the miners' strike on British politics.

I WOULD have telephoned a message earlier today but it might have been bugged and that would have been terrible. Have you noticed how the security services are intent on surveillance and bugging operations as far as this union is concerned?

Well there's no problem. These people do it every day to us and I'll tell them what they want to hear.

There's no secret about our policy. Our policy is a simple one. We want the right of every worker to work, we want to stop unemployment, we want peace in the world, and we want a better system. That's not something that needs MI5 or surveillance. It's something that should be understood by any logically minded man or woman in Britain today.

We're now in the twelfth month of the most historic strike of this country. I say that this government at the end of 12 months do not want a settlement of this dispute.

The issue which brought miners out on strike was an announcement by the board to close four million tons of capacity, close 20 pits, and axe 20,000 jobs. That policy was only a forerunner of a wider and much more vicious one to close 70 pits and close down 70,000 jobs in the mining industry.

Over the past period we have seen time and again, efforts made to try and get negotiations — negotiations that could lead to resolving this dispute. For those people arguing that they want a resolution of this strike it can be resolved tonight if there's a willingness on the part of the government to get a settlement. But there is no way that this trade union is going to become a signatory to an agreement to close pits and axe jobs in the mining industry.

We've written to Peter Walker this weekend and asked him to confirm the statement of David Hunt in the House of Commons on 4 February that part of the NACODS and Coal Board settlement dealing with a modified colliery review procedure was on offer to the NUM. We were prepared to accept it last October and we're prepared to accept it today. If that were accepted by the government and the board there could be an immediate resumption of negotiations to deal with the question of the 6 March proposals and the threat to close five pits.

But you see this issue is far wider now. Far more political as far as this government is concerned than about a mere determination of the board to close down capacity.

You only have to read in *Labour Weekly* what Ned Smith, the recently retired industrial relations director of the board said. He said that the Coal Board and government changed their policy when they saw at the end of September last year that the TUC and its affiliates were not going to deliver the support that was promised at the TUC congress. That's the reason that we haven't had a determination to resolve this dispute.



Photo: MARK SALMON

I would say that there have been some magnificent examples of working class solidarity. The National Union of Seamen from day one have supported this dispute and have not moved one ton of coal. The NUR and ASLEF have not moved any coal and have supported the National Union of Mineworkers.

There have been many other magnificent examples of solidarity both in the physical and financial sense. SOGAT and many other unions have sent thousands and thousands of pounds to our people who are suffering in terms that are almost indescribable.

But time and time again I'm asked by people who work in Fleet Street, 'What can we do to help?' I'll tell you what you can do to help. You can tell those who operate the presses and operate the papers that if they continue to publish the kind of filth against our people that they've done over the last 12 months you'll stop the presses.

To those on ITV and BBC, for a change just try to get on television the case of the National Union of Mineworkers. Stop putting out daily

the Coal Board's propaganda and demand that the NUM have at least 15 minutes a week of their own time to put our case.

We're being villified day in and day out in the media, and I'll tell you why. They've suddenly found a trade union leadership that's not prepared to fudge the issue, that's not prepared to sell out or betray, and the only thing that they can resort to is a smear cam-

**We want physical industrial action to stop the movement of coal and coke**

— a campaign of vilification against the leadership of this union.

I regard their smears as a badge of honour because it means we're doing the job for which we were elected; to represent the interests of mine-workers, their wives and their families in the struggle to retain jobs and communities.

There are people who say can we

win this dispute? I believe that we've already succeeded in winning a magnificent victory because we've shown that working people are not prepared to lie down under this Thatcher government.

In this struggle we've seen the emergence of a whole new dimension in British politics. We've got literally hundreds of thousands of people involved both directly and indirectly in helping the National Union of Mineworkers. We've got support groups not only in this country but throughout the world. That new phenomenon, the emergence of the women's support groups, has inspired workers not only here but in every part of Europe.

What the establishment have not yet grasped is that we've created our own resistance movement comparable to those that operated throughout World War II. We've got the support groups throughout Europe channeling money back in order that our people do not starve.

But I want to make an appeal to working men and women in Britain. We want even more financial support. But colleagues we also want physical

industrial action to stop the movement of coal and coke. We want to see trade unionists put into operation the decisions of the congress last year of the TUC.

If trade unions in the power stations, if trade unions in transport, if trade unions in the whole range of areas in Britain today were to declare their willingness to undertake industrial action in line with congress policy it would bring the National Coal Board back to the negotiating table far quicker than any other facility operated by any other organisation.

The cost of this dispute has been horrendous as far as my union has been concerned. But it's been horrendous as far as the capitalist system is concerned. Six billion pounds it's cost them so far and £120 million pounds as a weekly ongoing cost, a sliding pound and a crisis that we haven't seen since the end of World War II.

Yes our membership have suffered. Over nine thousand of our people have been arrested. Over five and a half thousand of our members have been injured on picket lines. Four of our people have died on picket line duty and seven of our members have died from injuries indirectly associated with the strike.

If there's any person in Britain today wants to know why they should give the physical and financial support to which I refer it's because David Jones and Joe Green gave their lives to the people who are on strike. That's why you should give support to our unions. That's why in front of this great demonstration, I'm calling on this government, and upon the National Coal Board, to return to the negotiating table with no preconditions — or alternatively to agree that the new modified colliery review procedure is given to this union as it was agreed between NACODS and the Coal Board.

At the same time I'm warning that this union will not be beaten into submission. As far as we're concerned the fight to save our jobs is even more real today than it was on 6 March 1984.

Stand firm, lift your heads and your eyes and look towards the new horizon.

We want you to save our own industry and our jobs. But at the same time as working men and women we want to retain our dignity and our self-respect as members of the finest trade union in the world.



# Miners international solidarity

THE MINERS' strike has sparked off the largest international solidarity movement of any industrial dispute in Europe since World War II. JUDITH ARKWRIGHT summarises the activity of the solidarity movement during the strike.

RANK and file trade unionists from all over the globe have been sending in donations of food and money. Recently, £10,000 plus 10 tons of dried fruit arrived from trade unionists in Afghanistan.

In Denmark there are now 125 miners' support committees across the country and Australian dockers claim to have stopped all shipments of coal to Britain over the last 10 months.

However, coal continues to arrive in Britain from Germany, Poland, Russia, South Africa and even China — to the extent that coal imports have more than doubled in the last year. Even if the narrow guidelines of the TUC and the World Federation of Trade Unions were adhered to the situation could change dramatically.

The support for the miners so far illustrates that it is possible on an international level to get the kind of support needed. In Belgium for example support for a blockade is now very strong. Dockers in Ghent, Antwerp and Zeebrugge have agreed not to load extra shipments of coal.

As the port workers' leader explained: 'this is not a normal, simple strike. It is a social struggle and we have met these situ-

ations in Belgium and we are maybe going to meet them in the future. We have a strong feeling of solidarity for people who are fighting to save their jobs.'

In Australia the miners' federation has a \$10 per month levy on each of its 13,000 members. School teachers, building workers and longshoremen have all contributed to the estimated \$350,000 so far forwarded to the NUM.

The seamen's union and the Waterside Workers' Federation have banned the shipment of coal to Britain. According to Arthur Scargill, 6,000 Australian workers have been laid off at one time or another as a result of this action.

The USSR has outstripped any other country in donations and money. By last November Russian aid had reached the £1 million mark.

Soviet miners in particular have shown support, with up to three quarters of a million roubles being raised in some regions. This kind of support has not been matched at the level of action for Russian coal is still going to Britain despite initial statements to the contrary.

USSR authorities, however, have refused to

break contracts to sell coal to Britain despite reports at the beginning of the strike that this would be done.

Since the summer, Danish and Norwegian unions have shipped hundreds of tons of clothing and collected upwards of £350,000 for the striking miners. The Danish seamen's union has been the most faithful to the demands of the World Federation of Trade Unions, which has co-ordinated support.

At Christmas the union freighted, free of charge, 325 containers and toys for the families of striking miners. There are now 125 support committees round the country. The latest project is to send over 100,000 chickens at the end of February.

## Holland

ON 9 MARCH in Rotterdam the support committees have called a national demonstration in support of the miners.

Negotiations over wages took place last week between unions and employers at the Port of Rotterdam. The local miners' support group was part of the delegation and demanded 1,100,000 guilders from the employers.

They said this was the excess profit the employers had earned by increasing their exports to Britain to try and break the miners'



Photo: THE MINER

strike. When the employers refused this demand, kilos of coal were brought into the meeting as a protest.

Friday 8 February saw dockers in Amsterdam implement a 24-hour ban on the handling of coal.

## Germany

A LOOK at the solidarity with the British miners' strike — or lack of it — organised by the West German trade

union leaders emphasises the NUM's outstanding defence of its members' jobs.

The union which organises miners in West Germany, the IG Bergbau and Energie, is known for its right wing leadership. It doesn't come as much of a surprise when German miners still dig coal which is then shipped to Britain.

By Monika Eady

And the DGB, the German equivalent of the TUC, is as bureaucratic as they come. It passes money collected for the miners on to the TUC rather than to Arthur Scargill's NUM.

When the IG Metall, the metal workers' union, instructs its branches not to send any money directly to the miners, then this is something else.

You will probably remember the struggle for the 35-hour week in Germany last year, when many IG Metall members took strike action.

Their demands were rather political and although the strike ended in a draw and not a victory, they should have learnt about international solidarity.

But far from it; class collaborationist ideology — firms have to stay competitive, no matter what that means for jobs and working conditions — outweighs any solidarity.

In other words, uneconomic pits will have to close and all that remains is humanitarian assistance to miners' families.

On the flimsy excuse that the NUM apparently left the international miners' confederation in 1983 the IG Metall refuses to support the NUM

directly.

Furthermore a letter to branches sent out in December states explicitly: 'This support for British miners' families should not lead to the conclusion that the national executive of the IG Metall is in agreement with the political aims of the NUM.'

And where do they send the money collected from German trade unionists? Do they know they couldn't have made a worse choice?

The Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC) have kindly agreed to distribute the money to miners' families suffering hardship!

The leaders of the IG Metall must really fear that a victory for the NUM might inspire German workers to fight for their own jobs.

It is heartening to know that there is a lot of rank and file support for the miners amongst German trade unionists. Local committees have been set up which are often twinned with pits in Britain.

Family contacts have been established and NUM members have spoken at meetings and rallies.

Luckily enough these acts of international solidarity at grass roots level have not been dampened by the lack of enthusiasm shown by their leaders.

## Vietnam

NOT ONLY has Vietnam banned direct exports of coal to Britain since the beginning of the strike, it has also banned export to any country which re-directs Vietnamese coal to Britain.

LINKS between the South African miners and British miners have been strengthened over the last 11 months. South African miners in September confronted the Chamber of Miners, temporarily forcing the employers to back down and increase their pay offer.

Roy Jones, North Staffs NUM (pictured above), visited South Africa in December 1984. Ian Isaac, South Wales area NUM executive, had this to say about the importance of building links between British and South African miners:

'In many respects the British NUM is fighting to defend what the South African NUM is fighting to win; a decent future for their families, security of employment and decent wages and conditions.'

'The decision of the South African NUM to give a donation (substantial in terms of their resources) is a recognition of the importance of our struggle.'

'In the midst of our strike we must recognise the common cause we have with mineworkers in South Africa.'

To offer and shape bona fide links between the British NUM and the South African NUM is imperative to our joint survival and development.'

●Reprinted from the Southern African Labour Education Project.

Now as a further gesture of solidarity the Vietnamese government has approved the decision of the North West Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea Association to use funds usually earmarked for aid to Vietnam for the striking miners.

Four hundred Lancashire miners and their families enjoyed Christmas entertainment and presents out of these funds.

In recognition of this solidarity striking miners from Agecroft colliery near Manchester presented an engraved miners lamp to the Vietnamese ambassador in Britain.

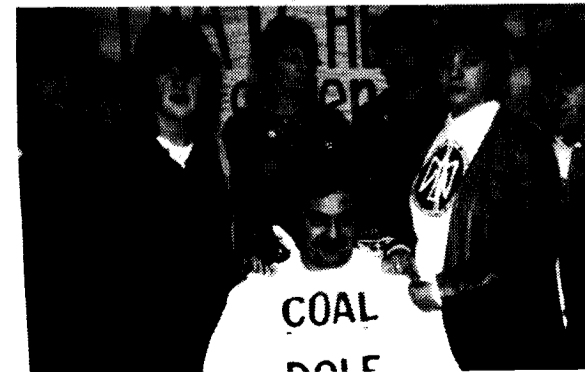


Photo: HILTON ARONOVSKY

## Women Against Pit Closures

# International Womens Day

### WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES

celebrates

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY RALLY

SATURDAY 9th MARCH, 1985

Saltergate Football Stadium, Chesterfield, Derbyshire

### PROGRAMME:

10am-4pm

Exhibitions, discussions, videos, at Lecture Theatre and Market Hall

11.30am-1.30pm

Rally at the Football Ground: national & international speakers

1pm-4pm

Street entertainments & speakers in Town Centre

Britain the 8th March has been celebrated annually since the war. It has always been an international event involving sisters in exile from other countries. This year Women Against Pit Closures will be celebrating women's struggle in a crucial aspect, in Britain and overseas.

We are inviting all women, especially women trade unionists, from all over the country to attend the rally in Chesterfield. We call upon women's organisations and trade unions to publicise this major event among their members and arrange transport to Chesterfield.

Money is urgently needed to help women from the mining communities get to Chesterfield for the rally. It is crucially important that all the women who have been supporting the strike have the opportunity to join the rally. Coaches will cost on average £300 each. Please send donations to: WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES, c/o Chesterfield Women's Action Group, 202-204, Rooms, Asgate Road, Chesterfield, Derbyshire.



WOMEN AGAINST Pit Closures was created in the summer of 1984 to draw together the thousands of women from the mining communities who had started groups to support the miners in their fight to save jobs and keep pits open. A national committee has been formed comprising one delegate from each of the 17 NUM areas.

Our aims include working for a victory for the NUM in its current struggle, consolidating the national women's organisation and strengthening the organisation of women locally.

Last August we organised a huge national demonstration for women to show their solidarity with the NUM by marching through London. It was a tremendous success.

The International Women's Day rally in Chesterfield on 9 March will be the second major national event organised by WAPC.

Women in mining communities have recognised that the destruction of the trade union movement is only one part of the government's plans.

We have joined the struggle to protect local

government, our health, education and transport systems. We have shown the same concern and solidarity for the unemployed, the peace movement, black people and other groups.

The precious friendships and active links we have made with women in every area of struggle in Britain and abroad will be continued and strengthened. Women Against Pit Closures will continue to exist as an organisation after the strike ends, and will develop links with the NUM and the labour movement at all levels.

We will concentrate on promoting and developing the organisation of working class women and campaigning on issues affecting mining communities, especially peace, jobs, health and education.

# High morale at Coalville

THE PRESSURE on Coalville's railworkers never lets up. Every day management is on the prod. British Rail bosses are testing the commitment of this 100-strong depot in the heart of Leicestershire's divided coalfields where workers still refuse to shift the mountains of scab coal.

Victims of a never-ending dirty tricks campaign, these railworkers nevertheless continue to score significant victories in their daily contests with management. The case of Edwin Hampton is a case in point.

Hampton is the signalman who a manager deemed 'mentally unstable' in December — all because he refused to let coal trains pass. Thanks to the strong stand taken by

the LDC (shop stewards) at Coalville, management retreated on this disgraceful 'medical' verdict, and today Hampton is back at work.

With the agreement of

all concerned, he now works at a signal box about 25 miles from Coalville.

By Doreen Wepler,  
NUR guard

Last Thursday, Hampton was confronted with a coal train bound for the Rugeley power station in the Trent Valley. After consulting with his LDC, Hampton refused to lower the barrier at the road crossing next to his signal box, so this coal train could proceed.

This action — taken on a branch line — is enough to irritate management, but it's not totally disruptive. However, the next train to draw up to the signal behind the coal train was a tanker.

Furthermore, the tanker extended beyond the branch line, blocking the mainline traffic on a busy stretch of track between Derby and Birmingham.

For a full hour Hampton stood firm. Finally, management decided to run the engine around the coal train and take it back into

Derbyshire!

This in itself is noteworthy, but the real question is why wasn't Hampton sent home?

Roy Butlin thinks it's partly because management sees that the morale at the depot remains high. 'The 17 January regional strike to protest against the victimisation of loyal union members boosted morale 1000 per cent.'

'And we won a very important concession because the action was so solid. Since then, management has agreed that we can do alternative work at the depot if we refuse to shift coal. This is a demand we have raised from the start.'

'Now about four to six guards each week are out road learning. This concession has reduced the numbers of men being sent home without pay by about one half, so it's a significant victory.'

Management at Coalville has its own problems. As Butlin points out: 'The area train crew manager has just been given the sack. This man — Wilson McIntosh — was the only one left of the management team which existed when the miners' strike started.'

'All the rest have been sacked or have moved. Of course, McIntosh's real crime is that he didn't get the coal trains moving.'

Despite its temporary difficulties, BR continues on a collision course with Coalville's railworkers. Consultation over the rota changes for the new May timetables has been totally undermined by management's refusal to let the LDC see BR's future plans for the depot.

'It's not hard to see why,' according to Butlin. 'This report contains proposals for cutbacks and



Roy Butlin speaks

there is no way management wants to provoke action against these plans while the miners' strike continues.'

The Coalville workers have other problems as well. For instance, a stream of anonymous letters have been sent to the Leicester newspaper in an attempt to undermine morale.

But the most recent dirty trick is more serious. Last week, Roy Butlin heard from his tax office. We need more information, he was told, than what you have sent us in your letter. The catch? Butlin never wrote to the tax office!

But someone else had, forging his signature, and

'asking' whether the funds collected in support of the Coalville members would be taxable.

So, thanks to some crafty soul who is out to destroy the vital solidarity action at Coalville, Her Majesty's Tax Inspector will no doubt be preparing a close investigation of Coalville's funds.

None of these dirty tricks have deterred the workers to date, and if Butlin has his way, these devious methods will have the exact opposite effect.

'Our past experience has shown that so long as we get out the facts about the harassment we face, our resolve to stand firm hardens with each new attack on us.'

## 'Dirty thirty' still fighting

MICK 'RICHIE' RICHMOND is a leader of the Leicestershire striking miners, the 'Dirty Thirty'. He told SOCIALIST ACTION how things are going there.

THE 'Dirty Thirty' are in excellent morale, but it's not only us. Myself and Malcolm Pinner have just returned from a trip to the Fife and Yorkshire coalfields. The morale is high up there.

The men going back, they tell us, are mostly non-faceworkers. Among the faceworkers it remains solid. That's why the Board is shy on releasing production figures.

This idea from some in the Welsh NUM leadership of going back without conditions is not on. The rank and file in Wales would not go back in any case.

There's also the issue of the 600 lads who've been sacked in the dispute so far.

In Leicestershire there've been moves to break away from the NUM. Three of the four pits decided to accept the rule changes.

It's now up to the area council to decide, but we haven't heard of any council meetings yet.

We think the changes will go through. We've already started leafletting the pits in preparation to recruit to the national union. The leaflet we put out caused a lot of controversy at Whittick.

The delegate told the men not to take any more literature from us.

Why? We think we're having an effect on some of the men.

South Leicester was the pit that voted against the rule changes. They realised the situation: it will be the first pit to close in Leicestershire.

They have a delegate, Terry Tracey, who we have some respect for, as well as Alan Cooper on the committee. Those two could've had some influence in the decision.

The day of action on rail was a real combined effort between the railworkers at Mantle Lane, Coalville, and the 'Dirty Thirty'.

We put a lot of effort into it. The NUR branch has begun expelling members that scab on the solidarity action.

Some times you'll get two trains moving coal a week. But it's really just a propaganda exercise.

There's no more coal being shifted because when they move it through Coalville it means they're not moving from Rawdon colliery.

We've begun fortnightly meetings of strikers from the minority areas: North and South Staffs, Warks, South Derby, Notts and Leicestershire.

We first organised these meetings to talk about how best to protect ourselves against victimisation when the strike ends and we're back at work.

This has provided an excellent opportunity for the rank and file strikers in these areas to help rebuild the union.

We've got everything up front from being in the minority areas.

The morale is sky-high against the massive intimidation we've faced.

We've circulated a resolution to all the area leaders asking for pledges of support.

If any member suffers victimisation after the strike all minority area strikers would come out.

We now have pledges from all the major areas to support us. That work's been done.

We believe this work and organisation of the strikers of the minority areas is very important to the NUM, and we want our voice heard in the national union.

The work of the support committees that have been set up to assist us have been of crucial importance. I think the Leicester support committee must be the best in the country.

There's been a drop off in money coming in after Christmas. Its only now starting to pick up.

The food collections remain excellent. We're at present sending food to miners' families in Durham.

The Asian community in Leicester have done outstanding work in this regard. We're getting a lot more threatening phone calls. I don't know why. There's not been any physical attacks lately.

I think it's a sign of their embarrassment with the

effective campaigning we're doing.

The strike breakers we try to talk to are scared to speak their minds against Jack Jones. We tell them we're out and we don't need calling out.

A lot of the officials just want to take voluntary redundancy.

It's time we started to educate them provided we get the backing nationally.

In five years' time there will be no pits in Leicestershire. The real tragedy is they've not had the people leading them to make them realise they can fight against this.

The 'Dirty Thirty' Leicestershire striking miners' new publicity material is now available. Badges, posters, T-shirts, etc. Details: Leicestershire Striking Miners, Room 346 Municipal Buildings, Charles St, Leicester. Tel: 0533 532201.

## Miners, local government: one struggle

DEMOCRACY DAY, on 6 March, must be the occasion for a massive demonstration against the Tory government local government cuts. Budget day for the rate-capped boroughs is Thursday 7 March. Camden, Islington, Greenwich, Haringey, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark will face massive cuts if the Tory proposals go through.

In London alone, there would be £400 million worth of cuts in jobs and services. This scale of cuts would be mirrored across the country.

By Pat Hickey

On 7 March Labour councillors will have to decide whether to implement the government's budget, or whether to stand firm and refuse to cooperate in the Tories' attacks on jobs and services.

The ILEA, and a number of boroughs, will stand against the Tories' attacks. For most councils this will mean taking the 'no-rate' option.

The policy of defying the law, in order to defend jobs and services has been endorsed throughout the party. But Kinnoch and Cunningham have made it clear that they will support the government — against those who break the law.

For Labour councils the

option will be to obey the law and implement the cuts, or to break the law. For Labour the only real option is to follow the example of the miners, and stand and fight.

Ken Livingston put the point in a nut-shell when he explained that local authorities under threat face a clear choice: join the miners in taking action, or collaborate with Tory cuts.

The Tories had hoped to defeat the miners before taking on local government. The miners have refused to surrender.

Local Labour Parties, and local government workers, now have the opportunity to open the second front. We must use 6 and 7 March to unite the struggle to defend jobs and services with the struggle of the miners.

• Democracy Day, 6 March: Assemble at 11.30am at Malet Street, WC1. March to the Festival Hall.

FROM MARCH 6, those of us who are leading authorities threatened with abolition or rate-capping face a choice. Either we are prepared to combine with the miners in taking action which could be branded 'illegal' by the Tory courts, or we collude in devastating the communities we're supposed to represent.

This is precisely the dilemma which the NUM had to face last year, and it seems appropriate that 6 March sees not only the TUC's day of action in defence of democracy — it is also the anniversary of the start of the strike.

I am calling on all supporters of democracy in London, all supporters of local democracy throughout the country and all those who support the miners to turn 6 and 7 March into a massive two-day event of pickets, stoppages, protests, demonstrations and lobbies marking the opening of our movement's 'second front' in the battle begun by the miners 12 months ago.

The Tories fear two opponents which they are attempting to destroy: the NUM on the one hand, popular local government on the other. They had banked on forcing the miners to surrender before having to take on local authorities and the GLC. Now that these plans have come unstuck, a tremendous opportunity opens up before us all.

The conditions exist for us to unite our forces with the miners' strike and build towards a general stoppage of work. Every leader of our movement who says 'the time is not ripe' is simply allowing this government to move on to the next victim. The time is ripe; it requires a policy of total resistance to everything this government is doing. Use March 6 and 7 to unite our forces into a combined offensive which will win.

KEN LIVINGSTONE

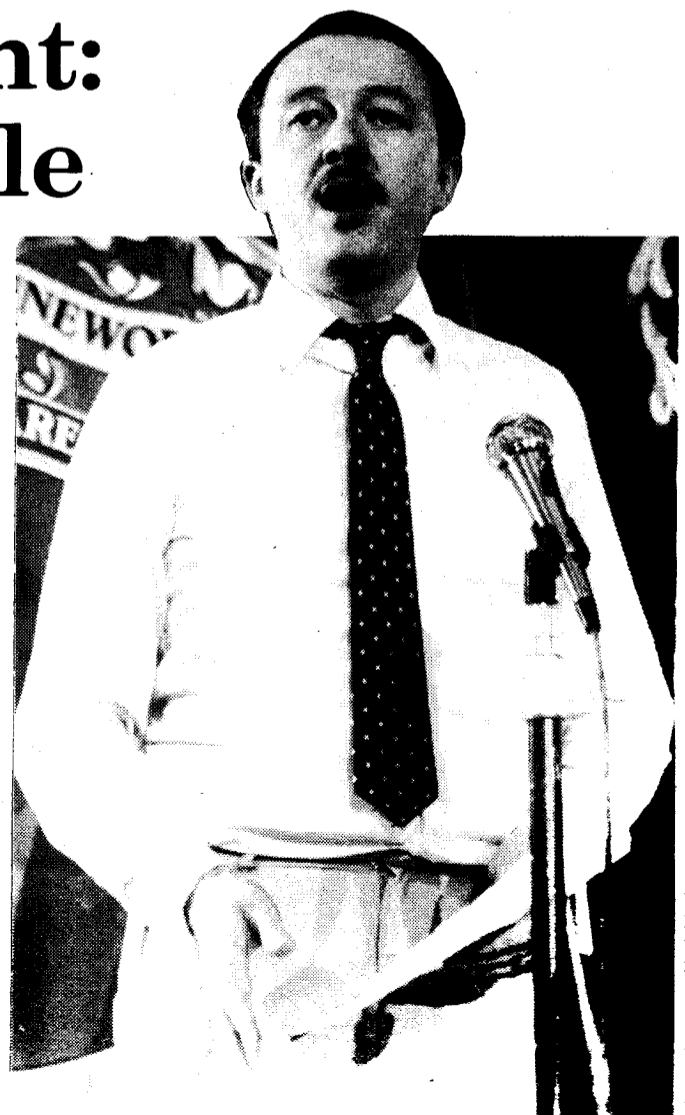


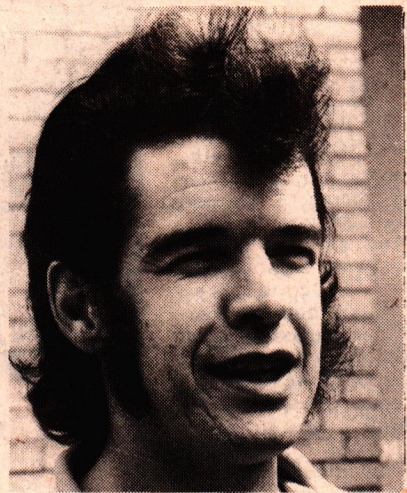
Photo: TUIA + HUFU

**MARXISM TODAY** has acquired an indelible reputation as one of the most right wing journals ever produced in the labour movement. It has consistently worked with Neil Kinnock's supporters in the Labour Party in an attempt to isolate the labour left. But it also bypasses Kinnock on the right by openly advocating in its pages a coalition, or electoral arrangement, between the Labour Party and the SDP-Liberal Alliance.

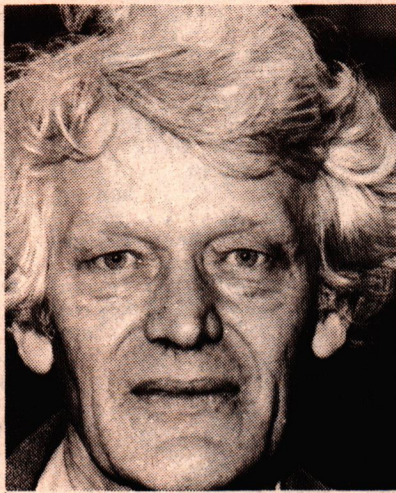
At first glance it would seem incredible to most people that a Communist Party could produce such a journal. In fact *Marxism Today* is the culmination of a long development of the Communist Party's politics.

**MICK ARCHER** looks at the sorry road to *Marxism Today*.

# The roots of I



Dave Cook



Edward Thompson



Bea Campbell

JUST ONE year after its thirty-eighth congress, described as outstandingly successful and inspiring by General Secretary Gordon McLennan, the faction fight within the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) reached breaking point. On the one side are the 'Euro-communists' who now control the party's national executive committee (EC), its apparatus and its theoretical journal *Marxism Today*. On the other stand the 'fundamentalists' grouped around the *Morning Star* and its editor, Tony Chater.

This crisis of the CPGB is an integral part of the crisis and decline of the European Communist Parties. But to understand its dynamic, it is necessary to look at specific features of the CPGB, its history and the political pressures affecting it today.

The CPGB has never been a mass party. Whereas many of its counterparts in West Europe arose from splits in the mass social democratic parties, the CPGB was formed in 1920 through the unification of a number of small propaganda groups. Up until the British General Strike of 1926 the party experienced a modest growth in membership to 10,730.

With the defeat of the General Strike membership declined and it was only in the 1930s with the rise of fascism, the Spanish Revolution, and the threat of war that it began to grow again. Membership exceeded 10,000 in 1936 and according to official figures, reached 17,756 in July 1939. The decisive growth of the CPGB however occurred after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and following the Anglo-Soviet Mutual Aid Pact of the following month.

By the end of 1941 membership had reached 22,738 and in the first three months of 1942 a further 25,194 recruits were made. Official figures claim 56,000 members by December 1942, the height of the CPGB's influence.

By now, however, the CPGB had gone over 100 per cent to class collaborationism. It gave full support to the national government of Winston Churchill, denounced strikes and fought for increased production in support of the bosses' war effort. In the mines, for instance, the CPGB passed a resolution dated 18 September 1942 arguing that increased coal production could be secured by '...regular working of all shifts available, eliminating all avoidable absenteeism, continuation of work after fatal accidents, and the relaxation of overtime restrictions to ensure that all faces are cleared daily...'

The political practice of the party during this period and its growth reinforced the CPGB's pretensions of being a mass working class party — as well as substantially moving its membership to

the right. But in the general election of 1945 the party received a rude shock when it failed to convert its growth and newly-won respectability into parliamentary seats. Two communist MPs were returned compared to 393 representing the Labour Party. Moreover, this proved to be the high point of the CPGB's parliamentary representation.

Following 1945 the CPGB faced a problem which has dogged it to this day. Although increasingly influential within the trade union movement, publishing the *Daily Worker* with a circulation of 100,000 and committed to the parliamentary road to socialism, it could never break the domination of the Labour Party over the political representation of the organised working class.

Nevertheless, the CPGB was determined to extend its influence. One of the steps it took and which has now exploded, was to establish a self-governing cooperative ownership scheme for its paper to raise further funds for its development. This was the Peoples Press Printing Society. Its shares were available to party and non-party members alike — a situation Tony

there was the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia which the CPGB opposed, but as the letters column of the *Morning Star* demonstrated, a sizeable section of its membership disagreed with this line. At its 1969 congress the leadership got 295 votes for its position whilst the minority obtained 118.

This minority, known as the 'tankies' because of their unqualified support for the use of Soviet tanks to resolve problems in the construction of socialism, persisted throughout the early '70s opposing 'anti-Sovietism' wherever it reared its ugly head.

The second product of 1968 was massive radicalisation of youth and the emergence of mass working class struggles outside of the direct control of the established reformist organisations. This led to two developments: the appearance of political and social movements independent of these parties, such as the international campaign in solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution and the women's liberation movement; and the growth of organisations to the left of the communist parties who actively intervened in these.

These new developments led to a

programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, which appeared in 1951. Approved personally by Stalin, this document abandoned any talk of revolution, the destruction of the bourgeois state, soviets or the dictatorship of the proletariat. Instead, it spoke of transforming '...capitalist democracy into a real people's democracy, transforming parliament, the product of Britain's historical struggle for democracy, into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of her people.'

When in 1975 the CPGB decided to open up discussions on a new draft of the *British Road to Socialism*, the Euro-communists in its ranks definitely had history on their side. The changes they were to argue for were a logical extension of the party's practice and its programme over the previous 25 years.

In January 1976, John Gollan, a former general secretary of the party took the first step in the new development by initiating a discussion in the pages of *Marxism Today* on 'Problems of Socialist Democracy'. The pretext for this was the twentieth anniversary of the Khrushchev revelations.

The ensuing debate lasted a year and covered the dictatorship of the proletariat, the relationship between party and state in post capitalist societies, independent trade unions, the character of Stalinism and inner party democracy. With some justification one of the contributors argued: 'This discussion is in substance not unconnected with the Italian Communist Party's policy of "historic compromise" based on their pessimistic and negative estimate of the prospects for socialism in Italy.'

'It is not unconnected with the attacks by the leaders of the Spanish Communist Party on the Portuguese Communist Party at critical moments in Portugal's national democratic revolution. More generally, it is connected with the decision of the French Communist Party to drop "dictatorship of the proletariat" from their rules and to decide at their next congress what words to adopt in its place, and of the Japanese Communist Party to drop the words "dictatorship of the proletariat" and even "Marxism-Leninism". Specifically this debate is preliminary to the discussion of the new, effectively fourth, version of *The British Road to Socialism*.' (Fergus Nicholson, *Marxism Today*, December 1976).

Indeed, no sooner had this discussion been closed in the January 1977 issue of *Marxism Today*, than the debate around the issues confronting the November 1977 congress began. By now the party had become polarised around virtually all of the central questions: the definition of the working class, pluralism, the revolutionary process and the concept of the 'broad democratic alliance' which was to replace the 'anti-monopoly alliance' in the earlier versions.

**Official figures claim 56,000 members by December 1942, the height of the CPGB's influence. By now, however, the CPGB had gone over 100 per cent to class collaborationism.**

Chater has exploited to the full in the current party struggle.

From 1945 onwards membership of the party declined. The 'radical' measures of the 1945-50 Labour government, which introduced the National Health Service and a limited series of nationalisations, was an obvious factor in this decline. Korea and the Cold War also took their toll. But the decisive events — turning the decline into a rout — were those in Poland and Hungary in 1956 and the revelations of the twentieth congress of the CPSU.

In a period of 18 months after the Hungarian revolt an estimated 10,000 people left the party leaving its official membership at 24,670 by February 1958. Amongst this massive exodus were some of its most prestigious intellectuals including the novelist Doris Lessing and the historian EP Thompson as well as a significant part of the party's trade union base. At this point, the CPGB managed to halt its decline, even successfully rebuilding its membership in the early '60s, so that in 1962 it numbered 32,492 where it roughly remained until 1968.

The events of 1968 brought new pressures to bear on the CPGB. Firstly,

further decline in the membership of the CPGB. By 1972 it was down to 28,505 whilst membership of the Young Communist League fell by 40 per cent to 3,000 between 1967 and 1972. The circulation of the *Morning Star* was in decline, and in the general election of 1970 the CPGB's candidates had polled an average of 638 votes each.

It was clear that a reappraisal of the party's programme and perspectives was necessary. This reappraisal, however, coincided with the views developing in a number of the European Communist Parties. Under the impact of the working class upsurge in their own countries and the experiences of first Chile and then Portugal a need was recognised by Enrico Berlinguer, leader of the Italian Communist Party to: '...draw useful lessons for a broader and deeper assessment of both the international picture and the strategy and tactics of the working class and democratic movement in a series of countries...' This was the dawn of Euro-communism.

In a number of ways the CPGB had pre-empted its European counterparts. Attempts to 'Anglicise' the party had been evident since 1945 and were enshrined in the first version of its



# Marxism Today

For a section of the party determined to check this process of 'revisionism' it became a struggle for the future of the CPGB. In July 1977, four months before the congress the most vehement critics of the new draft, based around Sid French and the leadership of the party's Surrey district, split. The CPGB claim this involved less than two percent of their 25,300 members whilst the New Communist Party, as they called themselves, claimed 65 branches nationwide.

Those who opposed the new draft and remained in the CPGB went into the thirty-fifth congress numerically depleted and identified with the 'splitters'. In an attempt to remit the new draft, and the 2,600 amendments submitted to it, to the 1979 congress they mustered a mere 48 votes compared to the executive committee's 330. Yet it was also clear that the battle was not over yet.

Firstly, against the advice of the executive, the congress voted by 193 votes to 137 to establish a sub-committee to examine the ailing fortunes of the *Morning Star*. Secondly, it decided to establish a commission on inner party democracy to report to its congress in 1979.

The confident conclusion of the editorial in the January 1978 *Marxism Today*, now under the editorship of the Euro-communist Martin Jacques was: '...the overwhelming defeat of the sectarian challenge (to the new version of the *British Road to Socialism* — ed) marked a decisive defeat for this position in the party's evolution.' This was to prove somewhat premature.

The decisions of the thirty-fifth congress settled nothing. Indeed the antics of a section of the executive, which was eager to minimise the division and the party's decline, merely obscured the different positions. What were the Euro-communists trying to achieve? Events were soon to show.

Central to the debate leading up to the thirty-fifth congress and after was an attempt to get the party to broaden its definition of the working class and to commit far greater resources to building alliances with the mass social and political movements than earlier. This involved the Euro-communists in arguing that whilst: 'The individuals participating in these movements may be drawn from a number of different classes...because of the numerical preponderance of the working class it is from this class that the majority of participants are drawn.'

Hence the concept of a 'broad democratic alliance was a '...fuller and deeper...' one than that of the 'anti-monopoly alliance' since '...it avoids the danger of the economic interpretation...namely of an alliance at the economic level in which the context of the alliance is provided by a common economic antagonism to monopoly capitalism.' (*Class Structure and Political Strategy* — Alan Hunt, *Marxism Today*, July 1977).

The perceived danger by opponents of this course was that it would lead to the party concentrating its efforts on recruiting and building amongst layers other than the industrial and commercial proletariat.

These debates had obvious repercussions for the CPGB's publications. It was under the editorship of Martin Jacques that *Marxism Today* moved to a bold presentation of the Euro-communist interpretation of the *British Road to Socialism*. When the sub-committee on the *Morning Star* reported in April 1978 it too called for a change in coverage to more clearly reflect the new version of the party programme. What next, the 'fundamentalists' asked themselves?

The answer came in the autumn of 1978. In the context of an upsurge of industrial militancy against the five per cent pay norm, introduced by the

Labour government of Jim Callaghan, historian Eric Hobsbawm produced an article in *Marxism Today* entitled 'The Forward March of Labour Halted?' In a critical survey of the development of the British working class he focussed on the limitations of 'trade union consciousness' and the economic struggle in a situation where the '...political class movement...' was in decline, ie the wages struggle was not reflected in a growth in membership of, or support for, the Labour Party, the CPGB or other groups on the left.

Summarising the year-long debate, after the general election of 1979, he argued '...the present phase of militancy is overwhelmingly trade unionist and economic, mainly on the issue of wages... What is unclear is the type of relation which exists between wages and

the CPGB since that time. True, from the general election of 1979 up until Thatcher's re-election in 1983 there were other issues on which the CPGB divided: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, where the minority won 43 per cent of the vote at the 1981 congress against the critical stance of the executive committee; Poland, where again the executive took a critical stance, provoking one critic to assert that there were those in the party '...for whom hatred of the Soviet Union and the party leaderships in Eastern Europe is a ruling passion. Their politics have the same social roots as Trotskyism and in this respect produce equally poisonous fruit with perhaps fewer red berries.' (*The Crisis in Our Communist Party - Cause, Effect and Cure*, Charlie Woods, 1983).

**But one policy above all dominated the politics of the party — that of the popular front. To seek out the 'progressive' section of the bourgeoisie was the almost continuous line of the party for most of the 60 years since the mid-1920s.**

the political struggle and how the wages' struggle is to be integrated into the wider struggle of which it is only one part. I believe, that this is the crucial problem which faces the labour movement today.'

Further comments on the divisive character of 'sectionalism', '...the tendency of "straight" trade unionism to take the capitalist system as given...' and the importance of recognising that even militant trade union action could '...be quite divorced from political consciousness...' captured the tone of many of the contributions to the debate.

Mike le Cornu, a shop steward at Heathrow airport, drew out the conclusions the party's 'intellectuals' seemed unprepared to state. In April 1979 he wrote: 'Perhaps at this late stage we can adopt a self-critical posture and really examine whether there was a failure on our part to apply a creative Marxist analysis to the new situation.'

'We may well conclude that our party and the left in the labour movement should have been united in mobilising the rank and file to mount the greatest pressure to ensure that the politically progressive demands contained in the Social Contract were carried out by the Labour government.'

In other words communists should have campaigned for the social measures Labour promised, and accepted wage restraint in return!

At the same time as Hobsbawm was striking out against 'economism', another theoretician was engaging in a new analysis of 'Thatcherism' which was to dominate the pages of *Marxism Today*. Stuart Hall's conclusion was that Thatcherism was: '...something qualitatively new in British politics' which had '...succeeded on the back of a deep and profound disillusionment among ordinary people with the very form of social democratic "statism" to which previous governments, in their different ways, have been committed.'

The left's response therefore necessitated: 'The formulation of a new conception of socialism...', '...the unification of the working class...' and '...the construction of a historical alliance which alone is capable of constituting the "social force" which could turn the tide of Thatcherism' (Thatcherism — A new stage, Stuart Hall, *Marxism Today*, February 1980). What content the Euro-communists would fill Hall's formulas with was soon to become clear.

Developing this notion of an historical alliance against Thatcherism has occupied centre stage in the debates of

Labour had to build a broad set of alliances based on new policies, new practices and new structures. The question left unanswered was how would such a bloc express itself electorally?

For many who followed the debate the answer seemed obvious. Frequent references to the period of the popular front and to popular coalitions, underpinned by the CPGB's support for proportional representation pointed to a governmental coalition embracing the 'entire potential support for democracy and for a better society'. Such a formula could clearly extend to all anti-Thatcherite forces including the newly emergent Social Democratic Party-Liberal Alliance. This was the formula which Hobsbawm made his own.

In a sense the Communist Party has come back to its home. It started in the early 1920s as a revolutionary organisation. But it rapidly became house-trained by Stalin. The party then followed faithfully for 40 years every twist and turn dictated by the Kremlin whether that policy was the ultra-left lunacy of the 'third period' of 1929 to 1933 or the extreme rightism behind Churchill in 1941 to 1945.

But one policy above all dominated the politics of the party — that of the popular front. To seek out the 'democratic', 'patriotic', 'anti-American' or any other 'progressive' section of the bourgeoisie was the almost continuous line of the party for most of the 60 years since the mid-1920s. It was encouraged in that line avidly by Moscow.

It is delightfully ironic that the CPGB today should have found that force in the SDP of David Owen and the Liberals of David Steel. Even more ironic and logical, that those advocating an alliance with these forces now demand a complete break with Moscow to achieve it. The party has now turned round to bite the hand which has been feeding it for 40 years — and the force which pushed it in this direction in the first place.

*Marxism Today* is no bolt from the blue. It can legitimately claim to be the direct descendant of the popular front politics pursued by the CPGB for almost 60 years. The rottenness of the offspring should lead those who want to think to go back and reject the long road that led to it.



Gordon McLennan

# Advance in Vietnam

# Kampuchea offensive

COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY guerrillas fighting the government of Kampuchea have suffered a severe defeat at the hands of Vietnamese and Kampuchean troops. All but one or so base camps along the Thai-Kampuchean border have been smashed and the so-called 'liberated areas' have been overrun.

This is despite the fact that these right wing bands are receiving massive financial, political and military aid from the US, the pro-imperialist Thai regime, and from China.

The bases on the Thai border are operated by three counter-revolutionary groupings, the largest and strongest of which is headed by Pol Pot who ruled Kampuchea from 1975 to 1979. Pol Pot's murderous Khmer Rouge regime was overthrown in 1979 by Vietnamese troops and Kampuchean insurgents.

The name of Pol Pot has subsequently become synonymous with mass murder, deliberate starvation of millions, and the destruction of all civilisation including cities and towns. Under the rule of the Khmer Rouge, several million Kampuchean people perished as victims of executions, starvation and disease.

For six years, supporters of Pol Pot have been operating from these bases to attack workers and peasants, economic targets and crops in Kampuchea. They have forced the diversion of massive amounts of much-needed material resources from both Kampuchea and Vietnam in order to defend themselves against these attacks.

This record has not stopped imperialism from funding this murderous outfit. A major achievement of this offensive, which began on 16 November, has been the destruction of all the Khmer Rouge bases including the supposedly impregnable base of Phnom Malai.

By Brian Grogan

Despite claims in the British press, the Vietnamese victories have been achieved with minimal civilian casualties. This has been because of a deliberate policy decision of the Vietnamese and Kampuchean forces. An example of this was the taking of the Ampil base, controlled by the right wing Khmer Peoples Liberation Front (KPNLF).

This was defended by 5000 guerrillas but was quickly overrun by a much smaller group of Kampuchean and Vietnamese troops even though the Kampuchean and Vietnamese didn't join battle



Photo: INTERCONTINENTAL PRESS

Kampuchean government troops resting en route to the Thai border

until after the evacuation of 23,000 civilians.

Despite these victories, the toll in terms of economic destruction and loss of life will not be ended. Most of the guerrillas have been given sanctuary in Thailand and the US has pledged an increase in aid to them. They are now reorganising with the open aim of launching guerrilla raids across the border in much the same fashion as

with the so-called contra raids into Nicaragua.

Peking has pledged too continuing aid to the battered guerrillas. The Chinese foreign ministry was as quick as the US in promising that it will help the counter-revolutionary coalition 'in all ways'.

Indeed, during the present offensive against the rightists, the Chinese government increased its border attacks against

Vietnam in order to help release the pressure on the bases.

The Vietnamese government report massive Chinese shelling of Vietnam during this period; and that China has massed 28 infantry divisions and 1000 aircraft on the Vietnamese border. Several small-scale incursions have been made into Vietnam.

Prince Sihanouk, ex-Kampuchean head of state

and major ally of the Khmer Rouge, speaking in Bangkok, called on the Chinese government to 'save' the rightist guerrillas with a second invasion of Vietnam, declaring that China must 'fight now'.

But the fact is that China received a bloody nose in its first invasion in 1981. It will need much stronger inducements to risk another head-on confrontation with the Viet-

namese army — one of the most battle-hardened in the world. Instead, Peking is currying favour with imperialism, claiming to be giving Vietnam a 'due lesson' by intensifying its attacks along the Vietnamese border.

This bravado cannot disguise the fact that in these recent events the joint aims of Washington and Peking have suffered a sharp setback.

# Revolt in Dominican Republic

TENS OF THOUSANDS of Dominican workers joined in a one-day general strike on 11 February to protest new austerity measures imposed by the US-dominated International Monetary Fund (IMF). It capped two weeks' protest following the January announcement by President Salvador Jorge Blanco that the price of petrol would go up 34 per cent.

The new measures came on top of last April's price increases of up to 100 per cent on food, cooking oil, and other essential items. Last year's price increases sparked a massive rebellion in which government troops killed at least 60 people and wounded some 200, as well as arresting more than 4,000.

The Dominican government owes \$2 billion to imperialist banks. This year

they must pay \$1.4 billion to be up to date on repayments.

By Marcel Black

Blanco's regime adopted the austerity measures as part of an agreement with the IMF. It refused to loan the Dominican government any more money unless it imposed price increases and

other measures.

The new US-imposed price rises ignited widespread revolt. Unions, left wing political organisations, community groups, and others joined in calling on the Dominican Republic's working people to strike against the government's austerity decree.

Businesses in Santo Domingo's working class neighbourhoods — such as Los Minas, Vietnam, and Katanga — were closed and workers stayed home. Strikes swept the barrios of other cities as well, including San Francisco de Macoris, Mao, Tamboril, Barahona, and Santiago.

The popular organisations that called the strikes saw the escalating actions as leading towards a general strike. The protests demand a break with the IMF, a cancellation of the Republic's debt repayment, and lowering of prices.

The government immediately cracked down on the popular resistance. The capital became a militarised zone as infantry troops and police occupied Santo Domingo.

Meanwhile, barricades were thrown up in Los

Minas, Vietnam, and other areas to try to keep the armed forces out. Helicopters and light planes flew over the capital city to direct troops to barricades and other centres of revolt.

Blanco placed specially trained counter-insurgency troops in charge of repressing the rebellion. The government also imposed strict news censorship. Several reporters were arrested for trying to break the news ban.

Hundreds of working people have been arrested and at least one youth killed by government troops. 'The situation is difficult in these communities,' said one Dominican worker, referring to Los Minas and other barrios.

The troops especially target youth, who, this worker said: 'can't show their faces in the street because they're immediately arrested and in many cases, beaten.'

Among those arrested were Pedro Franco, the general coordinator of the Committees of Popular Struggle, which have played a prominent role in organising the strikes. Also detained were Julio de Peña Valdez, general secretary of

the General Workers Federation, José Cristóbal Durán, general secretary of the United Federation of Workers, as well as other trade union leaders.

The government also attacked the Dominican Left Front, jailing Narciso Isa Conde, general secretary of the Dominican Communist Party, and other leaders of the broad coalition of left organisations.

On 7 February, after 10 days of escalating strikes, the Councils of Popular Unity called a general strike. Speaking for the coalition of some 52 popular organisations, José Pichardo said that the detention of Pedro Franco wouldn't stop the protest demonstrations.

Blanco's response was to order his troops to sweep through the barrios again on 10 February. They arrested hundreds of youth in the hope of blocking the strike.

Pichardo, however, proved correct. The 11 February strike was a success, and the Dominican government faces big problems in implementing the austerity programme dictated by its accord with the IMF.

Dominican Republic



# Apartheid shows its true face

IT IS ONLY a few weeks ago, on 25 January that President Botha, the executive head of the apartheid state, sought to placate his critics, particularly in the United States, with what appeared to be a move toward 'moderation' in apartheid politics.

'Steps to promote orderly urbanisation and to eliminate negative and discriminatory aspects of influx control are receiving urgent consideration. It is...the government's firm intention that problems, relating to the resettlement of communities will be given attention and resolved to the greater satisfaction of all concerned.'

This was followed, within a week by a ministerial announcement of a temporary freeze on the forced removals of blacks and the offer to free Nelson Mandela — though on terms which the government must have known he could not accept. Four long-term prisoners on Robben Island, members of the Pan African Congress (PAC), were actually released.

While these sugar-coated words were addressed to the growing movement against apartheid in the US, it was also intended to head off the wave of protests which had swept the townships throughout South Africa.

For the oppressed people of South Africa, actions speak louder than words. Even while Botha was speaking, preparations were going ahead for the forced removal of more than 7,000 'coloured' people in Kat River in the Eastern Cape from land which they and their ancestors had farmed for 150 years. Their land is being given to the 'independent' Ciskei 'homeland'.

Crossroads, the black squatter township near Cape Town, is again under threat. It is proposed to remove them to the new township of Khayelitsha, some 16 miles from the city. Officially the reason for the removals is given as 'health and safety reasons'.

By Charlie Van Gelderen

What the government is really concerned about is the health and safety of the apartheid state.

The policy of removals is endemic to apartheid and has been going on for decades. Between 1960 and 1970 about 1.8 million black people were removed and 'resettled' — the largest enforced population movements ever known in peacetime.

When South African capitalism was mainly mining capitalism, the colour bar and the migrant labour policy were essential to its profitability. They had two basic aims — to provide the mines (and the farms which fed the miners) with abundant cheap labour and to build a wall between the skilled white workers from Europe, who brought with them their traditions of trade unionism and 'socialism', and the migrant black workers.

It was a deliberate policy aimed at preventing a black proletariat taking root in the urban areas and combining with the organ-



Photo: NIGEL DICKENSON  
Squatters' camp in Alexandra township; riots in Crossroads have left at least 13 dead

ised white workers to threaten the very existence of capitalism.

With the growth of secondary industries, especially in the long boom following World War II, and the increase in multinational operations in South Africa, the needs of capitalism began to change. Capitalism, traditionally, needs a stable workforce with relative freedom of movement.

This need — expressed politically by the Progress-

ive Federal Party and latterly also by the so-called 'verligtes' in the ruling National Party — came up against the apartheid superstructure which had become the ruling ideology of the state.

Despite the legislation to control the influx of blacks into the urban areas, the economics of capitalism drew tens of thousands of workers into the towns. The specially constructed townships like Soweto on the Rand and

Langa in the Cape, where authorities could exercise a degree of social, police and military control, could not contain the new arrivals. Hence the growth of squatter townships like Crossroads.

These townships constitute a double threat to the apartheid regime. Not only do their very existence manifest an act of defiance against the white-made laws, but as these townships are largely 'auto-administered' — they be-

come schools where the workers quickly learn the value of self-organisation and the strength which grows from it.

What the government fears above all is a whole series of 'Sowetos' under conditions they cannot so easily control.

Crossroads has been under threat since 1977 and it is only the resistance of its people which have till now prevented its removal. Khayelitsha has been designed to give easy

access to police and military to control any trouble which might arise.

This attempt at forced removal, as well as that in the Kat River, is the reality behind Botha's promise of 'greater satisfaction (to) all concerned'. The people doomed to removal are not even consulted.

To crown it all, the regime is cracking down hard on the resistance movement. The arrest of six leading members of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and three trade union leaders, charged with high treason, which carries the threat of the death penalty coming soon after Botha's 'conciliatory' words and his gesture toward Nelson Mandela show the tensions which threaten the very existence of the racist state.

The UDF is not a banned organisation. Its activities, so far, have been confined to peaceful demonstrations against the new constitution and other aspects of oppression. Botha and the government just cannot believe that the riots in Crossroads which, at the time of writing, have left 13 dead, the massive school boycott and the general growth of resistance are spontaneous revolts against the barbaric regime.

There must be a conspiracy somewhere so scapegoats must be found. Hence the arrests.

The British labour movement must put all its strength behind the demand for the release of all the accused and for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela and the other political prisoners.

# Green light to US anti-abortion bombings

AMERICAN ANTI-abortionists have taken to harassing patients and staff in abortion clinics and, since the end of last year, have begun a bombing campaign in an attempt to short-circuit the law and popular opinion, and call a halt to abortions in the States. Since 1982, this reactionary campaign of violence has successfully destroyed a total of 30 clinics that perform legal abortions and has been responsible for more than 300 acts of vandalism.

Since 25 December, it has been impossible to get a legal abortion in Pensacola, Florida. On that day, three bombs went off within minutes of each other, destroying one abortion clinic and two gynaecological clinics that also offered abortions. The Pensacola clinic was completely gutted. It already had moved location after its old office was destroyed in a bombing last June.

One worker at the clinic pointed out: 'These attacks don't only impact on abortion rights, but on the right of women to contraception and simple health care.'

The two men and two women arrested for the bombings have admitted to them, claiming that they had received 'the call of god'. One of them, Matthew Goldsby, explained that he had simply chosen the 'quickest route possible to stop abortion'.

Only a few days after

the Florida bombings, as New Year's Day began, a powerful bomb exploded at the Hillcrest Women's Surgi-Center in southeast Washington. The roof of the clinic and one of its walls was destroyed. The force of the blast shattered nearly 250 windows in nearby apartments. This was the seventh bombing of a women's health clinic or abortion-related facility in Washington since February 1984.

'We are outraged and angry,' said Joanna Cannon, spokeswoman for the Hillcrest clinic. 'We exist here legally and those who choose to express their opinions with bombings are criminal and wrong.' She said the clinic would reopen soon.

Rosann Wisman, executive director of Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, said, 'Abortion is legal. The service is available as an in-

dividual right and individual choice. Bombers are keeping people from exercising that right.'

On 4 December the Federal Bureau of Investigation said the bombings were neither terrorist acts nor acts against the government. Therefore it relegated jurisdiction to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF). BATF, which is now 'investigating' the bombings, delivered a warning to abortion clinic operators that they should anticipate a new wave of violence on 22 January, the twelfth anniversary of the legalisation of abortion.

No warning was given to the violent opponents of abortion rights, nor was any mention made of measures that would be taken to prevent the attacks. In fact, the government continues to in-

sist that there is no conspiracy behind the bombings.

The government's position amounts to nothing more than a green light to those who carry out terrorist attacks against women in America. Far from defending the legal right to abortion, the government is leading a fierce campaign against this right.

The goal of the campaign is to make abortion illegal. This explains why the government refuses to stop the attacks, and why the bombers are able to act with such impunity.

Supporters of women's rights across the country are organising meetings, pickets and vigils to protest the attacks. Despite the threats, abortion rights supporters held demonstrations in major cities across

America on 22 January this year.

On that day in 1973, the US Supreme Court ruled that abortion is a woman's right. This was the most far-reaching advance won by women's rights fighters in decades. The ruling made it a law that women have the right to decide whether or not to bear children, as well as when not to have them.

The right of a woman to control her own body is the most basic of rights and a precondition for full equality. This is why attacks against the right to abortion are not just directed against women, but against the working class as a whole.

•This is an edited version of an article by Martin Koppel, which appeared in a recent edition of *Intercontinental Press*.



# All Stalin's men

THIS RECENT book by the Soviet Marxist historian Roy Medvedev consists of portraits of six men, all of whom figured prominently in the history of the Soviet Union in the Stalin period. They were not the best of Stalin's entourage, nor necessarily the worst, but they did survive. All began their political activity while Stalin was still alive, achieved prominence under Stalin and continued to be active in the Khrushchev years.

Voroshilov, Mikoyan, Suslov, Kaganovich, Molotov and Malenkov occupied the summits of power in the USSR. But, as the author observes, the people on whom I focus in this book can be seen as a source of pride for the USSR, the Communist Party or mankind as a whole.

Reviewed by  
Dave Holmes

Through these short biographies, Roy Medvedev sheds an unforgiving light on the bureaucratic system of the Soviet Union, under Stalin and his heirs.

'At the same time,' he writes, 'this work was not prompted solely by the historian's intellectual curiosity, for there are certain lessons to be drawn from it, notably that when all is said and done, democratic mechanisms and institutions must be created in the Soviet Union that will ensure that people like Stalin and most of those around him can never again hold power or assume control of the country.'

Of his subjects, Medvedev comments: 'Not one of the people portrayed here was born a criminal or a scoundrel; it was ambition, vanity and greed that led them from one crime to the next.'

Each choice taken led to a further choice to be made.

The first and decisive step taken was to support Stalin in the fateful struggles of the 1920s. Trotsky and his supporters fought against the bureaucratisation of the Communist Party and the Soviet state. Their defeat set the stage for the establishment of Stalin's rule of terror.

In this regime, Medvedev's subjects rose to positions of great power. Nevertheless, at any point a wrong step, a refusal to participate 100 per cent in Stalin's repressions, or even a suspicion in the morbidly suspicious mind of the dictator, could have sent them to their deaths. In fact, there was a high risk factor in being close to Stalin and many tried to avoid such an honour.

To survive at the summits of power in Stalin's regime meant to participate in terrible crimes.

The Stalinist terror of the 1930s fell with particular ferocity on the military cadre. The leadership of the armed forces was smashed. Some 25-30,000 officers and military commissars were killed — all this on the eve of the most destructive war in history.

During this period Voroshilov was People's Commissar of Defence. While his level of military competence was low, his reputation as a civil war hero and his loyalty to Stalin made him an ideal figurehead for the armed forces.

Perhaps Voroshilov did not initiate the military repressions but he

undoubtedly sanctioned the liquidation of his staff and the officer corps. Stalin generally demanded that Politburo members sign the blacklists he had drawn up. It was not possible to refuse and survive.

Despite the likely consequences, some leaders did try to protect their subordinates and limit the purges. GK 'Sergo' Ordzhonikidze, a Politburo member and long-time personal friend of Stalin, tried to protect his staff. He finally committed suicide in 1937 as a protest against the terror.

Some of Stalin's intimates not merely assented to the repressions, but played an active role in them. Kaganovich was one of these. In the 1930s, he was hailed in the Soviet press as 'Stalin's commissar' and chief trouble-shooter.

Medvedev reports that: 'During the investigations that were carried out after the twentieth party congress of 1956 dozens of letters from Kaganovich to the NKVD were discovered, complete with lists of the party workers whom he wanted arrested. In many cases he personally checked draft verdicts and made arbitrary alterations. He knew what he was doing.'

Stalin built up a cult around himself, but there were also smaller cults around some of his entourage. They often competed in having towns, collective farms and the like named after them.

Molotov's fiftieth birthday in March 1940 saw a big step forward in the promotion of his name. The biggest industrial centre in the country, the city of Perm, was renamed Molotov, and the map of the USSR suddenly sprouted two Molotovsks, one Molotovabad, Cape Molotov and Molotov Peak, as well as thousands of Molotov kolkhozes (collective farms), enterprises and institutes.

Following Stalin's death in 1953, the six generally supported Khrushchev in his efforts to destroy Lavrenty Beria, the organiser of Stalin's repressive apparatus since 1938. Mikoyan and Suslov endorsed Khrushchev's moves towards de-stalinisation. The rest had mixed feelings.

If their opposition was muted around the twentieth congress, it surfaced strongly the next year. Voroshilov, Molotov, Malenkov and Kaganovich all belonged to the so-called Anti-Party Group which tried to unseat Khrushchev in 1957. Khrushchev defeated them by securing the overwhelming backing of the full central committee.

The plotters feared the worst. Kaganovich phoned Khrushchev, virtually begging not to be shot. Khrushchev assured him that such times were over and that, despite their crimes, he and his associates would simply be

given lesser assignments.

Several of his subjects were still alive in 1983 as Medvedev was finishing his book. They would sometimes be recognised as they went about Moscow. At a theatre performance in Moscow, some members of the audience recognised Molotov and asked him to autograph their programmes.

'For a moment he came to life. Then suddenly a young woman in the foyer began screaming, "What are you doing? This man's an executioner! He destroyed hundreds of people!" The people around him scattered like autumn leaves. He lowered his head and quickly made for the exit.'

Then there was Malenkov, once widely

regarded as Stalin's heir but far too much compromised by the past and quickly out-manoeuvred by Khrushchev. In retirement he kept to himself, apparently resolved to take his terrible secrets with him to the grave. It seems he became religious in his old age and there were reports of him being seen entering various churches. Perhaps he was seeking forgiveness there for his numerous crimes.

But the Soviet people and progressive humanity can never forget the terrible crimes of stalinism. As Roy Medvedev points out, the moral of his book is the urgency and importance of the struggle for socialist democracy, which alone can ensure that never again can such things take place and that never again can such people lead the Soviet Union.

All Stalin's men, by Roy Medvedev, Oxford 1983, Basil Blackwell, £8.95.

# Diary of the 20th Congress

THIS IS an Italian communist's reminiscence on the historic Soviet Communist Party congress at which Khrushchev delivered his 'secret' speech denouncing the crimes of Stalin. Vidali was present as a delegate from the 'free territory of Trieste', a divided city on the Italian-Yugoslav border.

Although the congress was held in February 1956, the diary was published for the first time in 1974. This is its first English publication.

Vidali, better known in

the Communist movement as Carlos Contreras, joined the movement when he was 17. After being tortured and exiled by Mussolini's fascist regime, he was jailed repeatedly in many countries.

Reviewed by  
Robyn Marshall

During the Spanish Civil War he was a functionary of the Communist International. In his history of that war, Hugh Thomas names Vidali as one of the agents who, on orders from Stalin, helped organise the murder of Andres Nin, leader of the Party of Marxist Unification (POUM).

Vidali claims that his role was misrepresented, that he always refused to give personal details of communist leaders to Stalin's political police.

Vidali faced another complication in coming to terms with stalinism and the implications of Khrushchev's revelations. Although it's not explained in this book, at the end of World War II, Yugoslav partisans marched into Trieste just ahead of a division of New Zealanders.

This resulted in Trieste being divided in two: Zone A, the port and the west of the city, was held by the British. Yugoslavia took Zone B.

During the bitter split between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the Italian Communist Party slavishly followed Stalin and supported the capitalist Italian government, in the dispute over Trieste. In 1956, Trieste was still split.

De-stalinisation meant recognition of the Soviet Union's errors in dealing with Yugoslavia, an extremely painful line for Trieste Communist Party members to accept.

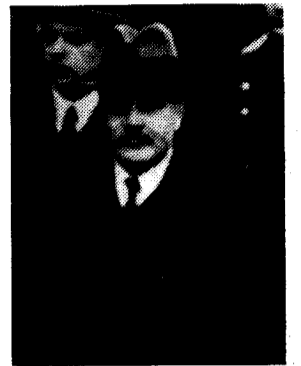
No foreign delegates were allowed to attend the closed session in which Khrushchev's four-hour secret speech was made. This made many of the delegates resentful.

In the corridors at the congress, Vidali met an old acquaintance Yelena Stasova, a leading Communist Party figure in Lenin's time. She narrowly avoided perishing in the 1930s purges.

However, Stasova relentlessly defended her friends in prison and did all she could for their families. Talking with Vidali she tells him of 40 mutual friends who had died in Stalin's prisons. In fact, Vidali himself had almost become a victim.

Vidali also meets the wife of former foreign minister Molotov. In 1948, Lavrenty Beria, chief of the secret police had conspired with Stalin to send her to prison on charges of trotskyism. Molotov was told to divorce her or face the consequences. He bowed to Stalin's pressure and dutifully divorced her. After Stalin's death she had been released and rehabilitated.

Vidali describes Anastas Mikoyan's congress speech, which was notable for its strong criticism of the Stalin period and the cult of the



Molotov



Beria

personality. This anticipated Khrushchev's later report and helped set a certain air of expectation at the congress.

The foreign delegates were left in the dark. Nothing was clear, except that the mood was changing and that portraits of Stalin were beginning to disappear overnight.

In the open part of the congress, care was taken not to mention Stalin's name.

Later, when Khrushchev's special report was leaked, Vidali's assessment was that: 'Khrushchev has tried to save himself — I don't believe he will succeed, because he himself has been a creature of Stalin, Stalin's accomplice and flatterer to a greater extent than others.'

Vidali saw the speech as just a manoeuvre in Khrushchev's power bid. He was also shocked by what he learned at a secret meeting with old communists released from prison in Siberia.

Like many who had accepted Stalin's leadership without question, Vidali was thrown into a crisis by the twentieth congress revelations. He resolves it by concluding:

'Going ahead by forced marches, with no previous experience on which to rely, at the cost of incredible sacrifices, the Soviet Union succeeded in transforming itself into that fortress which was able to resist all enemy attacks and the capitalist siege, up to and including victory in a terrible war against the most pitiless of enemies — Nazi fascism. All this took place under Stalin's leadership, and not in spite of Stalin, as some people declare.'

Vidali went on to become one of the strongest supporters of Togliatti, the long-term leader of the Italian Communist Party who was largely responsible for the development of Eurocommunism.

Diary of the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, by Vittorio Vidali. Journeyman, £4.95.

# The crimes of Stalin

THE EURO-COMMUNIST line pursued by the Communist Party at least since 1968 has dulled the sensibilities of many on the left to the full horror of the crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy. But the reemergence of a virulently-stalinist wing of the CP around the Morning Star makes it more urgent to remember just what the Soviet leadership represents historically. And just who Chernenko and Gorbachev are the descendants of.

The two books reviewed here gather together important new material on the Stalin period and its aftermath in the USSR.



# The party that dare not speak its name

**THIS SATURDAY and Sunday the London Labour Party meets for its annual meeting. Amongst the usual bland statements it will be discussing there are already a few arguments building up.**

One of the most ridiculous, because there should be no reason for an argument, will be a debate on the political levy. APEX — that well-known bastion of the trade union left — will be moving a composite which calls for 'a campaign of activity and education to win the arguments for trade union affiliation to the Labour Party'.

Their composite points out the need for an effective campaign in every constituency and union, and makes a few modest proposals: that material be made available on the links between the unions and the party, that constituencies should be encouraged to set up ad hoc campaign groups with local unions, that the London Labour Party work with the SERTUC and local trades councils on the issue, and

that where appropriate workplace Labour Party branches be formed.

**By Greg Tucker, Vauxhall Labour Party**

Proposals hardly likely to set the world on fire, but nevertheless a practical start to a campaign well overdue. Alas all this is too much for the regional executive. They cannot bring themselves to support

the resolution.

Instead they will be calling for remission and, with APEX probably willing to agree, that will be that.

The reason for the lack of support? Apparently the resolution might encourage constituencies to meddle in the affairs of the trade unions. Many of the trade union national campaigns on the political ballot aim not to mention the Labour Party at all.

Unfortunately the Tories won't go away if you lie down and play dead. Those union activists who know better must make sure that even if this composite is remitted, its calls for action do not go unheeded.

On other issues the regional executive has not been so weak. They are supporting two clear com-

posites on Northern Ireland: one calling for immediate and unconditional British withdrawal and the other calling for a widening of the dialogue with the Republicans including inviting representatives to next year's annual meeting.

On black sections there should be a set-piece debate between the Young Socialists and those London parties who have black sections. The long LPYS resolution boils down to one sentence: 'black workers will not be attracted to the Labour Party on the basis of special constitutional arrangements.'

The other composite seeks to extend the debate first to call on the Labour Party as a whole to fight to eradicate racism, second to defend those parties who

might become threatened by the party nationally because they have black sections, and third to allow black sections to be represented at a regional level.

In line with last year's decisions, the regional executive will be supporting the pro-black section composite.

Vauxhall delegates will be attempting to question the annual report's total silence on gay rights. After a thorough debate last year, a resolution spelling out a programme of action on gay rights was passed. The regional executive has done nothing whatsoever to make the resolution a reality.

At the best of times ignoring resolutions is bad enough: at a time when homophobia is being inflamed by the media, it is the duty of socialists to unite in defence of those under attack.

Defence from attack of another kind of sexual harassment at work will feature in an emergency resolution originally from the regional women's committee and being presented by the executive. Focussing on particular events in the London Fire Brigade, it is bound to cause controversy.

Though the incidents involved have had some publicity, many of the facts have not come out. So delegates will have to beware of smoke-screens.

The resolution is clear in its demands relating to the Fire Brigade — that firm action be taken against the harasser — but also spells out a series of general demands on the GLC as an employer which other councils would do well to note. It urges all trade unions to examine their own attitude to the problems of sexual harassment at work.



Greg Tucker

## YARDLEY WITCH-HUNT An appeal

**WITH A new witchhunt in the Labour Party threatening, it is worth remembering some comrades still caught up in the previous round. In particular, the case of the five comrades excluded from Yardley CLP is still dragging on after nearly two years.**

In June 1983, two applied to join for the first time, and were refused; and three members of several years' standing applied to transfer, unsuccessfully. In the course of our interviews with the membership secretary we were questioned about our occupations, CND activity and other irrelevancies.

Such was the hysteria of the whole business that we appealed to the NEC, in March of last year. A regional enquiry was held in June 1984, which we believe found in our favour. Since then, nothing. Whatever the appeals

and mediation subcommittee of the NEC is up to, it is not letting on. Throughout the whole affair, we have been told little or nothing, and it seems that our appeal is to be delayed indefinitely.

The least that we should accept is that the NEC should resolve the case one way or the other. However, it would be the final insult if the NEC were to turn around now and refuse us after all this waiting.

The Campaign Group of MPs recently gave its 'whole-hearted support' to the Yardley comrades, and we now appeal to all Labour Party members at every level to do the same. It is about time that the 'appeals and mediation' sub-committee lived up to its name.

**Jacky Law,  
Martin Tolman,  
Bob Smith,  
Pat Tough,  
Bob Whitehead**

**MOLESWORTH, February 1985. Eight hundred acres of flat bleak land, a disused airfield, ringed now by a barbed and razor-wire fence coiled high. Beyond that, almost fully-erected, a high metal fence topped by more barbed wire.**

Seeing this on 20 February made me feel that I was witnessing a process that could lead to the militarisation of Britain, if it was not exposed, resisted and reversed.

**By Les Parsons, Forrest Fields Peace Group**

I was there as a participant in an East Midlands' day of action, part of the national CND campaign to defend Molesworth, and — on behalf of the majority of British people — to resist turning it into a second US cruise missiles base.

It was hard to distinguish between the police and military functions of those guarding the base. It felt like a continuation of the military operation begun at night a few weeks before in what the *Daily Express* had revealingly termed the 'Battle of Molesworth'.

The barbed wire and the military presence combined to say 'keep out', and seemed to carry a threat of force behind it.

Involvement confirmed my feeling that the real defence of Molesworth cannot be just a CND campaign. It is a campaign by ordinary British people opposed to a Tory government who are signalling their intent to meet dissent and protest with force if necessary. The Tories are determined to turn Molesworth into a US base capable of playing its part in nuclear genocide.

The campaign to stop Molesworth must and will succeed. The action on 20 February illustrated the determination of people to continue their protest, to refuse to be silenced.

A strong physical presence was maintained throughout the day, and expressed itself through hourly chanting and music, a vigil, decoration of the perimeter fence, and highly successful non-

## Eye witness at Molesworth



Molesworth protest, 20 February

violent direct action.

Despite the military control and perimeter fence, 40 people successfully entered the base. They carried a message of protest and resistance to its heart.

The response to this action revealed the delicacy of the balance between control and intimidation. With some exceptions the

protesters were not physically intimidated. But they were detained for hours against their will, illegally. Similarly they were photographed against their will.

On a day when Thatcher endorsed support for Reagan's insane Star Wars plans and when the Ministry of Defence finally admitted that the US national guard was

training in Britain with the British army, it was exhilarating to be involved in direct action, resisting and defying the process of nuclear militarisation.

Increasingly events reveal that active participation in the struggle for peace is essential. Molesworth is now at the very centre of that struggle — for all of us!

Photo: MARK SALMON

## Tories can be beaten

**A WEEK ago in Rugby, the Tories convened an emergency council meeting to vote through unanimously a resolution reinstating 'sexual orientation' in their equal opportunities policy. This is now council policy.**

The Stop the Lesbian and Gay Ban campaign made one further demand: 'that the council make a public statement about their climbdown.' This they duly did, and the lobby of this week's council meeting was called off.

**By Frank Elvy**

'We will be magnanimous in victory. But only in victory,' said the campaign spokesperson.

We must not underestimate the scale of the Tories' climbdown. In September, when they deleted 'sexual orientation', the Tories stated categorically that this amounted to a ban on the employment of

gay people.

They were the first public body in this country to announce such a policy, and were lauded by the scum newspapers as 'the number one town in Britain'.

Now Rugby council, albeit inadvertently, has become the vanguard of progress. Most obviously our victory was achieved by mass action unprecedented in the history of Rugby town. But mass action of a special kind in the history of the gay movement in this country.

From demonstrations to pickets, the gay community nationally engaged in a partnership with the labour movement in Rugby. This combination was dynamic and victorious.

The other important, complementary factor was leadership, provided by Jeff Coupe, chair of Rugby Labour group. From start to finish he has been indefatigable, and on an unpopular issue in an unpopular place. Kinnock, are you listening?

Without Coupe's leadership it would have been extremely difficult to

cement the gay-labour movement partnership. His final words to the Tories were: 'if you don't do what you are told, there's going to be hundreds of "poofers" on the streets next Wednesday.'

There is an important lesson to be drawn from the experience of this campaign for all socialists. That is: the Tories are vulnerable and can be beaten.

The gay community can build on our victory in Rugby in two ways. One, we must develop ways of monitoring equal opportunities policies to make sure they are implemented. This has to be done through the town hall trades unions.

Second, the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights and Stop the Lesbian and Gay Ban must organise a mass lobby of the national negotiations between NALGO and the employers in the spring, to ensure that equal opportunity policies become the way of life in all town halls.

Forward to other victories!

# Socialist ACTION

# 80,000 on miners' demo



Photo: PAUL MATTSSON

# United action on teachers pay



Photo: JOHN CHAPMAN

ON MONDAY 25 February the National Union of Teachers voted, with only three against, to comply with the High Court injunction granted to Solihull Education Authority. Solihull took out an injunction to force the NUT to rescind the call on its members not to cover for absent teachers, not to attend out-of-hours meetings and to refuse to undertake supervision of school meals.

by Bernard Regan, NUT executive (personal capacity)

The judge's decision instructed the union to take back this call and comply with the 1984 Trade Union Act which requires that employees

are balloted before action is undertaken. The executive's decision to comply therefore represents a further strengthening of the government's anti-union legislation.

However their decision was not only to ballot teachers in Solihull, but in anticipation of further legal action by other employers, to conduct a national ballot. This represents an important con-

cession on another front — it is in effect an acknowledgement that the actions teachers are engaged in are part of their contracts. It will be an invitation to employers to dock teachers' pay.

Whilst NUT members in all probability will vote to continue action, the executive has handed the employers a stick to beat teachers with.

What is urgently required is a special conference of the union to discuss the implications of the Solihull decision and to organise a coherent and united response. The conference should also spell out a programme of real escalating action beyond the current three-day strikes, and should plan the mobilisation of the whole membership to meet the employers' challenge.

This strategy has to be linked at all levels with a campaign to create united action by all public sector workers with pay claims pending. Teachers in Scotland as well as those in further education, are also fighting to restore the massive losses they have suffered over the last 10 years.

A link-up between these and all the other local government workers could create a campaign involving up to two million employees.

The left in the union, led by Lambeth and East

London Teachers' Associations, are organising a salary conference on 9 March at Sir William Collins School, London. All union activists should make every effort to attend.

This Wednesday's ILEA school reps' conference will be discussing a resolution similar to the policy of London Bridge, calling for joint action and organisation in schools and colleges, together with a campaign to prepare for effective strike action.

Some teachers have already started strike action over pay. And, in the next few days, ILEA teachers will be balloted. A strong response is expected, comparable to the 70-90 per cent ballots in favour of action in other areas.

The fight on pay will set the scene for the fight on rate-capping. In Inner London, all teachers will be out on Democracy Day, 6 March, together with those from the rate-capped borough of Haringey, and from Brent and Sheffield.

The NUT must take firm steps to meet the pay challenge by joining with others taking action. We must fight the incursions into trade union rights represented by the Solihull decision — not only for teachers and their just demands, but on behalf of all trade unionists under attack from the Tory laws.

THE MINERS gave their reply in advance to the united 'surge to work' engineered by the Tories in a magnificent demonstration through London last Sunday, 23 March. An estimated 80,000 miners, women from the mining communities and other supporters marched to Trafalgar Square to hear speeches from miners' leaders and other trade union and Labour Party leaders.

The loudly-proclaimed message of the demonstration was that the fight goes on until the Tories pit closure programme is abandoned.

'There is no way that we are going to sign agreements to close pits and lose jobs', Arthur Scargill proclaimed to a rapturous reception. 'The miners cannot be beaten into submission.'

Betty Heathfield from Women Against Pit Closures pointed to the future by calling for International Women's Day to be the focus of massive action in support of the miners.

Conspicuous by their absence was the central leadership of the TUC. So no assurances were given that the TUC would implement its own conference decisions and mobilise 'total support' for the miners demands.

Ron Todd, secretary-elect of the transport workers' union instead suggested that the real problem was the failure of rank and file activists 'to convince people in their workplaces that their jobs too were at stake.'

This demonstration

shows that the ranks are prepared to act if given a lead. The massive turnout was achieved despite the sectarian way in which the demonstration was built by the Liaison Committee for the Defence of the Trades Unions and the *Morning Star*. It shows the potential that could be achieved by a Labour Party-TUC demonstration in support of the miners.

Even a MORI opinion poll conducted for the TV programme *Union World* showed that a majority of trades unionists stating an opinion supported the miners. (Forty three per cent for, as opposed to 36 per cent against.)

As the pit strike approaches its first anniversary, the miners still face a gargantuan task. But the core of the miners are still determined to go on.

This poses a real possibility of fusing with the struggles of other groups of workers as a new pay round is entered upon. This theme was taken up by Ken Livingstone who called on Labour councils 'to open up a second front against the Tories' when they meet on 7 March.

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