

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

FRANCE CHINA: STUDENTS IN REVOLT



Special 4 page pullout in the middle of this week's Socialist Organiser

WE CAN BEAT THATCHER!

Prepare for an election in '87

The fires of freedom flare in China

Singing the 'Internationale', the song of international working class unity, Chinese students have confronted the ruling bureaucracy and forced them to retreat.

In Peking, students chanted 'burn, burn, burn' as they set fire to the Peking Daily for its inaccurate reporting of previous student protests.

The Red Flag and other Communist Party paraphernalia has been burned by the students, who have been advocating "bourgeois democracy".

In fact, protest movements for democracy are the raw material for a future democratic, socialist China.

For more on China see centre page pull-out



Chinese students burn copies of the Peking Daily in protest at its coverage of their demonstrations. A crowd of hundreds cheered.



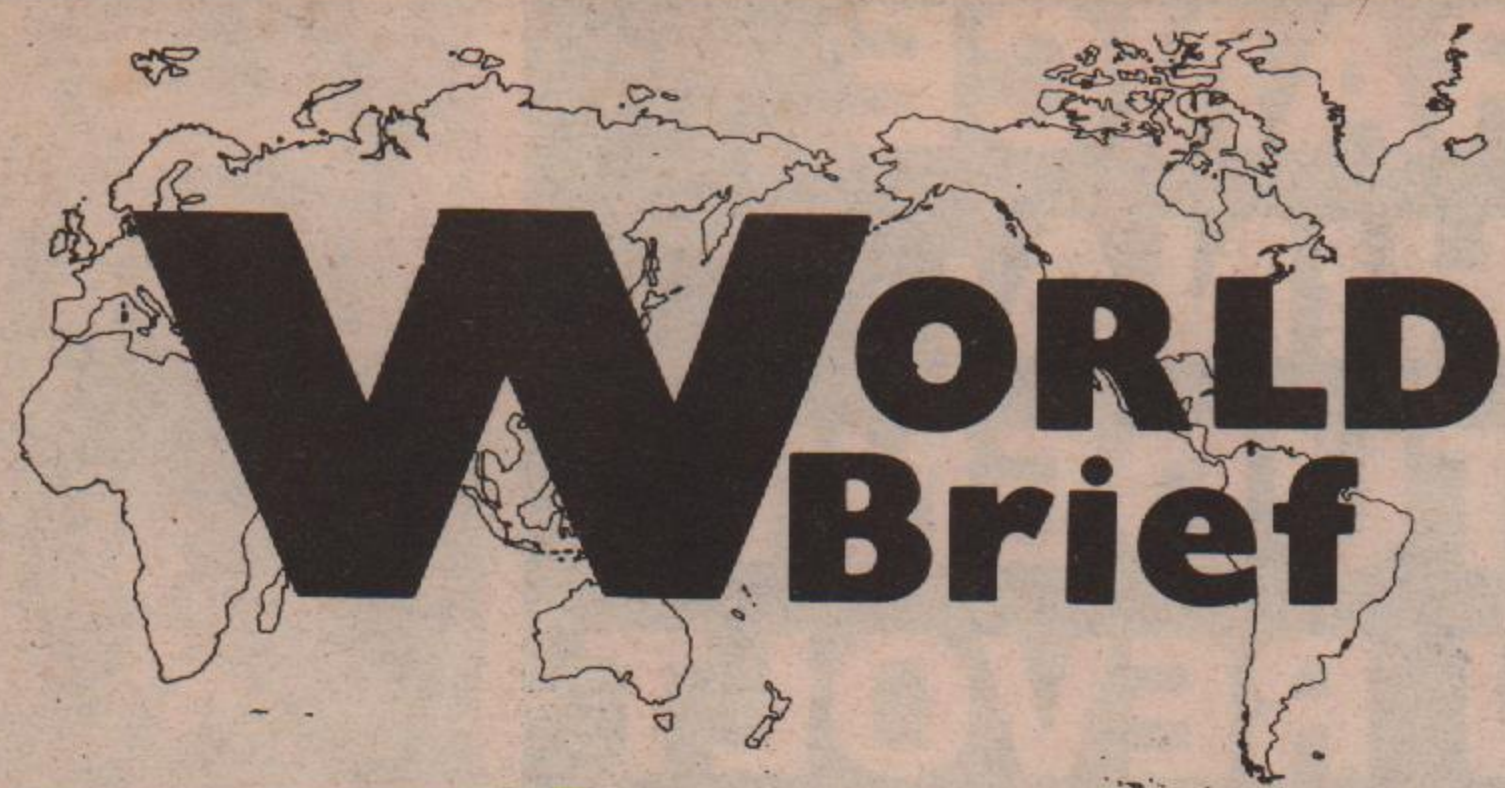
"Everyone, left, right and centre, in the labour movement must want to see the Thatcher government removed from office this year. But if we are to do that we need a very strong and committed labour movement fighting for our people as strongly as she has fought for the class she represents.

"The prospects of victory depend critically on our representing a clear constituency, many of whom do not vote at all, rather than trying to tempt a handful of voters back from the SDP.

"The clearer and stronger we are the greater the prospects of success."

TONY BENN

Now turn to page 3



Protestants and Catholics

Nobody knows exactly how many Catholics or Protestants there are in Northern Ireland. Some people avoid the question on census forms, others give unreliable answers designed to protect them from sectarianism.

For, of course, in Northern Ireland your religion and the political affiliations and sympathies that can be assumed to go with it, may be your death warrant. It can make you the target of sectarian assassins.

Therefore in mixed Catholic-Protestant areas, many people avoid identifying themselves as Catholic or Protestant, Unionist or Nationalist.

Now the Unionist parties opposed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement have launched their own political "census". They are going from door to door

throughout every part of Northern Ireland in which they dare set foot, collecting signatures on a petition which calls for a referendum on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

It will be a brave man or woman in Protestant or mixed areas who will refuse to sign.

This "petition" campaign is mainly an exercise in intimidation. Already the homes of Catholics in mixed areas have been petrol bombed.

Sectarian attacks are bound to be more numerous in the period ahead, as a direct result of this "petition".

Elections in Ireland

The date has yet to be set but the political parties in the Irish Republic are limbering up for a general election that is now very near.

The ruling coalition government between Labour and the Liberal-Conservative Fine Gael party recently lost its majority with the defection of the Catholic arch-bishop Alice Glen TD (MP) from Fine Gael.

A leading campaigner against divorce and abortion, Glen had called non-Catholics in the Republic "enemies of the people" and been "deselected" by her local Fine Gael party.

The opinion polls give C. J. Haughey's Nationalist-Conservative Fianna Fail party a very

big lead over Fine Gael. But with Fianna Fail's "Liberal" split off, the Progressive Democrats, contesting its first general election, there is a joker in the pack. Another coalition, this time made up of Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats is not entirely ruled out.

Provisional Sinn Fein may possibly win one or two seats as well.

The coalition has been catastrophic for the small trade union based Labour Party, for four years it has been the junior partner as the coalition presided over economic collapse and the renewal of mass emigration.

Labour is expected to do very badly in the elections.

Ceasefire in Afghanistan?

The decision of Russia's puppet government in Afghanistan — read the decision of the Russian Politburo — to offer a "ceasefire" to the people of Afghanistan is good news.

Except that it isn't quite true. It's a propaganda ploy and probably part of a diplomatic game with Pakistan which borders on Afghanistan and has given refuge to three million people who have fled from the USSR's murderous war against the peoples of Afghanistan.

Does the "ceasefire" mean that they will stop

napalming villages and cease to conduct Russia's equivalent of the USA's war against the people of Vietnam? Only if the Afghans stop fighting to throw them out. And they say they won't stop.

Afghan acceptance of this ceasefire would leave the Russians and their stooges in control of Afghanistan.

The battered Afghans need a ceasefire alright — one that would follow the withdrawal of the defeated Russian armies which have spent seven years trying to conquer them.

Thatcher's big lie

SOMEONE once justly described Stalin's regime in the USSR as "the dictatorship of the lie". Mrs Thatcher does not preside over a totalitarian state. But her government too has rested heavily on lies and deception. Now the truth is beginning to catch up with her.

Remember all those 'sincere' Tory Party Political Broadcasts in which it was indignantly denied that the Tories had slashed the National Health Service? Absolute figures for expenditure were cited to 'prove' the opposite.

Now a survey of the NHS shows that over the last six years the number of hospital beds in Britain has been cut by 20,000!

Waiting lists are longer. Waiting time for operations can stretch into years. Because of the pressure on bedspace, sick people are being turned out of hospitals before they are fit to be discharged.

Meanwhile, there has been a phenomenal boom in private medicine. Health care is increasingly available only to the sick who can pay for it. The others — quite a few of them anyway — can just go away and die if their own bank accounts are not strong enough to save them.

Tories have lied and lied again over the number of people out of work. On a number of occasions they have changed the basis on which unemployment figures are calculated so as to make the numbers appear less than they are.

Above

The real number of the unemployed is probably well over 4 million, a million or more above the admitted number. The Tories are mounting a sustained campaign to terrorise unemployed people off the register, the notorious Restart scheme.

Now there is talk of a new Tory trick to lop a quarter of a million young people off the unemployment register in the run-up to the General Election. The facts don't matter, appearance is everything. People don't matter — manipulating them, and fooling enough of them to vote Thatcher back for a third term — that's the name of the Tory game. This is government by the deliberate and shameless cosmetic lie.

Some of the truths about unemployment in Britain have now begun to catch up with Thatcher too.

A Department of Employment census is about to be published which shows that 94% of all jobs lost under the Tories — since 1979 — have been lost in the North and the Midlands. Yet Thatcher denied as recently as last December that the North-South

By Mick Ackersley

divide was so vast: "I don't think that there is anything like the North-South divide that some people like to think".

No wonder Thatcher's government blocked publication of this census for nearly a year!

In housing too the truth is beginning to catch up with Mrs Thatcher.

One of the great Tory triumphs has been the selling off of council houses. They have squeezed local government finances, stopping other council houses being built. Now former judge Lord Scarman has publicly warned the government that if things go much further in Britain we will be back — even in London, at the heart of the prosperous south — to housing conditions comparable to the slums which disfigured Britain's cities in the mid-nineteenth century!

Scarman said: "Do people understand the misery, the squalor, the threat to health, and even to life itself which homelessness inflicts on millions of our fellow men? Homelessness is a critical element of the social conditions which provide a breeding ground for crime, marital breakdown, child abuse and neglect."

Blaming the government Scarman

went on: "Tomorrow our own children and grandchildren will find themselves condemned to live in slums unless something is done now."

"Urban areas are going to be full of houses not properly repaired which will slowly slip into a state bordering on unfitness for human habitation."

This is only one part of the true picture of what is happening in Thatcher's Britain.

Everywhere in Britain there is squalor and corruption, the rule of the shameless exploiter over the helpless or defeated and over those that are not yet ready to fight back. And everywhere it is covered over by barefaced lies and weaseling denials backed up by most of the mass circulation press.

Offensive

Britain is not Stalin's Russia, but Thatcher's rule does indeed have much in common with "the dictatorship of the lie".

The labour movement must go on the offensive in the period between now and the general election and make sure that the truth about Thatcher's island slum is brought home stark and clear to the people who can do something about it — the working class.

Dunnes strike

The two-and-a-half year old strike by Dunnes supermarket workers in Dublin against the sale of South African goods was to have ended this week because the Irish government has introduced new anti-apartheid policies.

But upon returning to work, the eleven strikers were called into the canteen and asked to sign documents that would require them to handle all goods — including goods from South Africa. Of course, the workers refused to sign.

According to their union, the Irish Distributive and Allied Trade Union, they have now been effectively dismissed.

Their strike has received international recognition, and has directly led to changes in Irish government policy. It is a model for working class solidarity with the struggle in South Africa.

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BBC electricians strike

EETPU members picket the main gate at BBC's TV studios in Shepherd's Bush. The men are on strike after having negotiated unsuccessfully with management for over two years.
photo: Jez Coulson (IFL)

LABOUR PARTY

NCC Election results

With the right wing gaining a 7 to 4 majority in the postal ballot for the newly established National Constitutional Committee, Neil Kinnock can base his future purge plans against the left on the knowledge of a clear working majority in what is now the final appeal court for most matters in Labour's constitution.

The left slate won the CLP section convincingly with Mandy Moore, Ken Slater and John Burrows all getting over 100,000 votes. The closest right wing candidate got 43,000; the top placed Militant supporter (Ray Apps) 34,000. The only other left winger elected as Alan Quinn (TGWU) in the trade union section. The right wing slate took the other

four trade union places, the two seats in the women's section and the one place for the Socialist Societies.

Vladimir Derer, secretary of the CLPD comments:

The result in the constituency section demonstrated the crucial role of a joint left slate. Comrades elected in the CLP section who were on the CLPD slate, backed by the Labour Left Liaison (LLL) and the Campaign Goup, were way ahead of the runners up (2 of whom were on the right wing 'Labour Forward' slate). At the same time the number of votes cast for the successful left wing candidates was only a third of what left wing candidates standing in the NEC elections can generally count on.

This shows that the left on many CLPs did not take the NCC election seriously, despite the fact that the real issue was whether the new NCC

will or will not rubber stamp the witch-hunt. Headlines in the bourgeois press announcing the result show that Labour's enemies have understood this much better than those left 'activists'.

The result in the trade union and Women's sections are further evidence of the shift of opinion in the unions to the right, with formerly 'left' unions (T&G, NUPE) failing to vote for left candidates in the women's section. If their decision was dictated by 'tactical considerations' then they are likely to be disappointed — there will be no quid pro quo.

Far from being a foregone conclusion the result shows that a more balanced composition of the NCC could have easily achieved. All that was needed was a few extra votes for Owen Briscoe in the trade unions and the election of one left woman candidate in the women's section.

Tube Strike

By John Bloxam

THERE will be a one-day official strike on London's underground next Wednesday (14 Jan) after London Underground workers recorded an 82% ballot majority to support the NUR leadership's call for industrial action against London Regional Transport's latest round of attacks on jobs and conditions.

Support for action clearly comes from drivers and other central operations staff, although it is the non-train staff who are bearing the immediate brunt of the attacks, particularly through competitive tendering and privatisation of services.

Recently LRT bosses have demanded a 30% wage cut from canteen staff so that they can 'compete' with private firms for their own jobs.

The NUR leadership campaigned for a yes vote, and has now called the one day strike. But the signs are that they will try to limit the action to such protests. In a mass meeting in the run up to the ballot, NUR general secretary Jimmy Knapp told the workers: "This is not a call for everybody out of the gate. We are asking for a yes vote for negotiating strength."

Militants must use next Wednesday's action — campaigning for 100% support among the NUR and solidarity from the section of drivers in ASLEF — as the launching pad for the all-out action that will be needed to defeat LRT's plans.

Labour can win!

There will probably be a general election in 1987.

All the signs point to it. The Tories are in full cry after Labour, concentrating their fire against Labour's proposed non-nuclear 'defence' policy, and raising a great hue and cry in the press about the activities of a few Labour councils such as Brent and Harringey.

The Tory Central Office has booked large numbers of bill boards all over Britain from April to June so it may be a June election.

They think they can go for the kill. Thatcher boasts on TV that she can win her third general election and then go on to drive any sort of socialism to the very margins of British politics. She says she wants to make the sharp rightward tilt seven years of radical Tory government have given to British politics irreversible.

The next election will be the most important election for a very long time. The labour movement must win that election.

It would be far better of course if the working class were to rise in angry revolt against the horrors Thatcher has inflicted on millions of people over the last seven years and drive the Tories from office.

The TUC should have organised a general strike at the beginning of the eighties to drive them from office. That's what we advocated then.

But the leaders of the trade union movement didn't fight back. Slump and unemployment and consequent loss of self-confidence have taken their toll of the working class movement.

Militancy will revive — and a Labour victory will help it revive faster by boosting the labour movement's confidence — but right now the upcoming election is the best chance we have of removing Thatcher in the immediate period ahead.

The left must take that chance, and put all its enthusiasm and energy into winning the general election.

Of course the serious left knows that the Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley-led Labour Party does not have the politics necessary to reverse the damage done by Thatcher. And a Labour government will not open the door to a socialist Britain.

Quite likely — if not inevitably — Kinnock's energetic efforts to ingratiate himself with the bankers and big business will lead a Kinnock Labour government to attack the working class just like the Wilson-Callaghan Labour



government did in the 1970s.

But a new Labour government will be in part dependent on the labour movement and open to its pressure. MPs who backed anti-working class policies by a Labour government could be deselected by their local parties.

The Prime Minister himself will be elected by MPs in the House of Commons, but he will only be elected PM there because he has been elected Labour Party leader. Unlike any previous leader of the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock was elected not by Labour MPs alone but by an electoral college in which Labour MPs were the minority and representatives of CLPs and the trade unions the majority.

Whatever Kinnock and Hattersley may intend to do, the labour movement will have great scope for action in self-defence against a Labour government.

Kinnock and Hattersley may not be able to do what they now intend to do when they form a government.

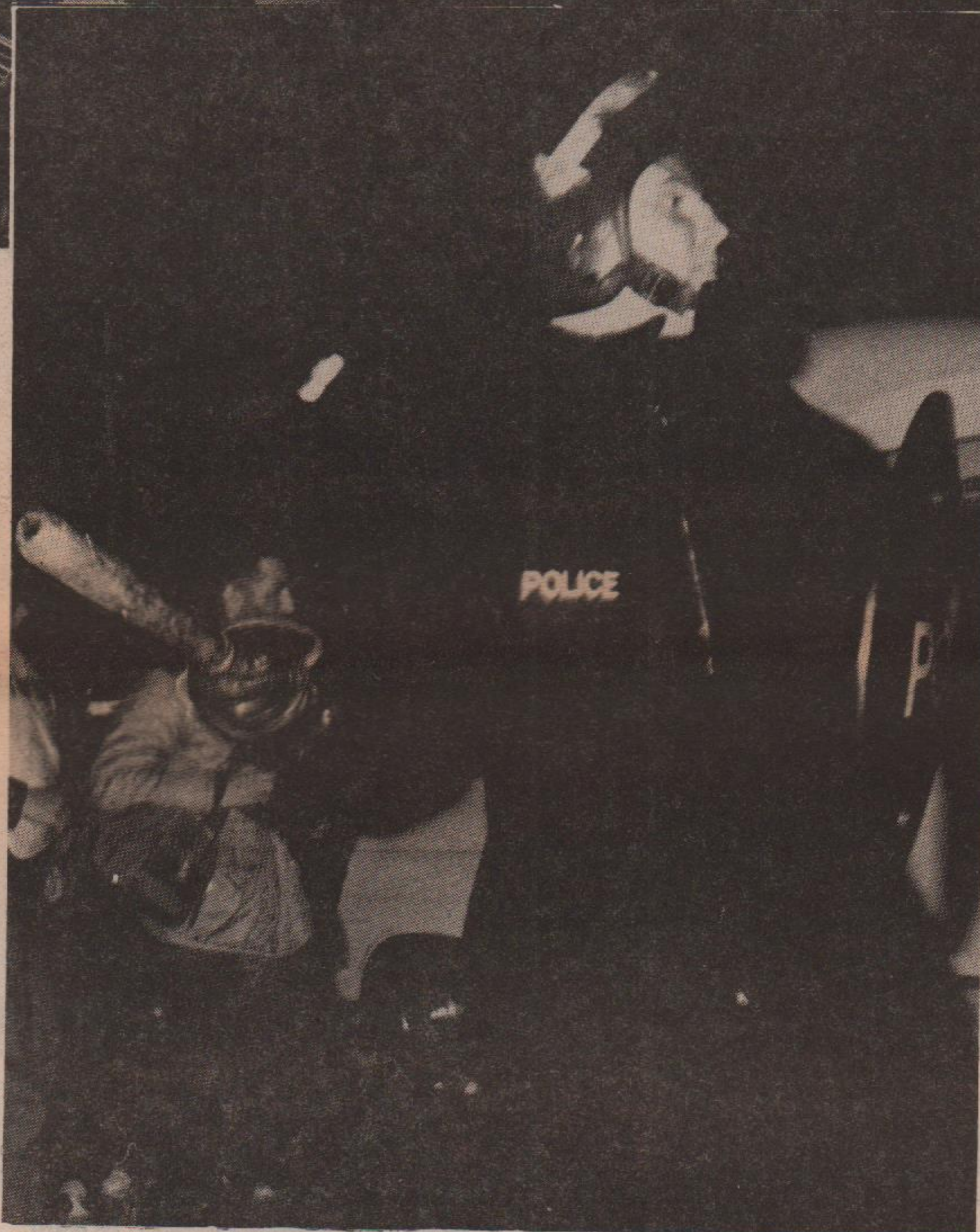
The ruling class knows this and that is one reason for their embittered and unscrupulous campaign against the Labour Party.

The serious left has good reason to distrust Kinnock and Hattersley. But if that leads to us refusing to throw everything we have into getting a Labour government elected then we are cutting off our noses to spite our faces. Kinnock and Hattersley are not the Labour Party. They are not the labour movement.

The danger is that large sections of the left will feel so alienated and turned off by the present regime in the Labour Party — a regime made possible only by the defeats and setbacks suffered by the left over the last five years — that they will either abstain from participating or else just go through the motions, dragging their feet.

Shading over from disillusioned Left wing members of the Labour Party on one side there is an entire spectrum of the Left which distrust and is disdainful of the electoral system in its entirety. They want "class struggle" instead, by which they mean industrial struggle. So do we.

But politics is also part of the class struggle. It would be an im-



Blackpool and Wapping: Defending Thatcher

mense surge forward for millions of workers in Britain right now if they were to become involved in *doing something* to mobilise themselves and the labour movement to fight to kick out the Tories and put into office the only labour-movement based alternative government available to us — a Labour government.

Half-baked shame-faced, half-anarcho-syndicalist politics, like those of the SWP have helped the right and the soft left — by their abstention from the political process within the labour movement — during the struggle for the political soul of the British working class movement that began with the defeat of Callaghan's government in 1979.

Abstention — or half-abstention — from the political process in society in the run-up to the general election will help the naked enemies of the working class — Margaret Thatcher and her red-in-tooth-and-claw Tory government.

If that sounds harsh, then remember that the realities of Tory rule in Britain are harsh also. Whatever the intentions or wishes of the anti-Labour left —

and even if they issue flabby and half-hearted calls for a Labour vote during the three weeks of the official election campaign, as will the SWP — they are helping the Tories against the labour movement unless they turn now and put their backs into a serious campaign to elect a Labour government at the next general election.

It is not necessary to be silent about the crimes of the last Labour government, or about the likely crimes against the working class of a Kinnock-Hattersley government. Socialist Organiser will not be silent.

What is necessary is for us to face up to the stark choice we now face — either five more years of Thatcher or the election of a Labour government.

The Greenwich by-election is the immediate test. Labour must retain Greenwich. The London labour movement must organise now to send squads of volunteers into Greenwich to canvass Labour votes.

We can kick out Thatcher and her dirty crew of hard-faced Tory spivs and scoundrels in 1987. So let's fight to do it — starting from now!

RACE AND CLASS



Viraj Mendis

Anti-Deportation Conference

If Viraj Mendis is deported to his native Sri Lanka, as the Home office has decided that he should be, he will face imprisonment or death. He is a known socialist who has supported the rights of the persecuted Tamil minority in Sri Lanka.

Viraj Mendis has lived in this country for 13 years. Despite a big campaign to save him, the Home Office is insisting that he must leave Britain. Since the end of last year, Viraj has been taking sanctuary in a church in Manchester, where he lives.

The Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign is calling a conference in April in support of Viraj and of other deportation cases. The conference will take place in Manchester on April 11-12.

One of the issues it will discuss is how to make the immigration laws an issue in the forthcoming election.

The conference will be open to everyone.

Release Bruta Perera

An international campaign is being waged for the release of a Sri Lankan Trotskyist, Bruta Perera, who is being held under the Jayawardene regime's state of emergency.

He is a member of the Revolutionary Communist League, which is affiliated to the International Committee of the Fourth International.

B. Perera was first arrested together with two other RCL members at the end of June; they were all released, but Perera was re-arrested on 21 August and is still being held.

Perera is charged with 'resisting arrest' — which, according to information we have received, carries a possible sentence of 20 years imprisonment, or execution under the regime's emergency laws.

We are appealing to organisations to attend the weekly picket at the Sri Lanka High Commission from 12 midday to 2pm each Thursday at 13 Hyde Park Gardens, London SW7, and to write to the Sri Lanka High Commissioner at that address, demanding Perera's release.

As with the case of Eleuterio Guitierrez, the jailed Bolivian Trotskyist tin miners' leader, and all political prisoners, we call on all organisations to take up the demand for their release, as a matter of principle.

Simon Pirani,
(on behalf of the Workers Revolutionary Party)

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GRAFFITI

MONEY

The price of Guinness

Did Guinness pay people to buy its own shares during the £2.5 billion takeover of Distillers last year?

The government has rejected demands by Labour MPs for an interim report by the Department of Trade and Industry on their investigation into Guinness. The DTI say such a report would obstruct their inquiries.

The origin of the investigation into the com-

pany concerned their links with the recently discredited American tycoon Ivan Boesky. But now it has gone far beyond that. The DTI are demanding documents relating to the purchase of Distillers.

The story is complex. It began when Morgan Grenfell resigned as merchant bankers for Guinness, and their own direc-

tor, Roger Seelig, resigned.

Seelig had masterminded the Distillers takeover.

Then the connections with Boesky surfaced. It turned out that Seelig had given an informal indemnity to Dawn Nominees, a subsidiary of the merchant bank Henry Ansbacher, for any losses they might incur from buying Guinness shares. Dawn Nominees bought the shares at 50p above their market value.



"Nobody with a conscience votes Conservative anyway." Norman Tebbit

UNEMPLOYMENT AND US TV

Restart link with MI5

Apparently, one of the delights that the new year will bring is an American TV special mini-series called 'Amerika', in which the US of A has been occupied by the USSR (in conjunction with the United Nations!), who proceed to Sovietise American life, until a brave band of all-American resistance fighters led by Kris Kristoferson kill them all off (softly, no doubt).

One of the things that all this ridiculous Reaganite crap calls to mind is that the vigilance against Russian subver-

sion that they demand we take more seriously has indeed been grossly lacking up to now. According to the never ending revelations of Peter Wright in the MI5 trial, virtually every important person in the British Establishment is in fact a Soviet spy.

Why the British aristocracy are so determined to undermine their own way of life is not entirely clear to me. Perhaps they never recovered their sanity after Charles I lost his head all those years ago. Or perhaps it's

something someone put in the wine.

But it does beg a question. If every supposed state secret is in fact common knowledge in the Kremlin, but there are as yet no Russian tanks patrolling the streets and hoisting up badly drawn pictures of Lenin, spies, despite the large amounts of money that I presume they earn, don't actually do much at all.

Sounds like the ideal job. So you know what to say on your 'Restart' interview: 'Er... thinking of going into spying. 'Gis a job.'

POLITICAL DINOSAURS

Tweedledee and Tweedledum

Mick Costello, former industrial organiser for the Communist Party, announced his intention, and that of the Tankie Morning Star fragment of the old Communist Party, to 'Rebuild the Party' this week — which means that his faction are preparing for a full-scale split.

A Tankie CP could regroup hardline pro-Moscow people who have

been expelled over the past year or so, and pull out their remaining sympathisers in the party.

In a two-part article, Costello spells out the nature of the 'Crisis in the Party' — rightly accusing the 'Eurocommunist' majority, and in particular its journal 'Marxism Today', of abandoning 'class politics'.

The Euros — whose main recent claim to fame is their recommendation to the Labour Party that it should do a deal with the SDP — have indeed abandoned 'class politics' (or, more precisely, they have gone over to a different class). But what is Costello's intransigent, working-class alternative?

Costello's line is just the old version of the 'broad democratic alliance'. "There is a continuing basis for building a very broad movement," he writes, "including many who consider themselves to be on the right of the movement of opposition at the moment."

The new party may call itself by the same name as the one controlled by the Euros — the Communist Party of Great Britain. Confusing, like Tweedledum and Tweedledee — and not only in name. Politically they aren't really all that far apart.

MURDER

The real Macmillan

The British have a worldwide reputation for hypocrisy and the universal weeping and wailing over the death of old granddad Supermac reminds us how well-deserved it is.

Macmillan was one of the architects of the Suez adventure in 1956 when Britain, France and Israel invaded Egypt.

Before that Macmillan was one of the civilian war lords during the Second

World War and in that capacity sent tens of thousands of Ukrainian men, women and children to imprisonment, torture and death in Stalin's death camps.

Macmillan wanted a prosperous Britain and to have "one nation". Unlike Thatcher, Macmillan cared for the British working class. In fact he'd have done anything for us, except get off our backs.

A fighter for our class

By Alex Glasgow

Anatoly Marchenko, one of the best known working class opponents of the Soviet regime, died in the prison of Tchistopol, 500 miles to the east of Moscow, at the close of last year.

The date scheduled for his release was 1996. He had already spent a total of 20 years in prisons and labour camps for his struggle against Stalinist oppression. He was 48 years of age.

Born in 1938 to a working class family in Barabinsk in Siberia, Marchenko began work on building sites at an early age. He was first arrested at the age of 19 and sentenced to two years in prison. After an unsuccessful attempt to flee across the border into Iran, he was sentenced to six years for "treason".

Freed in 1966, he wrote "My Testimony" as a record of his experiences in Soviet labour camps. From then on he was committed to supporting the struggle for human rights in the Soviet Union, and so, even more than before, he was a marked man in the eyes of the state.

He was soon arrested yet again, and imprisoned for "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda". In the labour camp where he served his sentence he met and married Larissa Bogoraz, herself victimised by the regime for having demonstrated in Red Square in 1968 against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia.

On his release Marchenko was exiled to Chuna in Siberia. Despite his imposed isolation, he helped Yuri Orlov, Alexander Ginsburg and Anatoly Shcharansky to establish the Moscow-based committee for monitoring the implementation of the Helsinki Agreement on human rights.

(Ginsburg had already become acquainted with Marchenko in 1966, a month before being sent to the labour camp where Marchenko had served his own sentence. In the camp, Ginsburg later wrote, "he had left memories and a legend, that of the worker who had read in the library Marx and Lenin in their entirety, volume after volume...")

Marchenko's co-founders of the Moscow Committee now live in the West. He himself was not to be so lucky: in 1981 he was condemned to



Anatoly Marchenko

10 years in labour camps followed by five years in exile for "anti-soviet agitation and propaganda".

In 1985 Marchenko was transferred to Tchistopol. According to Western journalists based in Moscow, he was repeatedly severely beaten up by non-political prisoners, with the tacit support of the prison authorities, and resorted to repeated hunger strikes to protest at his ill-treatment. He was punished for his protests by prolonged spells of solitary confinement.

"It is an assembly line destined to destroy me," he wrote in a letter of 4 August 1986, smuggled out of prison. Four months later his wife received a telegram informing her of her husband's death, but specifying neither the cause nor exact date of death.

Shortly before his death the KGB

had offered him his release if he and his wife would be prepared to emigrate to Israel. This was the repeat of an earlier offer of 1974 which the couple had rejected on the grounds that they wanted to emigrate to the United States.

Whether Marchenko might have followed in the recent footsteps of other Soviet dissidents were it not for the premature death inflicted upon him by two decades in Soviet labour camps and prisons therefore remains open to idle speculation.

For, as Ginsburg wrote on the death of his former colleague, "I think that I was lucky. I have first done my sums: in the last 27 years I have been deprived of my freedom for 9 3/4 years, but he for 20 years. He was to have been freed in 1996. But our prison camps are not made for assuring our survival."

O LETTER

Being clear on Zionism

FACED with rising anti-semitism in late 19th century Britain, Eleanor Marx used to declare at public meetings, 'I am a Jewess'.

Strictly speaking she wasn't, but she wanted to confront the anti-semites head on.

The position of Mick Ackersley and Jack Cleary is in some ways similar. Faced with 'anti-zionists' who say that if they defend the rights of the Israeli Jewish nation then they're Zionists, they respond: 'So I'm a Zionist. So what?'

The impulse is clearly honourable. But the logic, I think, is faulty. 'Zionism' had a clear meaning before 1948. Marxists opposed Zionism. They regarded it as a tragically mistaken attempt by the oppressed to respond to oppression, rather than as an anti-Arab imperialist conspiracy; but they opposed it.

They were right to oppose it, I think; and I believe Mick Ackersley and Jack Cleary would agree. But an Israeli Jewish nation now exists; and however it came into existence, it has rights.

Crude anti-Zionists often refer to the Israeli Jewish nation as 'the Zionists'. They evade the issue of the rights of the Israeli Jewish nation by first reducing the Israeli Jews to a political group ('Zionists') and then reducing 'Zionist' politics to the driving out of the Palestinian Arabs.

Now most Israeli Jews would accept the label 'Zionist'. And historic

Zionism did mean the driving out of the Palestinian Arabs. But historic Zionism also meant many other things. And the big majority of Israeli Jews are Israeli Jews not because of an ideological choice but because they were born in Israel or found Israel as a refuge from persecution. So the 'anti-Zionist' definition grossly distorts the reality.

Then the 'anti-Zionists' add an inescapably anti-semitic twist by proceeding further in the same line of argument and extending the term 'Zionist' to all those (Jews) who feel a special national allegiance to the Israel Jewish nation.

Even as a gambit in debate, saying 'So then I'm a Zionist too; so what?' is a more confusing than clarifying response. Obviously we — Mick Ackersley, Jack Cleary, myself — do not feel any special national allegiance to the Israeli Jewish nation above all others. Rather, we defend the rights of that nation like all others.

The point is to separate out all the different elements blurred together in the word 'Zionism'. It is crucial to insist that the Marxist opposition to historic Zionism has no bearing on the issue of the rights of the modern Israeli Jewish nation.

There is another problem. In Israeli and wider Jewish politics, 'Zionism' has a current meaning which is narrower than Jack Cleary's 'logical' definition as meaning 'defending the right of Israel to exist

(maybe with modifications)'. The narrower meaning is: seeing the state of Israel as having some mystic mission for the redemption (physical, social or spiritual) of the whole worldwide Jewish people; and therefore seeing it as having not just rights proper to the Israeli Jewish nation as to any other nation, but special, additional rights, higher than those of other national entities.

I don't particularly advocate this narrower meaning as 'my' definition of Zionism. But it is certainly more logical than Jack Cleary's (one can very well condemn historic Zionism yet be a 'Zionist' in Jack Cleary's definition).

And another thing: in the general British labour movement we can very well deal with the crude 'anti-Zionists' by saying that their use of 'Zionism' is an ideological amalgam, and by insisting on defining issues more precisely: the politics of the state of Israel, and the rights of the Israeli Jewish nation, non-Israeli Jewish identification with that nation, etc.

But it is almost impossible to participate in Israeli, or broader Jewish, politics without accepting the narrower definition of Zionism, at least provisionally. And to have 'our' definition of Zionism in which almost all Jewish and Israeli anti-Zionists, and a sizeable spectrum of Palestinian nationalists, are 'Zionists', is perverse.

Martin Thomas, Sydney

SOCIALIST STUDENT

PRICE 10p

Student revolt in France and China

A 4-page pull-out produced by Socialist Students in NOLS with help from Youth Fightback.

What to do next

At the December NUS conference SSiN were successful in winning the call for a big, nationally organised campaign of direct action against the Tories.

Demanding a full grant for every student; demanding the right to a place to live; and demanding that the Tories don't cut benefit money, NUS is supposed to be organising demonstrations, occupations, pickets and lobbies.

But the National Executive are unwilling to get up and fight. They prefer to write to MPs and light candles in mourning for every student who can't get a grant.

They don't think that British students can win, and they don't want students causing trouble on the streets.

Demo

This term there will be a national demonstration on Saturday 21 February (so it's bad luck if you are at a Further Education college and have to work on Saturdays!) but SSiN will be organising more.

All around the country there will be meetings called by Areas, or Labour Clubs or SSiN groups to discuss organising more direct action. They will discuss carrying out the conference mandate.

We propose:

- A national demonstration with direct action.
- Occupations, and where possible rent strikes, in colleges running up to the demonstration.
- Pickets and occupations of councils demanding houses for all and living grants for all Further Education students.
- Squats of college and council houses that are left to rot.
- A refectory meeting in every college.
- Pickets of colleges demanding they come out against loans.

• Linking up our demands with local trade unions and community groups defending themselves against the Tories.

Contact us for details of meetings. SSiN members on NUS Executive are willing to speak in your college about fighting the Tories.

Write to SSiN, 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15 or phone 639-7967.

A FRENCH LESSON FOR NUS



Students demonstrate in Paris

THE POWER OF MASS ACTION!

The French students have shown the way. If you want to take on a right wing government and beat it, there's no point having endless chats with them over cups of coffee: what you have to do is mobilise as many people as you can on the streets and fight them with everything you've got.

Inspired

As a result of the mass action of the French students, plus the action of workers inspired by the students' militancy, the government backed down on its proposals for a reactionary reform of the education system.

Now the French government is in a real mess, faced with a rail strike and a growing strike

By Michele Carlisle,
NUS Executive.

wave.

Only a few months ago, things looked quite unhelpful in France. Chirac's right wing government was elected early last year, kicking out a government of the Socialist Party. But the whole situation has been transformed very quickly.

The first lesson for students in Britain is that mass action can work. A determined fight is the surest way to win. And if the fight is able to link up with the working class, its chances of success are even greater.

Demonstrations, rent strikes, college occupations: direct action involving large numbers of

Turn to page 4



The power of mass action

"They got tear gas and truncheon blows and realised they were fighting the government."

Since the start of the university year in October, there has been a campaign to make people aware of the contents of the Loi Devaquet.

At the same time, the University of Caen put out an appeal to all other colleges calling for a mobilisation for a national demonstration to force withdrawal of the law.

This work brought home to a lot of students what the Bill was about and on the basis of signatures to the appeal, the first national meeting to coordinate the colleges took place on 15 October.

A few days later, two universities went on strike — Caen and one in the Paris region. It quickly got round that the struggle was taking off and that allowed other colleges to intervene and call general meetings to go on strike as well.

Within a week, in the Paris region, all the colleges were on strike. Another national meeting took place which was supposed to be a delegate meeting of the students unions but was transformed into a delegate meeting of colleges on strike — priority was given to strike committees. It was a great success with more than 2000 students representing their colleges.

The delegate meeting at the Sorbonne on 22 November called for a general strike of students from the 24th and a national day of demonstrations on the 27th. On the 24th, almost all the universities in France voted to strike at large general meetings and at the same time a whole series of lycées began to move as well. There haven't been any mobilisations in the lycées (secondary schools) for a very long time in France: the situation changed completely.

The demand was very clear: withdrawal of the Devaquet Bill. There was no discussion about possible amendments: everyone agreed no amendments were possible and the only possible demand was its withdrawal.

The strike developed very quickly and on Thursday, 27 November there were big demonstrations in provincial towns and in Paris: in all, more than half a million demonstrated. This led to a new degree of national cooperation with representation of strike



Chirac

Paul Carey, Gail Cameron and Richard Aplin talked to French students on the demonstrations and put together the following account.

committees, who called for continuation of the strike and a general strike in education — not just university and lycée students, but also the staff and teachers — and for a national day of demonstrations in Paris on December 4. There was also a call to harden up the strike against the government by occupying two colleges.

Structure

What is interesting right from the start is the structure. There were general meetings every day, which elected strike committees and national coordination made up of five representatives of each college — a good democratic structure. Even if the movement was young and lacked experience, it nevertheless had a pretty good structure.

The big demonstrations were on 27 November, which wasn't just a big demonstration in Paris but also big demonstrations in most provincial university towns, and also in some small towns without universities: 30,000 at Grenoble, 25,000 at Toulouse, 20,000 at Rouen and Caen.

On 4 December, there were further demonstrations in the provinces as well as in Paris: about the same as on the 27th.

More demonstrations took place on Monday 8 and Wednesday 10 December. There were demonstrations in most towns against police violence and in memory of Malik Oussekiné, who was killed by the police on Friday 5 December.

There were some small problems. There are two student unions, UNEF — Independent et Democratique (UNEF-ID), run by a current of the Socialist Party, and UNEF — Solidarite Etudiante, (UNEF-SE), run by members of the Communist Party. The balance of forces between these unions is not equal: for some time UNEF-ID has been much stronger than UNEF-SE. UNEF-ID called for the mobilisation and generally behaved well in the strike, even if at the start they didn't believe a mobilisation of this size was possible and they didn't push for it.

Some rank and file activists, on the other hand, put forward the call for demonstrations from the start but the leadership didn't think it would work. They didn't have an orienta-



tion for a general strike. When it really began to take off, they re-thought their position. The UNEF-ID never took on the movement head on, that's absolutely clear. They always went with the prevailing mood. They didn't want to take the movement on. Their attitude to the demonstration on Wednesday, 10th, once Chirac had announced the abandon-



ment of the law, was to abandon it. When they saw the pressure in the colleges for the day of action, to demonstrate to the end, to protest against police violence even if the law had been withdrawn, they didn't oppose it in student general meetings or in CNE. They weren't very keen.

The trade unions didn't respond to the call from student unions, but from the national delegate body. That's important because the movement went beyond just the unions.

Unions

The trade unions responded to the call of the national coordination for the demonstration on the 10th. Firstly, up to the 5th, there was no specific approach of the student movement towards the unions. On the 4th there had been a show of force on the streets: about one million people

everyone says. The students had the impression of having reached the peak of their strength. But the government had not given in and the students didn't think they could go further than they had done the previous day in the streets. That's the first reason they turned to new sectors, new allies.

The second reason was the police violence. On the Thursday night there was an extremely violent charge of police against the students: workers in the factories were disgusted at the attitude of the government and police. From this point the national coordination of students called on the trade unions to join them, help them, affirm their solidarity.

The reaction of the various union federations differed. The CGT — led by members of the Communist Party — immediately said, "OK, we'll support you, no problems. Define your conditions". The CFDT (led by the

Countdown to confrontation

The Devaquet Bill

- Selection process for entry into university. At present every student who passes the Baccalaureat (French equivalent of A levels) has the right to go to university. This would be changed to introduce selective entry. The prospect for many school leavers, who fail to enter university, would be unemployment, because of the massive level of youth unemployment in France.

- Increase in fees, which most students pay themselves.

This law was accepted at a cabinet meeting on 11 July and passed by the Senate with certain amendments on 30 October, and was due to be discussed by the National Assembly on 27 November.

17 November: Strike called, on the initiative of the UNEF-ID, at the Paris-XIII-Villetaneuse University. Contacts made with other universities.

22 November: Student meetings throughout France vote for a general

strike in the universities.

23 November: Students participate in a march through Paris organised by the teaching union FEN (Federation d'Enseignement National).

25 November: By now 50 out of the 78 universities are affected by strike action. Thousands of high school students demonstrate in Paris.

27 November: 500,000 students march throughout the country, 200,000 in Paris, demanding the complete withdrawal of the Devaquet Bill. Clashes with fascists. The CGT declares its support for the students.

CNE calls a demonstration in Paris for Thursday 4 December.

28 November: 10,000 high school students demonstrate in Paris.

30 November: Chirac says he will discuss the Bill with student leaders.

1 December: Demonstration against Mitterrand and Chirac who were opening a museum.

4 December: Massive national demonstra-

tion in Paris (1 million strong) plus 300,000 in the regions.

CRS attack the demonstration, resulting in violent clashes. Government refuses to back down.

5 December: Government concedes on a few points. Spontaneous demonstrations against police tactics the night before.

6 December: In the morning Malik Oussekiné beaten to death by the CRS. Afternoon: demonstrations in the Latin Quarter. Again fighting breaks out in the night. FEN, CGT, CFDT call for a stoppage on Monday 8 December.

7 December: CNE calls for a remembrance march on Monday, 8th, and a national demonstration in Paris on the 10th and calls for trade unions and the general population to participate.

8 December: Tens of thousands of students march in memory of Malik. Chirac withdraws the Bill completely.

10 December: Massive demonstration in Paris, part victory celebration, part memorial demonstration.

The lessons of May '68

Jill Mountford tells the story of May 1968, the biggest general strike in history.

May 1968 in France saw 10 million workers stop work, and many of them occupy their factories, in one of the biggest general strikes in history. President De Gaulle left the country, declaring "the game is up".

The French working class came within grasp of the overthrow of capitalism, and its replacement by a democratic, socialist society.

The general strike took almost everybody by surprise. In the Autumn of 1967, a call for a token general strike put out by the main trade union federation, the CGT, was a flop: it appeared that the workers were not interested in such action. And by the late 1960s, the theory was common that the working class had lost its revolutionary potential; on the left, as well as on the right, it was widely believed that the days of such mass strike action were long passed.

But beneath the calm surface of French society, there were troubled undercurrents. Declining living standards, growing unemployment and many other causes of frustration were producing widespread pent-up anger. When at the beginning of May, militant students, joined by many young workers, resisted the police occupation of the Sorbonne University in Paris, their courage inspired the French working class into action. The workers hated the police, and in particular the notoriously strike-breaking CRS; and the Night of the Barricades, 10 May, in which 30,000 students and young workers fought the police in a pitched battle, provided the spark that ignited the whole country.

Strike

The unions called a one-day strike in solidarity with the students — to head off more radical action. But their bluff failed: three times as many workers went on strike as belonged to the unions. And they did not go back the next day.

In many of the big plants, workers took control — at Sud Aviation, and at the militant Renault factory in Billancourt, occupations began. The Red Flag was hoisted over some of the plants.

The implications of the strike were immense. Its sheer proportions dwarfed many other general strikes: the 1926 General Strike in Britain, for example, involved only 2-3 million.

The government had no real power. The armed forces were paralysed by sympathy for the strikers; even some sections of the police came out in favour of the strike. The possibility was there that real power could pass into the hands of the strikers.

And the experience of this vast strike had a powerful effect on the consciousness of the workers participating in it. Old ideas, traditions and expectations disappeared, or were transformed. Spontaneously, everybody started to address each other in the familiar French form of 'you' — 'tu', rather than 'vous'.

In the big occupations, mass meetings held discussions on a wide range of political issues — and even, in one big car plant, on subjects such as sexuality. In one shipyard, the workers in the sit-in refused to spell out their demands. Why? Because they wanted not merely higher wages, or better conditions, but a radically new form of society — yet they were unable, spontaneously, to articulate

their new hopes and aspirations.

In such a situation, it was possible completely to restructure French society. The factory committees that had been set up could have been expanded into local and regional councils of workers' delegates, and a national council could have been formed as the basis for a workers' government. The old state machine could have been dismantled completely, and replaced by the new institutions of workers' democracy. In particular, the armed forces and police could have been replaced by democratic militias based in working class communities.

None of this happened. Eventually, the workers did win higher wages, but none of their more radical hopes came to anything. Indeed, in the general election that followed the strike, de Gaulle won a big majority.

Failure

What happened? Essential to the failure of the May strike was the role played by the Communist Party (CP). The CP was the major working class party, and ran the biggest union federation, the CGT. It was a party that described itself as a *revolutionary* party, and was seen to represent the revolutionary traditions of the French working class.

But the CP was deeply hostile to the revolutionary possibilities opened up by the strike. At the beginning it denounced the student radicals, and when the strike was underway, tried to prevent students joining workers' demonstrations — although striking workers who had been inspired by the students did not take this attitude.

The CP took pains to remind the readers of their paper, *L'Humanite*, that the student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit was German. (Though their chauvinism was lost on many workers: when the Gaullists said that the 'German Jew' should be sent "back to Dachau", demonstrators, including Algerian Arabs, chanted "We are all German Jews").

The CP proposed extremely limited objectives for the strike. They insisted that it was not political, and kept it, as far as they could, contained in the economic sphere. They were, indeed, able to win economic concessions — though at Renault in Billancourt, a CP stronghold, CGT leaders bringing the news of their 10% wage increase were howled down.

They called for a "change of policy opening the way to progress and democracy" and "popular government". And this weak, limited, feeble policy was successful in derailing the strike.

After a massive strike, and a glimpse of something radically new, the movement produced very little. The mountain laboured to produce a mouse. And so many workers felt disillusioned and demoralised. Even more, middle class people who had been pulled behind the strike at its height felt let down and alienated when it failed. Right wing calls for a return to "law and order" made sense to them: they were to vote for de Gaulle.

Backlash

As has been the case many times before, a revolutionary movement that failed to fulfill its promise and exhausted itself provoked a right-wing backlash.

Things could have been different. An organisation of serious Marxists who knew the lessons of history and were able to argue for coherent revolutionary objectives for the strike — if they had enough influence in the working class — could have completely changed the course of events.

The 1968 strike was a major watershed in world politics. It is still a source of inspiration and of lessons for us today.



Above and far left: students on the march. Left, Simon Pottinger, NUS executive member and SSiN supporter joined the demonstration.

From their point of view they now have a weak government, taken by the throat by the movement — it's a terrible defeat for them.

UNEF is a union and not a political organisation. But for the movement itself? That depends on what one means by politics.

The press in France has tried to characterise the movement as 'apolitical' and that's not the feeling of the students. One thing is clear: The movement went beyond all the political organisations; they did not lead it... In that sense the movement was not political and also in the sense that there was no clear preference for a particular organisation.

Politicised

On the other hand the evolution of the movement politicised people. The government with its truncheons and tear gas politicised people. On Thursday evening they didn't think they were involved in politics but fighting against a law... But they got tear gas and truncheon blows and recognised they were fighting the government, Chirac's cops — the government sent the CRS to defend itself. The students started with slogans against the law and centred on education and ended with "Chirac-Pasqua resign", against the RPR rally, "Malik killed. RPR has its festival".

This is the first time most students have met with such violence from the police and it has traumatised many.

On the Friday afternoon there was a demonstration against police violence. A small number of students continued to demonstrate in the Latin Quarter and occupied the Sorbonne. The police tried to clear them out. The students blockaded the HQ and cops on motorcycles went in — they are trained for violence. Malik was in the street and the cops caught him in a door and beat him. He was defenceless. They arrive on bikes, swinging clubs trying to get people into corners. They create a panic. Others may have been with Malik and run away. It is clear he had no arms and was defenceless. He had no crash helmet.

Malik wasn't a leader, an agitator or provocateur, but a student who was well viewed by everyone. The reaction among youth was even greater because it looked like a racist attack.

Socialist Party), was much more timid. "Yes, we'll support you but there are conditions for our participation". The students thought it should be up to us to decide the conditions for support from workers' and not the other way round.

Withdrawal

There was a change when Chirac announced the withdrawal of the law on the Monday afternoon. Everyone except the CGT said there was no longer any reason to demonstrate. "We are against the Devaquet bill — now it no longer exists", therefore they withdrew their support for the day of action on the Wednesday. But when the union leaders saw the pressure in the factories amongst unionised workers to go to the Wednesday demonstration, they made the call.

The Paris region of the CFDT maintained their call, while the national federation didn't give its support.

What is important for us is that when, on Monday, the government saw the possibility of links being made between the students and the working class, they withdrew their Bill. On the following Wednesday, despite the withdrawal of the Bill, there was a huge demonstration. If they hadn't done that, there would have been a huge general strike. They felt that.

On Monday, Chirac, withdrew the whole law, and in the evening announced that they would be abandoning the Bill for lycées. On the Tuesday night they announced that a whole series of measures due to go before Parliament — racist laws, reform of law on nationality — were also being postponed. It was a total victory: they even gave up points that weren't demanded by the students.



Police attack a student. Many believe that the attack on Malik was a racist attack.



The power of mass action

A wave of workers' action

As we go to press it is clear that last December's student victory in France has begun to unleash a wave of working class revolt against the right-wing government of Jacques Chirac.

Inspired by the students' militancy and the decisiveness of their victory, public sector workers have embarked on a series of strikes. These strikes have so panicked the government that they have mobilised the French riot police — the notorious CRS — against the most solid of the strikers, the railway workers.

The aftermath of the student victory has left the two major parties of the Left, the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, floundering. Following their lukewarm support for the students, both the SP and CP have in turn denounced, then tried to railroad, the strike movement.

Action

Strike action started less than a week after the student victory, with merchant seamen bringing shipping to a halt in the majority of French ports on 10 December.

The day after, there was a four hour stoppage by electricity workers and a demonstration of 25,000. This action was repeated a week later, leading to a substantial reduction in power supplies.

The most serious action has taken place on the Paris underground and on the national rail network, the SNCF. On the underground, action started on 22 December, organised by an independent drivers' union which embraces half the drivers. The strike cut metro services by 60% and has continued in the New Year.

The SNCF workers went on strike on 18 December and within the week they had paralysed the whole rail network. They have won support from office staff and have occupied stations.

They went as far as blocking railway lines to stop potential scab trains, but this has proved virtually

Richard Bailey looks at the upsurge of working class direct action following the students' victory last month.

unnecessary.

Since the New year the strikers have rejected management concessions over wages, and have upped the stakes by demanding full pay for strike days. The state have responded by setting the CRS on them, and assembling a huge scab fleet of coaches.

Because of the high degree of rank and file control by the strikers, the CP leadership of the CGT union confederation have been unable to dump the strikes and have been forced to call out other workers in an effort to gain control of the strike movement. This has involved one day strikes by workers in the gas and electricity industries and workers in the shipyards and the munitions factories.

The lessons should be clear to student activists who wish to orientate towards the working class. A serious, militant student campaign to reverse the Tory education cuts need not be isolated from the working class. On the contrary, providing student militants are level-headed, they can help raise the confidence of the working class by the example of a serious fight back, while at the same time appealing to the working class for support and explaining our case.

The students in France, because of their social position, were able to move in advance of the workers against the French government; nonetheless we should see them as part of the same social movement.

In Britain, students should run our campaigns in such a way that we can revive the labour movement out of its current doldrums to fight the Tories.

Once the power of the working class is released then, as the example of France shows, the whole political balance of forces can be turned round.



SSiN supporters picket Chinese Embassy. Photo: Ian Swindale.

Picket supports Chinese students

By Simon Pottinger, NUS Executive.

ON SATURDAY 27th December SSiN mounted a picket outside the Chinese Embassy in Portland Place W1, from 11am onwards.

Why did we call this picket?

The picket was in support of the tens of thousands of students who demonstrated for freedom and democracy in fourteen Chinese cities during the month of December.

The student movement began in Shanghai, and soon spread to Peking and other centres as more and more students took to the streets, demanding an end to authoritarian government over China's 1,000 million people. The Chinese student movement is still growing in strength and support. Reports of arrests are coming in as we go to press.

The student movement in China is naturally of concern to British students, and we should support it in every way we can. The Deng regime gets a pretty good press in Britain. It does not deserve it. Of course there have been improvements since Mao's time. But the basic fact remains that 1,000 million Chinese people still live under police state tyranny.

Freedom is indivisible, the

Chinese students are entitled to our support as they fight for an extension of freedom in their country.

Reports suggest that the Chinese student movement is being manipulated by competing factions in China's ruling bureaucracy. But the ideas they raise have a power, a logic and a momentum of their own — ideas such as Abraham Lincoln's, 'Government of the people, by the people, for the people', which students have emblazoned on their banners. Once put in cir-

ulation such ideas can prove very hard to control.

The ruling factions may not be able to control the Chinese student movement. The Chinese students now take their place in the ranks of the current wave of international student protest.

Students in France won a victory over the Chirac Government recently, and now French railworkers have followed the example to their militancy. In China too, the students may inspire the workers. The Chinese workers and students together could win freedom and democracy — and socialism — in China.

The power of mass action

From page 1

students: these are the kinds of things students need to do to defend their interests.

And the closer that such action can be linked up with the labour movement, the better.

The National Union of

Students needs a policy for mass action and a leadership that fights for its policy. At the moment NUS has many excellent policies — most of them put forward by Socialist Students in NOLS. But the leadership of NUS — supporters of Neil Kinnock — have consistently failed to carry out these policies.

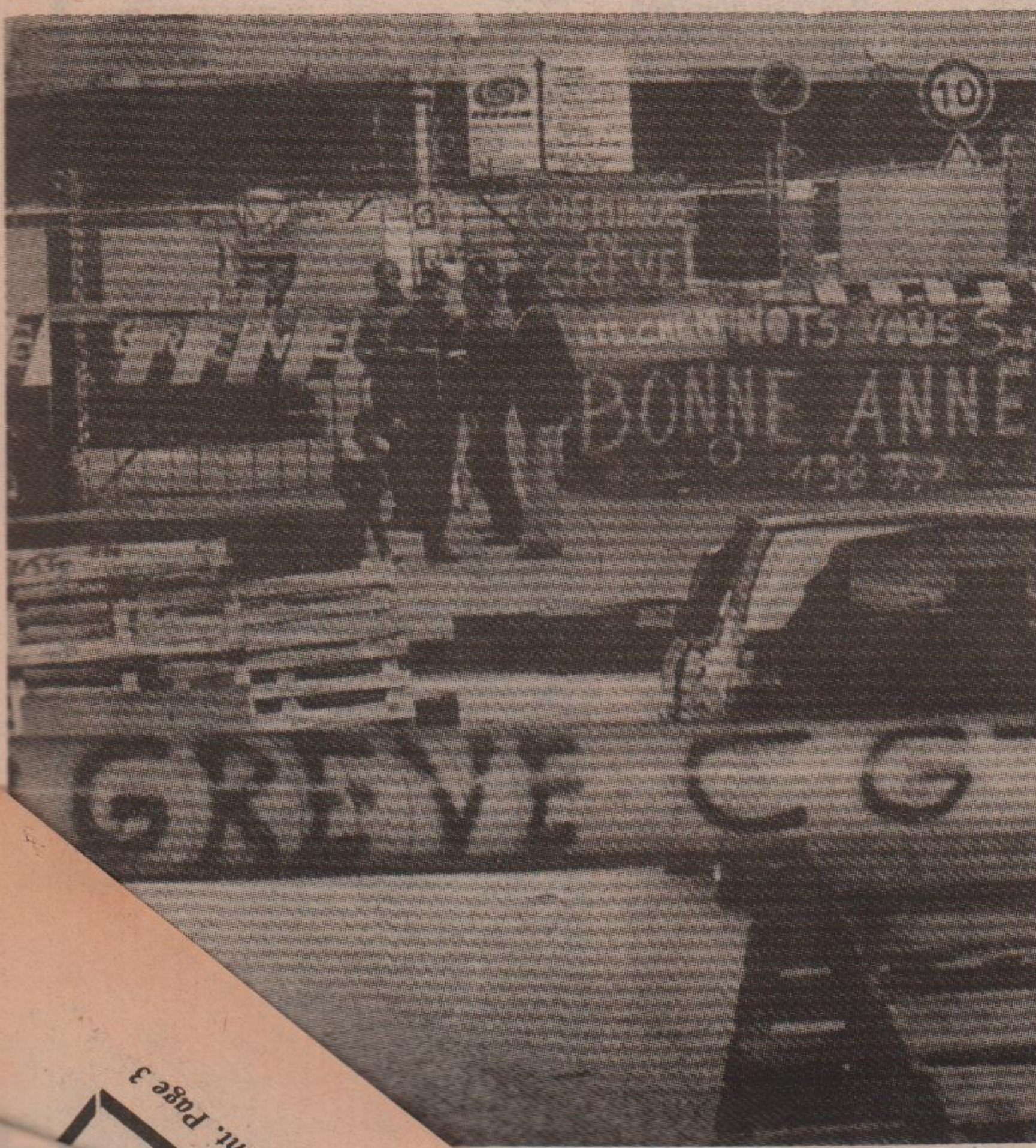
SSiN is now recognised as the left opposition in NUS. SSiN is committed both to radical policies, and to their actual implementation. SSiN aims to win the leadership of both the National Organisation of Labour Students, and of NUS itself. We want to make sure that students in Britain learn from students in France. Join us.

Get in touch

Socialist Students in NOLS can be contacted at 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15.

Read Youth Fightback

The latest edition of Youth Fightback is available from 33 Hackworth Point, Rainhill Way, London E3 3ET, for 25p plus 18p postage.



The workers move into action

France: behind the fightback

Stan Crooke examines the French labour movement and its record. The concluding part will be published next week.

At the close of 1986 the working class movement in France found itself in a situation comparable to that faced by the British labour movement at the close of 1979.

Just as the British working class had had its strength partially sapped by the pro-capitalist Labour government of 1974-79 and, by the end of 1979, found itself confronted by a viciously right-wing Tory government, so too the record of the French "socialist" government of 1981-86 demoralised French workers and paved the way for the return of an overtly right-wing government led by Jacques Chirac in March of 1986.

The record of the Socialist Party (PS) in power in 1981-6 — in coalition with the French Communist Party (PCF) for the first three years — was as sorry as that of the Labour government of Wilson and Callaghan. Initial reforms such as a cut in the working week, an extra week of annual holidays, some nationalisations at a price of extravagant compensation, and a tax on wealth which left the latter largely untouched, all turned out to be mere gestures rather than real inroads into the power of capital.

And token gestures in favour of workers soon gave way to real attacks on workers. Wages were held down, cutbacks were made in the social security system, unemployment was allowed to increase, living standards fell for many, and racism flourished as immigrant workers were scapegoated for the crisis of capitalism.

Faithful to its capitalist masters, the PS-PCF government subdued the militancy of the workers' movement: the growth of unemployment to some three millions cost unions members and made workers more hesitant about taking action — by mid-1986 the rate of strikes in the private sector of the economy was at its lowest for 40 years.

Growing unemployment also meant a falling union membership. Between 1968 and 1985, for example, the membership of the PCF-controlled trade union federation (including retired workers maintaining their membership) fell from over 2,100,000 to 1,622,095. This weakened the mobilising capacities of the unions.

The stage had thus been well prepared for the entry of the RPR-UDF government — five years of back-tracking by a government "of the left" and a weakening of the self-confidence of the working class — which the new government was prepared to exploit to the full, by continuing and intensifying the anti-working class and socially reactionary policies of its predecessor.

RPR-UDF legislation already carried out or in preparation includes: wide-ranging privatisations, an increase in the legal maximum working week, a new racist nationality code, abolition of trial by jury for "terrorist" offences, attacks on tenants' rights, cutbacks in social security, an amnesty for currency speculators, increased powers for the police, etc., etc.

However, despite a basic similarity between the situation of the British labour movement at the close of 1979 and that of French workers at the close of 1986, there are also important and potentially far-reaching differences.

These are partly the result of differences between the British and French labour movements and political systems, and partly the result of the events of December of last year.



Riot cops attack striking rail workers

The PS can only roughly be compared with the Labour Party. It is neither a trade union creation, nor a trade union based organisation at present. Nor, unlike the Labour Party, has it been the party for which workers have traditionally cast their vote: not until the mid-1970s did the PS overtake the PCF in terms of overall electoral popularity (but even then, not necessarily working class electoral popularity). And the ongoing, if declining, significance of the PCF represents a further difference between the political organisation of British and French workers.

Thus, the rank and file campaign for democracy and accountability which mushroomed in the Labour Party after the 1979 election defeat is unlikely to be — and, indeed, has not been — repeated in the PS or, even less so, the PCF.

Even more significant is the difference between British and French trade union organisation. Whereas in Britain there is just one trade union federation, there are a variety of national, regional and industrial trade union organisations in France.

Metamorphosis

The largest unions are the PCF-controlled CGT and the CFDT (originally a Catholic breakaway from the CGT in 1919, which changed its name from "French Confederation of Christian Workers" to "Democratic French Confederation of Labour" in 1964). The second rank unions are FO (a 1947 breakaway from the CGT, in protest at a wave of PCF and CGT-inspired strikes) and CFTC (the continuation of those sections of the "French Confederation of Christian Workers" opposed to the metamorphosis into the CFDT).

In addition there are a number of smaller trade union organisations, such as the pro-Gaullist CGC which recruits from the higher grades of employees and management, the national teachers' union (FEN) which covers some 90% of teachers, the CFT (French Confederation of Labour), the CAT (Autonomous Confederation of Labour), plus various other much smaller union

organisations covering just workers in one specific industry in one particular area.

The result of this proliferation of trade union organisations is not a higher level of organisation than in Britain, but a lower level of unionisation, due to the divisions into different unions which weakens the overall position of the trade union movement in France: in general only 20-25% of the total French labour force is unionised.

This overall weakness of French trade unionism, exacerbated by the growth of unemployment under the PS-PCF government, meant that the French union movement was in a relatively weaker position at the time of the RPR-UDF electoral victory than that of the British unions at the time of Thatcher's 1979 victory. On the other hand, although weakened by the "socialist" government's policies, the French unions had not been decisively defeated.

A further difference between 1979 Britain and 1986 France lies in the nature of the French system of government, in which major powers are concentrated in the hands of the President (elected once every seven years on the basis of universal suffrage, in separate elections from Parliamentary elections).

Although the RPR-UDF won control of the National Assembly, the President remained Francois Mitterrand, victorious candidate of the PS in the 1981 Presidential elections. Conflict might therefore have been expected between a right-wing controlled parliament and a PS President with vast constitutional powers.

Focus

But it would certainly be wrong to regard President Mitterrand as a focus for working class opposition to the new government. The powers of the French President make the French political system even less democratic than the British one. And the last thing to which Mitterrand was, and is, accountable to is the rank and file of the French labour movement.

In fact, a cause of much greater concern to the new RPR-UDF

government than the existence of a "Left" President was the growth in support for the fascist FN (National Front) of Le Pen. The growth of the FN posed a direct threat to the French labour movement. It also militated against the possibility of the RPR-UDF government making concessions, for fear of losing support to the FN, an additional factor in the situation in France not present in Britain in 1979, when the fascists sustained heavy losses at the polls.

However, by far the major difference between the situation of the French working class in the aftermath of the RPR-UDF election victory and that of the British one in the opening period of Thatcher's government lies in the events of December of last year.

Inevitable

The first major test of strength faced by Thatcher was the steelworkers' strike of early 1980. Although the Tories' victory in that conflict did not make inevitable their victory in disputes in subsequent years, it certainly strengthened their standing and their hopes of achieving further such successes. But in France the new RPR-UDF government was defeated in the first decisive test of strength: the attempted attack on higher education.

Student opposition to the attacks mushroomed and won in a matter of weeks. On 22 November a general assembly of 1,500 student delegates met to plan the campaign. On 23 November 200,000 marched on a demonstration called by FEN (the one exception to the hitherto low level of trade union mobilisations), and 200,000 marched again on 27 November on a student demonstration, as student strikes spread throughout French universities. On Thursday 4 December, 800,000 marched through Paris. Demonstrations and street clashes continued over the weekend, costing one student his life. On Monday the government backed down completely. And on the Wednesday (10 December) hundreds of thousands again marched through Paris in mourning for the dead student and in celebration of the victory.

PRESS GANG

By Jim Denham

Ideal stories

According to John Pilger, who recently stomped out of the News on Sunday project, one of the proposed headlines for a dummy issue was Dirty Den has AIDS.

It was, said the editor, an ideal story, "combining popular appeal and social awareness". It was this trend that led Pilger to resign as editor-in-chief shortly before Christmas.

It is probably only a matter of time before one of the tabloids does carry that headline — indeed, they've already come close when the Sun, Star, News of the World etc., discovered that actor Leslie Grantham's brother may have died of the disease.

I thought of that headline as I read a piece in the Guardian about the mysterious Rocky Ryan. If and when the story does appear it will be even money that it is a Ryanette.

Rocky (if it was indeed he) explained the initial motivation behind his unusual hobby/crusade: back in 1975 he was stitched up by a Sun reporter during the Black Panther hunt. As a result Rocky was arrested by armed police at 2 a.m. while the Sun's man looked on, scribbling down his scoop.

Since then Rocky has exacted his revenge by conning most of the national press with a series of hoax stories fed with a panache and cunning that borders on genius.

Rocky outlined his philosophy to the Guardian: "they make them up anyway, don't they? People in the press are the lowest form of human life. They crucify people that can't defend themselves so they're fair game too, the bastards. There's no way I'd pull the strokes some of you lot pull. I'd never do anything to really hurt."

Rocky's artistry lies in identifying just the right story to set the hack's pulses racing (royalty, the Moors Murderers, Dirty Den, etc., etc), thinking up a spicy and just about believable 'angle', researching his subject extensively enough to give a veneer of authenticity, and then 'feeding' it with a Thespian skill that would do Sir Lawrence proud.

We can chalk up such fictional tabloid 'coups' as the story that Lord Lucan had been spotted in South Africa, the report that Peter Sutcliffe had been made a trusty by prison authorities, the summoning by the Queen of Princess Michael to a meeting to discuss the latter's marriage crisis, and the Star exclusive that Dirty Den was about to leave East Enders.

He is also responsible for a considerable proportion of the coverage given to Prince Charles, Colonel Quaddafi and Moira Hindley — although James Anderton can probably claim more credit for the Hindley stories.

A recent bold departure was to feed a true story to the Sunday Sport (nice one!) and then, the following week, denounce it as a hoax to the Sunday People who fell for it hook, line and sinker. He then gilded the lily by sending Robert Maxwell a demand for £500 for filling a page.

But Rocky has a problem: no-one can tell which stories are Ryanettes and which are naturally occurring products of the hacks' fertile imagination. For instance, the News of the World continues to stand by its story about Princess Michael and the Queen, denying any Ryan involvement. How are we to tell?

Rocky now plans to issue advance notice of his strokes so that there will be no confusion. How he will do this I do not know. An alternative scam might be to go legit and sign up with the News on Sunday.

by Les Hearn

TORIES CAUSE A PAIN

LAST year, the government's Committee on the Safety of Medicines (CSM) blamed aspirin for a rare but serious illness in children — *Reye's Syndrome*. It ruled that **Junior Disprin** be withdrawn from sale and that children not be given any aspirin products.

However, many aspirin products are still on sale with recommended doses for children as young as 4 years. One, **Alka-Seltzer**, contains over four times as much aspirin as **Junior Disprin**. New stocks will carry a warning against giving to children, but old stocks are still being sold — with government acquiescence.

As aspirin has other harmful side effects, such as causing bleeding of the stomach, and is fatal in overdose, the need for an alternative minor pain reliever is plain. **Paracetamol**, aspirin's major rival, is free of side effects except in one respect, where it is possibly worse than aspirin. In overdose, paracetamol kills, not quickly, like aspirin, but slowly.

No immediate effect is experienced but some 24 hours after the overdose the victim may undergo nausea, vomiting and stomach pains. For the next two to six days, jaundice, blood and brain disorders, coma and death may follow. The main cause of death is severe liver damage. Let us therefore look at the liver's role in dealing with what is a substance foreign to the body.

The liver has the job of dealing with foreign substances that may be poisonous to the body. Enzymes in the liver attack these substances, modifying them to make them more soluble in water so that the body can get rid of them faster in the urine.

In normal doses, paracetamol is broken down in this way but in overdose paracetamol is converted into *quinone*-like substances that are actually harmful.

The liver can cope with a certain amount of these quinones by joining them up with a substance called *glutathione*. This combination is quite soluble and passes out in the urine. But once the store of glutathione is used up, the remaining quinones attack the cells of the liver; killing them.

This is a particular irony, since paracetamol is harmless and doesn't need to be 'detoxified'. This is an example of *'lethal synthesis'*, where the body manufactures a weapon against itself.

The key to preventing liver death from paracetamol overdose is speed of diagnosis and treatment. Unfortunately, people who take an overdose as a 'cry-for-help' suicide attempt may not report the fact until they start experiencing symptoms a day or so later. Having perhaps repented of their suicidal intentions, they may find themselves dying anyway. The same delays in treatment may occur when an accidental overdose has been taken.

This outcome may be simply avoided if the liver can quickly make some more glutathione. This can only be done if enough *methionine* is available. Methionine is an essential constituent of many proteins but is only present in small amounts in food. Prompt treatment of paracetamol overdose consists in giving the patient extra methionine. An even simpler solution, blindingly obvious in fact, is merely to put methionine into the paracetamol pills. And new, safe paracetamol is now available under the brand name **Pametol**.

This would be of immense value in treating children now deprived of aspirin. Unfortunately, it costs four times as much as ordinary paracetamol. So the government will not allow the NHS doctors to prescribe it!



G'day Poms: Paul Hogan tipping his hat.

The Wizard of Oz

Edward Ellis reviews 'Crocodile Dundee'.

If you like Fosters' lager, you'll love 'Crocodile Dundee'. Paul Hogan stars as a macho Aussie who spends his time illegally killing well, crocodiles, of course, in the outbacks of Oz. A beautiful American journalist who accompanies him on a trip into the Bush is so impressed with him that she invites him to New York.

Although he has never been to a city before (never seen an escalator, never slept in a bed, never heard of mugging) he naturally copes with all calmly and in style.

The film has only really got one joke, which it tells in a lot of different ways. Still, it's a funny joke, so I suppose they might as well get as much mileage out of it as they can. The joke is epitomised by Hogan's encounter with a rich American snorting cocaine: he thinks the poor man must have a

cold, tips his two hundred dollars worth into some hot water, and covers his head with a towel.

He is an unsubtle yokel making minciment out of New York sophisticates (if he can't think of an argument, he thumps them in the gob); but he is also a Real Man, unlike all these urban effeminate, and his beautiful journalist, naturally, falls head over heels...or, as they say, loses her wallabys.

Gobbled

Progressive this film isn't. Early in the film the enterprising journalist endeavours to prove that women can survive on their own in the Bush, and narrowly escapes being gobbled up by an enormous crocodile. Hogan rescues her in the nick of time, whereafter she decides to stop struggling and hang on to her man.

Later, the naive Dundee, informed that the woman in a New York bar chatting him up is not actually a woman at all, verifies this information by grabbing the offender's testicles in a fist.

Still, if like me, you are tickled to the tips of your marsupials by anti-Australian chauvinism, *Crocodile Dundee* is the film for you. G'day mate.

"Sun" journalism from Socialist Action

Socialist Action (19 December) published a very distorted account of the National Union of Students Conference. Reporter Polly Vittorini's article "NUS in Crisis" tells bare-faced lies in order to present a picture of SSiN's role at NUS conference which has only a passing resemblance to what actually happened.

Vittorini also lies by omission and inference. But first the bare-faced lies.

Vittorini says that SSiN did not vote to hear the PLO speak: we did. He was our third preference guest speaker behind a Metal and Allied Workers' Union organiser from South Africa and a representative from Art Attack — a collection of art colleges threatened with closure.

We did not expect Art Attack to do well and would be eliminated early in the STV ballot; therefore our transfers from MAWU would have gone to the PLO at full transfer value, not weakened by "going through" Art Attack.

Vittorini asserts that SSiN has a position for a federal united Ireland. It doesn't. Socialist Organiser does, but SSiN is much more than SO.

SSiN

Vittorini also lies when she says SSiN is against women's self-organisation. No, we are not!

Our motion to conference was the only one to propose the constitutional autonomy of NUS women's conference and give its committee adequate resources to actually be able to campaign.

We were the only ones to propose positive discrimination onto NUS executive. The only ones to argue that women's committee should have the right to submit motions to full conference and to table one debate at full conference.

What we were against was the Women's Officer being elected by

SSiN

By Jane Ashworth

Women's Conference because of the problems of accountability it raises. We believe that the motion passed will put the Women's Officer in an invidious position.

She is going to be accountable to both NUS Conference and Women's Conference and they are likely to be contradictory.

We are also against the Women's Conference having an effective veto on mandates about women passed at full conference as was in the main motion.

Contrary to the innuendo in the article, SSiN withdrew the parts of our motion about the Women's Officer election because we mucked up the drafting of the constitutional amendment.

If Vittorini had any regard for the truth she would either have read the motion herself and found out it was a mess or asked a member of the Steering Committee or Rules Revision Committee — who were at the compositing meeting — if we were telling the truth. We did not run scared — we mucked up.

The article in *Socialist Action* further distorts our arguments on sexual harassment. We are against the assumption that men are guilty until proven innocent. Women need equality and that means our accusations must be heard and taken seriously. Sexist prejudices must be forced aside in order to allow for a fair hearing and trial. Natural justice — the right to a fair trial — is a positive right denied to most people in the world. We should not allow it to be eroded.

The whole article does not put the issues at NUS conference into the right framework.

SSiN is in a running battle with the Democratic Left leadership of NUS. We are the campaigning opposition. Students are demanding action about grants, benefits, cuts, housing and

SSiN is the only organisation offering national strategies. Vittorini doesn't mention this.

She doesn't mention that it was SSiN which organised for the idea of a nationally integrated strategy to be discussed. And it was SSiN which wrote the motions and won the debate.

In other words SSiN has been successful in passing a whole new direction for NUS. And the battle over the next term will be to force the NEC to implement the mandate of organising a rolling programme of direct action against the Tories, including occupations, demonstrations, pickets, lobbies, rent strikes, etc.

SSiN

Vittorini believes that central issues in the Labour Party are central issues in NUS. That is not true. And so far as the parallels can be made they have to be reasoned and not just asserted.

The absolutely central issues in NUS are Further Education development and committing NUS to a campaigning and working class orientation. The development of NUS women's, black and lesbian and gay work is part of that debate.

Finally it is odd that Polly Vittorini asserts that there are "majorities for the policies of the Campaign Group and the campaigns of Labour Left Liaison" in NUS. This is fantastically crude.

It may well be that the Campaign Group would agree with SSiN's strategy for NUS, but political questions often appear in a sharper relief in the student movement than in the Labour Party. For instance, South Africa is a key issue in NUS.

There is no agreement between the campaigns in LLL on the relative merits of the ANC, the trade unions and the black consciousness movement. So what would Polly Vittorini say is the politics of the Labour left on South Africa for which she thinks there is a latent majority in NUS?

Similarly there is no agreement in LLL and the Campaign Group about import controls or Ireland, or

Palestine, or local councils strategy for fighting the cuts. There is not agreement on a programme to fight the rulers of the Stalinist states.

So instead of there being real and concrete issues and demands that Vittorini is talking about, it is mainly vacuous, dealing with illusions and mirrors. She is imposing a set of constructions on NUS, without actually analysing the issues at stake. All Vittorini is saying in reality is that she is in favour of good and against sin. Congratulations!

SSiN has discussed LLL and the Campaign Group. We have said that Labour Clubs should affiliate to LLL, that they should take copies of Campaign News. There is no problem with this.

Vittorini should come clean and either lay out her strategy for NUS and explain why SSiN is no alternative to the Democratic Left or shut up.

Vittorini is behaving like a Sun journalist — chucking mud and hoping some of it sticks; dropping a few buzz words to get the readers going. Vittorini is playing at what she thinks are home truths and doesn't bother herself with facts and nuances. Never once does she rise above that level, and she should.

UNOFFICIAL CONFERENCE DOCUMENT

December 1986
£1 with grant/50p without

MINORITY REPORT

Compiled by SSiN supporters
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Michele Carlisle NUS Executive
Melanie Gingell NUS Executive
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Dabbling in fruitless deals

By Liam Conway

The government is now almost certain to reject the Nottingham agreement, because the result of the NUT ballot may have given the false impression that the Jenkins offer is generally acceptable to most teachers.

The NUT leadership is giving credibility to this impression by claiming that the low vote in the ballot is the result of confusion amongst the membership.

The reality is the opposite to this. The only confused party in the whole dispute is the NUT leadership.

A simple analysis of the ballot figures demonstrates the lack of resolve of our leaders to support their members' desire for a substantial flat rate rise with no trading off of conditions of service.

Over 42% of those voting rejected the Nottingham deal. This is a substantial figure in itself, considering all the attempts to stop members getting the facts. More significant still is the fact that nearly 50% of all NUT members (about 100,000 teachers) did not vote at all.

Obviously these teachers were so enthusiastic about the deal that they were not even prepared to return their ballot papers!

The simple fact is that the vast majority of NUT members are at least very unsure about the Nottingham agreement.

Given that the NAS/UWT members overwhelmingly opposed the deal, and that the EIS in Scotland are already taking strike action, the raw material is there to restart action in England and Wales. The only ingredient missing is an NUT leadership committed to defending union policy instead of dabbling in fruitless deals with Labour leaders who think they can win elections by ending strikes rather than by supporting them.

Confrontation

The coming term could see a major confrontation with the government. The leadership seems set to try anything to prevent this happening. It is essential therefore that all those on the left work within the Local Association Pay Action Campaign to force the leadership to fight the government's attempts to bring teachers and the whole education service to heel.

EIS return to rhetoric

By Ian McCalman

The Scottish teachers' pay campaign, which has lasted two and a half years, is reaching a crucial turning point.

The National Executive of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS), the main teachers' union, has voted 21-6 to recommend acceptance in a ballot of a deal which is substantially the same as that recently rejected by the membership by an 84% majority.

The only change of note is seven extra days holiday which will cost the authorities nothing, is educationally counter-productive and is a cynical ploy to buy teachers' acceptance of an extra 80 hours work, contractually binding duties, staff appraisal, a divisive "new promoted post" category and a review of staffing and resources without any prior financial commitment.

The deal, backed by both the Euro-Communists and "Morning Star" Stalinists, marks a surrender by the majority of the leadership in the face of Tory threats to legislate on teachers' pay and conditions.

Their fear also springs from the prospect of having to abandon the search for a comprehensive settlement on pay, conditions and resources in favour of the strategy of the left, of a straight pay claim entirely separate from the campaign on conditions and resources.

Adoption of the left's strategy may well mean a smaller settlement than many teachers hoped for but it would ensure that we do not erode our con-

ditions and we press on with our curriculum development boycott and work to contract, lifting these gradually over an extended period of time as resources are made available. It is the prospect of a union committed to such a long-term campaign that the majority on the executive reject. They want to return to traditional cosy relationships punctuated by verbose rhetoric. Hence their anxiety to settle now.

Of the six Executive members who stood firm, four are from Glasgow and are supporters of Campaign for a Fighting Union.

There is widespread unease at the haste and secrecy involved in the deal and clear opposition has come from the Executive of the largest local association, Glasgow. Other centres of opposition are likely to be Lanarkshire, Aberdeen, Morayshire and Ayrshire.

John Pollock, General Secretary of the EIS, has launched wild attacks on those who oppose the deal, claiming that they are unrepresentative.

A leaflet from the Confederation of Scottish Socialist Teachers, an umbrella organisation of the different activist groups has sent a detailed analysis of the deal into every school in Scotland, urging a no vote.

The propaganda battle over the next few weeks will be decisive for Scottish teachers in terms of deciding their future conditions and the kind of union they will have.

SILENTNIGHT

Union backs down

After almost 19 months, the Union has withdrawn official support from the Silentnight strikers. They state:

"It is in the light of all the circumstances that the General Executive Council of FTAT have had to seriously review the situation and address themselves to the overall position of the Union. It should be appreciated that it has been a long, difficult and expensive dispute which has had a serious effect on the resources of the Union and regretfully, can no longer be sustained."

The fact that the employer has

chosen to put up a wall of silence and not talk is no reason to give up and go away.

We are having an effect with the leafleting campaign and the sales of Silentnight beds are decreasing in the High Street.

We need to continue this pressure and we are asking the Labour and Trade Union Movement to ensure that the boycott against Silentnight remains. We are also asking that the pressure be maintained against the Co-op Directors and managers of other stores, who are still purchasing Silentnight beds.



Cheung San Han (left) with two of the other Wheelers strikers and an interpreter from the Chinese Information and Advice Centre, Cheung Siu-Ming. Photo: Ian Swindale.

Strikers ask for support

How did the strike start?

The strike started on 10 November. I was unfairly dismissed by the owner and the three other chefs came out on strike in my support. They were also sacked. We had been refusing to co-operate with the employer's attempts to reduce quality in the restaurant. He is anti-union and doesn't want unions in his restaurants.

In the past he launched a number of attacks on our working conditions and each time we were able to seek advice from the Chinese Information and Advice Centre or the TGWU and defeat him.

How did the situation arise whereby Wheelers restaurants are staffed almost exclusively by Chinese chefs?

In the 1950s Mr Welch, a London oyster trader, started a small seafood restaurant with a Chinese chef. As the chain of restaurants grew this original chef was put in charge of all the chefs and typically everyone from the head chef down to the washers-up was Chinese. The chain prospered and grew, and the Wheelers reputation was largely built by the hard work and skill of the Chinese chefs.

Eighteen years ago the Wheelers chain, which included about a dozen restaurants in London and three in Sussex — two of them in Brighton — was floated on the Stock Exchange.

When Welch died in 1983 the chain was bought up by a multinational concern called Kennedy Brooke. In February 1985 they sold the franchise of the Brighton Wheelers to local stockbroker Bailey.

What changes took place after Bailey took over?

Bailey immediately launched a series of attacks on our working conditions. He refused to pay us for the

Wheelers striker Cheung San Hang spoke to Ian Swindale about the dispute.

same number of days off as we had previously enjoyed; he tried to put us all on a probationary period on the grounds that he was a new employer, even though we had all worked there for at least five years; he refused to continue paying us weekly and tried to pay us fortnightly instead. Each time we went to the union and managed to force him to back down because he was acting illegally.

When the head chef, according to custom and practice, decided to put in two days overtime during a busy period, Bailey refused to pay him and we went on a half-day strike in support of the head chef and he got his money.

Bailey then argued that as this was such a small workplace there was no point involving the union. It would be easier to discuss the issues together. This approach failed so Bailey decided to buy off the head chef. Unfortunately he succeeded and the head chef is now scabbing on us.

Bailey next decided to try and split the workforce. The head chef approached me on Bailey's behalf and asked me if I would like some shares in Bailey's companies. I refused on principle because I knew that if I accepted the shares I would be on the employer's side against the Chinese workers.

By July of this year, as a result of all these attacks, the staff approached Bailey and asked him to negotiate a proper contract of employment. He agreed to a meeting but failed to keep the appointment. Instead of negotiating he asked the head chef to approach the chefs individually and offer them 500 shares in one of his other concerns. Four of us refused to accept and four took them, so he succeeded in splitting the workforce.

The traditional July date for the annual pay increase came and went without any pay rise even though the chefs had agreed during the previous year to add an extra item to the menu without any extra pay.

By October the London branches had been given a 5% rise but we didn't get that. Instead Bailey demanded the addition of more items to the menu and changes in our working hours and conditions. We refused to co-operate and I received three warning letters. I was sacked on 8 November. I continued working,

refusing to recognise the dismissal but on Monday 10th, I was given my P45 and my wages at 2.15 p.m. so I went down to the union and the dispute was made official. Now there are four of us on strike.

What support has the TGWU given since then?

During the first two weeks the union official came regularly to the picket line. He thought he would soon have the employer round the negotiating table. But Bailey sent the union a number of letters threatening legal action because his business was being affected by too many pickets.

The union official, Brian Gould, began to get cold feet, and the union ended up giving an undertaking to the court to have a picket of six — the four of us on strike, the union official and an interpreter.

In the third week Gould spent five minutes and in the fourth week fifteen minutes on the picket line!

However, we received a lot of support in the town, particularly from students, from the Labour Party and from the Labour Group. The Mayor refused to cross the picket line when invited to a function at Wheelers.

When we started picketing we reduced the restaurant's business by 20-30%. In the next two weeks business was down by 50-60%. Now it is only down by 20-30% again. This is partly due to the fact that the students who have helped out on the picket line have been away over Christmas.

What needs to be done now to win?

We need a lot more support, particularly in London where the Wheelers restaurants should be leafleted and mass picketing organised. There are many students in London who would support us and who have the time to spare. We have to hit Bailey's other interests as well as those of Kennedy Brooke who still own the London Wheelers chain.

The union is moving much too slowly. We need more support from the union and we need the support of Chinese workers in London.

What will be the consequences in the Chinese community of victory or defeat?

If we get our jobs back a lot of Chinese workers will join the union. But if we lose, a lot of people will ask themselves whether it's worth joining a union when the biggest one in the country can't defeat a small employer. There's a lot at stake. However, the Chinese labour movement in this country is slowly beginning to organise and so whichever way the strike goes there will be many people who are a lot more aware.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

FOR WORKERS' LIBERTY EAST AND WEST

Botha's tightrope walk continues

South African President PW Botha has called an early election in the Spring, probably in April. Most commentators accept that Botha's ruling National Party will win a big victory. The elections, of course, will be for whites only.

Botha has had to tread a tight-

rope over the past two years. Partial reforms have been accompanied by intensified repression.

The State of Emergency imposed on June 12 last year — just before the tenth anniversary of the Soweto Revolt — has seen thousands of anti-apartheid activists locked up and many deaths at the hands of the police and the

army.

Amongst racist Afrikaner (Dutch-speaking) whites, there has been a big growth in neo-fascist movements, challenging Botha from the right.

The early election is an attempt to rally support for the government's adapt or die policy.

WAPPING

All out January 24th!

By Carol Hall Deputy MoC SOGAT Clerical (in a personal capacity)

As the News International strikers approach the anniversary of our long, hard struggle for jobs and for basic trade union organisation, we need to reflect a little on how Murdoch was given the initiative right at the beginning.

Do you remember that bitter cold winter as we froze in the first seven weeks of the dispute, shouting "scab" from behind the barriers a quarter of a mile from the plant? For yes, those were the days of the low profile campaign, when strikers and our supporters from other unions, were told by the national leadership to stay away.

"We will win the battle through the media, through the boycott campaign, through the distribution. We do not want nasty mass picketing. Look at what happened during Warrington, during the miners' strike. This only alienates the general public from the cause". That is what they told us!

Murdoch had other ideas. Relying on and indeed relishing the weakness of Dean and Dubbins, he rushed SOGAT into court, getting their funds sequestered.

But gradually the strikers took control, imposing correct policies — mass demonstrations, delaying Murdoch titles, picketing the TNT depots, the wharfs, etc. We took the fight out to the movement, urging the rest of the newspaper industry to



Police attack Wapping pickets: Photo John Harris

become more involved.

As the battle got fiercer, the Thatcher storm troopers in blue were being used in their thousands to brutalise the workers. The judiciary was being used to criminalise the workers. The mass media were

detaining the workers. But the spirit was strong.

Murdoch and the state were worried. Witness the most brutal attack, totally unprovoked, on 3 May, where the thugs in blue ran amok in an attempt to intimidate and break the

strike. SOGAT national leadership cracked and purged their contempt of court. Then they balloted strikers to accept compensation instead of their jobs. In reality it signalled the end of the strike for them.

But the strikers thought otherwise. They turned the offer down and took the battle forward, despite being handicapped by the print union leaders' unwillingness to confront the Tories' anti-union laws, which have given Murdoch a weapon that he uses time and time again — the law courts.

The strikers will not give in. They know, more than most, what is at stake. They know that a defeat at Wapping will have the gravest and most bitter consequences for the working class.

Rejected

Another money offer has since been decisively rejected.

It is now time for the movement to rally around and support those brave men and women who have sacrificed, suffered hardship, seen tragedies, who have had their friends and colleagues like Mike Hicks, sent down and jailed on trumped up charges.

Bring your banners and placards down to join us on the historic march from Temple to Wapping on our anniversary march and rally.

Let us show — and mean it — the real spirit, the real solidarity of the working class by filling the Highway with wave upon wave of people.

My plea is this: let us make it more than that — let us make it the start of an irrepressible fight back.

We can win, we have only got to want to enough.

DEMONSTRATE
Saturday January 24
Assemble, 5.00 p.m.
Tower Hill tube

French Fightback

Working-class in opposition to the right wing Chirac government has been sweeping France. Workers on the Rail and Metro networks have been joined on strike by workers across the public sector.

The Socialist and Communist Parties have had to move into action in an effort to control the movement. Echoing the student demonstrations that began the crisis for the government, the Communist Party-led trade union federation the CGT had been marching behind banners declaring "When one fights, one wins".

On January 5, a 24 hour strike in solidarity with the railworkers included gas, electricity and bus workers was called. According to some reports, it was not a great success. But as we go to press the government still looks in a weak position.

The British trade unions, too, need to start a fightback against our rightwing government.

Socialist Organiser meetings

MANCHESTER
Sunday 11 January. The Lessons of France. 7.30 p.m. Town hall.
Thursday 22 January. The Middle East. 6.00 p.m. Manchester University Students Union.

LIVERPOOL
Wednesday 28 January. Debate with Militant on Ireland. 7.00 p.m., Liverpool University.

SO SUPPORTERS IN THE TGWU.
National meeting, Sunday 18 January. 12 noon. Merseyside Unemployed Centre, Hardman St., Liverpool. For further details contact Jim Denham, 021-471 1964.

SUPPORT THE NEWS INTERNATIONAL STRIKERS.

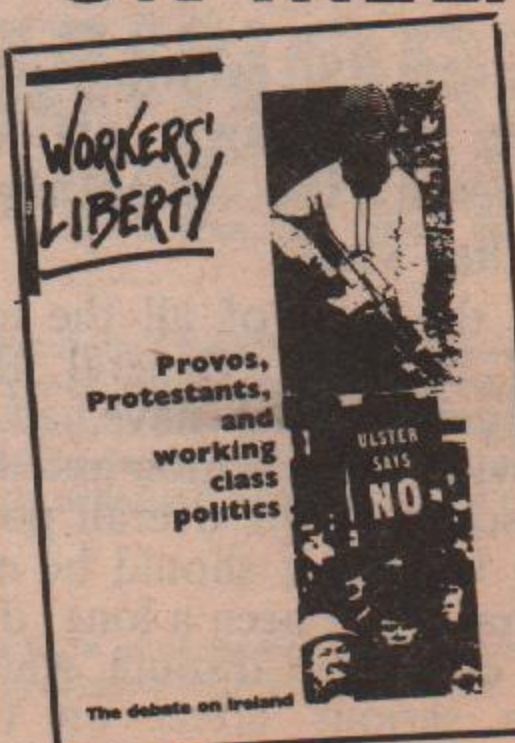
Monday 19 January. Room 8, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton. 7.30 p.m. Speakers include Dennis Skinner MP; Richard Balfe MEP; 3 News International strikers.

Wednesday 21 January. Oxford House, Derbyshire Street (off Bethnal Green Road), 7.30 p.m. Speakers: Tony Benn MP; Betty Heathfield, WAPC; Carol Hall; strikers from Silentnight and Hangers. Chair: Liz Short.

LOBBY THE CSEU. NO TO JORDAN'S SELL-OUT!

8.30 a.m., Wednesday 14 January. Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, London WC1. Called by North London District AEU and Engineering Gazette.

Provos, Protestants and working class politics THE DEBATE ON IRELAND



A unique confrontation between the views on the left. What sort of united Ireland could win the support of Protestant workers? What way to working class unity?

Workers Liberty no. 5 is available, price £1 plus 18p postage, from PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Don't talk to the UDM

By the end of January we should have the tribunal decisions on my victimisation, on Mick McGinty's, and on Bolsover miner Geoff Poulter's. Given the Coal Board's talk about 'reconciliation' it will be interesting to see their response if we win any of the cases.

But I do not think for one minute that we will get our jobs back. When the interim hearing ordered Mick McGinty's reinstatement, all the Coal Board did was to suspend him on full pay.

The important thing to keep in mind is that these victimisation cases, and the one of the two Welbeck lads, are highly visible, high profile cases that everybody sees. But there has been massive victimisation of other miners that has not been brought to the attention of the national union, or the media.

In Nottingham we have sustained day to day harassment of miners by management. And yet despite that we still have a real drift towards the NUM. Henry Richardson said recently that there has been a small surge. The Coal Board is desperate to stop this but has real problems.

Coming up in Parliament is the

new Coal Bill, which talks about recognising minorities in certain areas. Its main concern is the UDM, but that recognition should also extend to the NUM in Notts. We are holding on until we get a break and that might be the one; and if we get that recognition there will be another surge forward in membership.



At Bolsover pit the majority of men are in the NUM, but management will only recognise the UDM there because that is the biggest union in the Notts coalfield.

In the week before Christmas there was a dispute after a man had been sent home for refusing to work in unsafe conditions. When Geoff Poulter, the NUM branch secretary, went to see management they sacked him! He was told his sacking was for 'trade union activities', although by the time his sacking letter arrived the Coal Board had got cold feet and did not put that in writing.

On the political front it has been reported in the press that Stan Orme

will be coming to Notts at the end of the month. He is not scheduled to meet the UDM but will be speaking at a number of public meetings. The Notts NUM have sent a delegation to Neil Kinnock and Stan Orme and we made our position clear. We would welcome the Labour leader, or any Labour Party representative, speaking to any rank and file Labour Party member or rank and file miner; but under no circumstances will we accept that they talk with an organisation which has not been recognised by either the TUC or the Labour Party. An organisation which has collaborated with the bosses in getting men sacked and imprisoned.

We knew about FTAT's decision to ditch the Silentnight strikers before most did, because we had some of the strikers at our Christmas social in the Welfare. It is an absolutely appalling decision — to cast off workers who have been on strike for 19 months. We told them that, if they choose to continue the dispute then, as rank and file miners, we would give them every possible support we could. They told us the fight would go on.

Paul Whetton is secretary of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.